

Coimbatore, India

Images of India – Orchids Passing

A river of orchids,
flowing multi-colors,
lilac, lavender and rose,
silk saris swirling,
school girls pass
on their way to class.

Orchid-colored saris
some muted by use
others vibrant
as young eyes
are the school uniforms
at the Girls College
in Coimbatore,
Southwest India.

I have been meeting
the college President,
the Professor of Botany,
Grand Dames.
But now,
walking the college gardens
in noontime heat
I am the only man,
only Westerner,
only mossy grey beard
among the orchids.

Broad leaves of trees,
luminescent chartreuse,
flash lantern-bright
against a liquid sky
of deepest cobalt.
To the right
a deep architectural grid
four stories high
of whitewashed concrete sunscreens
projects geometric shadows
of palest blue.

Orchid, lavender, lilac,
chartreuse and cobalt,
vehement hues
saturated, and compressed
under equatorial sunlight
return now
unbidden, undiminished
to my closed eyes
after seven years.