LAILA'S FLIGHT
Omer Nabi, Pakistan

Laila sat on the mattress like a little doll being decorated by several young women. After she had been cleansed with an ubtan (herbal paste) massage, some of the girls in the room rubbed the combined essence of camphorwood and sandalwood on their fragrant root of khas on her arms and legs. Her silken hair was pulled and braided with strings of small, white jasmine flowers. Laila's aya (nurse maid) painted intricate patterns on her hands and feet with mehndi (henna paste). Everyone in the room was giggling and making innocent jokes to Laila about her husband. But Laila sat there, quiet, with a shy, yet excited grin on her face, letting the women prepare her for her husband-to-be.

Meanwhile, a lot occupied the attention of Mirza Satish and Chambell Begum, Laila's parents. The last minute arrangements had to be completed by eight o'clock at night. The catering had to be locked over. The seating arrangements for guests had to be supervised. Also, the decorations were to be completed. So much remained that it seemed impossible for everything to be completed in perfection. The people from the tent company arrived at six o'clock. Mirza Satish's brother instructed them where to erect the Shamyana, a pavilion supported on poles and made from colorful pieces of canvas, stitched together to form beautiful floral designs. He also set the dining tables between the sitting of men and women as Laila's family had instructed. The ceremony had to follow the conservative custom of absolute segregation between the two sexes. The chairs were arranged in such a manner that the people would sit in groups and there would still be room for a straight carpeted aisle for Laila to walk up to the stage. Great attention was paid while constructing the stage. Mirza Satish himself, with other male members of the family, directed the workers to build the stage. A Persian rug was spread over the wooden frameworks and strings of flowers and tinsel were hung from the fabric, clothing all the way down to the sides of the stage. Behind the stage, a mural was made with flowers, spelling out the words "Shaadi Mubalak" (Congratulations on your wedding).

Most of the female activity was conducted inside the Haveli (village estate) where Chambell Begum was the chief instructor. She supervised the order in which Laila's dowry (down) was prearranged with her husband's family, to be placed for display. The expensive clothes were folded in a way so as to reveal the delicate gold and silver embroidery merging with tilthah-beadwork. Laila's jeweled veil was embroidered with gold leaf. Moreover, the household decoration articles and other utensils that completed the haveli were placed on one side of the room.

The meal for the occasion had to be prepared with all the ingredients in exact proportions. Blank food would spoil the entire effect of the graceful ceremony. Therefore, Chambell Begum went to the screened terrace every now and then, where a maid brought platefuls of the food for her to sample and give suggestions until the tasters were satiated.

All the preparations having been completed, everyone got busy dressing up for the function, except Laila, whose makeup would be freshly applied after the groom's arrival. She stayed in her room with confused feelings. She had never met the person she was marrying. How would he be? Would he be the same man she had read about in books? How would she adjust to life in America? Would she be able to adjust to life in America? Would she be able to adjust to life in America?
THE CHINA MASSACRE
Jeffrey Zir, Hong Kong

On June 3, 1989, I finally got some relief from the pressures that I experienced throughout my first year of study in the United States. Summer vacation was here and everybody was heading home, including me. I was so anxious to see my parents, yet at the same time very worried about the student uprising in China. Although not born in China, nor had I ever lived there, being Chinese, I felt very deeply about the whole event. At school, I didn't know much about the details of the protest and I couldn't wait to get home and find out more about it. Early that morning, my advisor drove me to the airport, and I was on my way back to Hong Kong. While I was on the plane, waiting desperately for time to pass, the environment was peaceful and full of happiness. Who could have known that in China the troops were on their way to Tiananmen Square and a bloody massacre was about to take place.

After the long twenty hour journey, the plane finally arrived at the Hong Kong Kai Tel International Airport. I was exhausted yet extremely excited to see my parents. Oh! I had so many interesting things to tell them about my venture in the States. But my excitement dwindled as I proceeded towards the customs area. Usually at customs, people were full of joy with happiness hidden inside the noises; but that time the environment was totally different. People looked sad and the noises sounded sorrowful. I then realized that something must have happened, but my remaining excitement stopped me from further imagining what I went through. As the automatic door slowly opened, I saw my mom standing in the front row, as usual, waving eagerly towards me. I was so happy to see my parents. Strangely, I realized that my parents, like most of the people, were dressed in black. This was unusual and sorrowful that it reawakened my curiosity about what had happened.

When we were on our way home, my mom told me everything and she showed me some newspaper articles about the bloody massacre. In the newspapers, there were pictures of dead people. They were gross and disgusting, especially the one with a man's head smashed by a tank. Those pictures made me so sick that I couldn't eat for days.

My mom is a very sensitive person. She cut out all the news articles about the massacre and she recorded all the special programs that were related to the event. She stayed up all night watching the news and recorded a total of ten 180-minute tapes. After I recovered from jet lag, I started to read all the newspapers that my mom had cut out and watched the video tapes. There was a scene showing one million Hong Kong residents, 1/4 of the population, protesting against the Chinese government so as to support the students spiritually. It was so touching that tears began to well up in my eyes.

Hong Kong was originally part of China until China lost the war in 1998. Hong Kong was then granted to the United Kingdom for ninety-nine years. On June 1, 1997, Hong Kong will once again be under the Chinese rule. Although Hong Kong is now a British Colony, most of the residents are still Chinese and they were all very sensitive about the whole student uprising, like myself. Being of the same race, having friends and relatives living back there, and being concerned about the future of Hong Kong, we would do whatever we could to help the students achieve democracy. People who were assassinated in business forgot about their personal worries and worked together to face the common problem. Companies took money from their profits and used it to buy tents and food for the student protesters in Tiananmen Square. In addition, all the singers and movie stars in Hong Kong put together a twelve hour non-stop concert so as to raise money to help the students and protesters Bejing. We did everything we could to help them: we supported them both financially and spiritually.

I had been to China before, and from what I saw people were definitely living in extremely bad conditions. People worked so hard with so little reward. In time, outside knowledge began to enter China. The knowledgeable ones, the students, then began to think why couldn't they live a better life like people in other countries. As a result they started to protest for democracy. The "Old Gang" in China saw the potential for a riot, so in order to retain their own power, they sent troops to kill them all, leaving a "wound" in Chinese history. This massacre ruined all the good China had done for years. Now no other countries have faith in them and it has become extremely hard for China to live up to the International standard. Personally I do hope China will change and that people can live a better life as they do in Hong Kong.

AFTERNOON

The sun was shining at the middle of our heads, which means it was afternoon.

The sun is very far. The sun gave the heat and stronger energy to make everything change and grow up. The sun gave a lot of quality to the trees, plant, animals and humans.

However the sun is so hot. I heard the nature around me rustle. The sun is light in our brain, and the sun is fertilizer for all nature.

Green, blue, brown, yellow and red all stood together. As they contact which one is growing more? Which is bigger? Which is greener? Small, medium, and big stood together. As they are happy to have a sun, we are happy to study.

Visit Hos, high school student from Combodia, who was an intern at Tufts International Center.

A FOREIGN STUDENT FOCUS
Jane Elish-Andrews
Director, International Center

When thinking about submitting an essay to INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES these thoughts came to mind. Do the American born students understand who the foreign students are as Tufts? Do they have a sense of their struggles and successes? I will try to expose you to some of the issues involved in the lives of foreign students.

Imagine leaving your country and family that you love and respect, for the dream of going to the U.S.A. to pursue a goal of obtaining a degree from an American college. Your acceptance to Tufts, an internationally recognized school is the pinnacle of your educational goals. This opportunity now seems like a missed blessing, one of a privilege and one of a burden. Anticipating that this adventure will prove to be worth its while, you feel the excitement of reaching the U.S.A., the land of opportunity and lifestyle that is not seen anywhere else on this earth.

As your plane lands, your heart is filled with an anxiety and curiosity never before felt. You are about to meet your first blockade on the journey-language/communication barrier. What will it be like to express ideas in English and be graded on work done in English—how will you be perceived by peers? Will people understand what you are saying? As you move through the airport line you are met by an Immigration Officer who demands to see your visa documentation. In your haste you cannot locate the documentation and the officer loses all patience and begins to scream and harass you. In your mind you wonder is this the way visitors are welcomed in this country?

A MEMORY OF A PALESTINIAN MARTYR

Like a wounded tiger, you leap across the dry forest, charred eyes burning beneath the burning sun.

When they tired your hands and left you in the valley of Jordan.

The day your house fall with a scoop of bulldozer the reflection of the moon on your forever chanted. Green eyes of a girl disturbed from sleep, the night filled with screams when they reflect you a thief and took your family away.

Like a defeated animal you bury your face deep into the hot sand, the taste stings in your mouth the firing hours of digging and feeding the hands, roots of sweat pouring down your bronze skin.

Amidst the orange trees, the dry roots feed like marrows.

The rain begins to fall. Roots of the olive tree burst from beneath the soil. You may now die comfortably because for every Palestinian martyr, a hundred roots are planted.

Deema Shruks, A Palestinian Student from Kuwait.
MORE THAN CLOSE FRIENDS

Cuenca, Aragon, Spain

I was anxious about his arrival. The waiting had been too long; the closer the event approached, the further it seemed to be from me.

During those months of expectation, all sorts of things came to mind: his physical appearance, character, mental skills... but what kept me most concerned was whether I was going to be able to set up the best relationship between us. Even before his arrival, Juanocho had already changed my life.

At last, our appointment day arrived. We had arranged through our mediators that we would meet on the 19th of April, 1990. It was one of those hot sunny days that makes one realize that spring will soon come; it was a good start for such an important event. Although suspecting Juanocho was not going to be there so early, I drove to our meeting at 6 a.m. in the morning. I waited. Those were the longest hours of my life.

Suddenly, he came. I was astonished: he was not just ugly but also disagreeable. He appeared behind a green wall, with his small and banding body, his short and wrinkled face and his long wild dark hair. He arrived screaming and with an expression on his face that made me wonder if he was a human being or one of Steven Spielberg's creatures.

The second time I saw Juanocho, my impression was more positive. We were both in a better mood, for we had slept a while. This expression on his face had changed; the redness and wrinkles had disappeared, his hair was now combed in a part, and, in a pleasant situation, he had two big round eyes that were hidden at the bottom of his face. He looked at me in an imporing way but I could not dare to embrace him.

He emitted strange sounds totally meaningless to me and, when I talked to him, he opened his brown eyes trying to show me how amazed he was about my "speech". We reached an agreement by looking into each other's eyes: I was a little stranger dependency on me and this responsibility scared me.

Time passed and Juanocho has become an independent part of myself. Sometimes, when I am walking alone in the street, a feeling of having forgot something really important assaulcts me; I soon realize that what I miss so desperately is Jauno and I smile of happiness thinking he is already with me.

Juanocho new dresses the way he (a devil, Hanst and T-shirts), tries to talk (I am not sure what language), plays soccer, and enjoys NDA motives. I think he is really handsome, chubby face, enormous black eyes, fat nose, funny lips and a smile that makes everyone else smile too.

He has developed my own character: active, loving, friendly, and moreover, he is a good person. We sometimes get cross, but after some hugging we again become very close friends.

This will be forever because, if you have not realized yet, Juanocho is my son.

(America, p.1) shows had to be sneakers. And this was only a taste of what was to come, the point where I moved to what was to be my home for the next six weeks.

Sealing my new home was itself a shock. There was nothing I could do there, so I tried to settle down and meet some people. The first person I met was the most important; my housemate. He turned out to be a really kind and gentle person and he was very helpful to me through some of my hard times. As the days passed, I kept meeting new people and learning more and more. I learned, for example, that you could not drink whether you were 21. I could drive the sign of alcohol, and also that going out with a girl meant you were "going steady". Also, I realized that using a different currency and understanding their sense of humor (Mony Pythons, Saturday Night Live), their favorite music (The Who, The Grateful Dead, Red Hot Chili Pepper) and their subjects of conversation, which revolved around humor, music, and also sports, another unknown area, would take a lot of getting used to.

As days went by I began to get accustomed to this completely new lifestyle, which even meant different meal times. I live in a room moving into childhood, I began to understand more about what was going on around me. By the third week I could account for most of my surroundings and I knew what to expect from others. It was at that point that I started to make judgments about and evaluate the new data. And what I realized was that what I had perceived as huge differences in the beginning were not that big and that there were actually a lot of similarities between the two cultures. The combined measures on crime and driving is a way of preventing drunken driving. The same is done in Greece by imposing a driving age of eighteen. The most popular subject of conversations in Greece, as in America, are sports, music, and humorous anecdotes. It is just that different backgrounds prevent us from truly understanding each other.

And finally we all value similar things in life: a good profession, a good family and love. We all have different ways of expressing the same feelings.

This is what I think was the benefit of my experience: it not only smoothed my transition into college life but also helped me understand the American culture. It also helped me realize that people of different color, race, and sex think in similar ways and that situations should not be viewed negatively, looking for differences, but positively, seeking the elements that unite us.

Edited by:
Robin Stone, Lesley College Graduate Intern
Mell Bolon, Lesley College Graduate Intern
Sponsored by:
Tufts University International Center, Dastou Hall

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After barely passing through these initial obstacles you arrive at the Ivory Tower of Tulips being cultivated by a group of volunteers trained by the International Center. But you wonder what the next challenge you will encounter on this adventure of learning?

Orientation is over and classes begin, you feel quite confident that you are prepared to take on the academic challenges ahead. You quickly become aware of the differences which exist between your country and the American culture. You are shocked by the lack of competition which seems to exist between students. Students are not particularly friendly or willing to help each other in the classroom. Everyone seems to be more concerned with getting the best grade. You are also uncomfortable with the amount of speaking up in class and asking questions that the professor expects of you. In your country it is considered extremely rude if you speak up in class or disagree with the professor. You feel that your strong academic background, which appears to be more rigid and disciplined than the American one, will enable you to do well. But you still raise the question: Am I really willing to take on this enormous challenge? Will I be successful?

The next hurdle of your educational experience at Tulips falls into the area of your psyche and your emotional well-being. How do you assimilate into this new culture? You find yourself struggling to move into the spheres of the American culture but emerge with people from your own country and background. In your mind you question how you can become a more integral part of the culture. You have already very close friends from this new environment, bridging the gap between your own culture and the American culture. You have read that in the College of Engineering speaks English any more. You ask yourself, what are you doing? You have come to the country because you respected what the U.S. could offer you. You know you have worked hard to achieve your academic success. In some cases you didn’t approach the U.S. for higher education, but the U.S. came looking for you. You were being other a product that seemed too good to be true and you bought into it.

The marketing strategy for U.S. education is so powerful that everyone worldwide this is competing for the same product, a U.S. education. As a foreign student, you have bought this product and now you are hearing that you don’t deserve it. This doesn’t make any sense to you. How are you beginning to come into contact with an issue which is raw to you because it expresses itself in just in and your anxiety lessons. Friendships begin to form with student advisors and with new foreign and American students. The sincerity of the group of immigrants is overwhelming, but you wonder what the next challenge you will encounter on this adventure of learning?

Your question is important and critical to your future and the future of your country. Your country is the United States. You are working hard to complete your studies in the United States. Many Americans including university professors probably do not know where your country is located unless it is in Europe, because they have not studied world geography since elementary school. Nor do Americans place a high value on their need to learn more about other countries. As your years at Tulips advance and you learn to come to terms with all the diverging attitudes and opinions to which you have been exposed. You struggle to find a balance between your life prior to Tulips and your present one. You have learned so much and have grown in ways that can only be possible by living in another culture. You are thankful and glad to have had this opportunity. You greatly value the friendships you have made and know that they will endure. But you ask yourself, What’s next? Where should I go? Where will be the most comfortable? Can I readjust to life at home? Can I adjust to a permanent life here?

It is now four years later in your life and many events have occurred both in the U.S. and in your home country. You are beginning to realize that you are now a changed person. You no longer easily fit into either your own culture or into the American one. This seems pretty strange because you are still married to your childhood. Where do you belong? Do you still have the same affection and tie to both countries, but how can you choose between the two? How do you begin to connect your educational journey with your journey of life?

I have tried to present to the Tulip community a capsule version of my struggles and successes of many of our foreign students. My main message is this: When you meet someone who has a cultural background from your understanding that these students request only one courtesy from you: Treat them as you would treat others; fairly, honestly and openly. If a personal occur, we will bring you opportunities for men and women to work together in an independent work in which all cultures and nationalities are equally respected and valued.