

The Dance of Nayana: Analysis Guide

1. Read *Dance of Nayana* (in Cowan's (2005), *Ariadane's Thread: Case Studies in the Therapeutic Relationship*).
2. Prepare notes of your own analysis of the case, *Dance of Nayana*. Bring two copies of your typed notes to the scheduled in-class clinical case staffing session. Submit one copy to your instructor before the case staffing, and keep a copy for your own guidance during the discussion. The instructor must be able to follow the logical analyses of the submitted notes to evaluate the work.
3. Though not an exhaustive or mandated list, the following are factors worth considering as you prepare your thoughts and notes on *Dance of Nayana* for the scheduled in-class intensive case analysis:

Nayana

- What was the nature of the presenting problem?
- Somatic complaints and their meanings
- Barriers and bridges of trust with her therapist
- The push and pull of two cultures
- The meaning of dance
- The meaning of her choice
- Nayana's strength
- The meaning of Nayana's dreams
- Nayana's relationship to Ben, to her parents, uncle, cousin
- What cultural and family pressures were causing distress
- What did getting lost in traffic represent to Nayana?

Dr. Cowan

- Therapeutic challenges in his work with Nayana
- Cultural conflict in the therapeutic relationship
- Crisis points in therapy
- Professional boundary issues in this case; were lines crossed?
- Therapeutic strategies
- Dealing with Ben's protectiveness
- How did Dr. Cowan keep his own values in check?
- What was the defense of "isolation of thought" that occurred in the session? Why did Dr. Cowan think this was a mistake on his part and how did Nayana react?
- What was the question asked by Dr. Cowan that helped bring insight to Nayana regarding somatization?
- What did Dr. Cowan say he had to constantly monitor in himself when working with Nayana?
- How were Dr. Cowan's western ideas about the nature of good mental health challenged by his client, Nayana?

Other Issues

- Multiculturalism
- Interpersonal & familial dynamics
- Interfaith and cross-cultural issues
- Cultural competence
- Professional boundary-keeping
- Clinical diagnostics
- Personal bias in clinical practice
- Other clinical and psycho-social, moral, cross-cultural, and ethical issues

Grading Rubric for the *Dance of Nayana*

It was evident that the student had read and studied the case adequately and appeared to be familiar with all aspects of the case.	The student used creative strategies in presenting his or her oral case analysis, clearly depicting major themes and analyses in their written notes	The student demonstrated critical thinking regarding the clinical, therapeutic, ethical, cultural, and case conflicts. Professional speaking etiquette was evident.	The notes submitted by the student demonstrated depth of clinical understanding and maturity as an advanced social work practitioner
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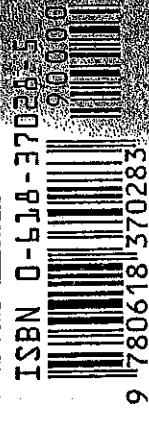
"As a clinical supervisor, it is apparent to me that therapists in training are eager for an inside view of the consulting room, to see the inner workings of real therapy relationships: What goes on in the heart and mind of both client and therapist? With notable exceptions, much of the therapeutic literature seems to present a sanitized or hegemonic version of particular theories and methods, and the therapist is often missing entirely from these accounts. But a therapeutic theory, like an expensive suit, can be an elegant yet lifeless thing. It needs a person to try it on, walk around in it a bit, and see how it wears out of the shop window and among people. In *Ariadne's Thread* I wanted to tell the clients' tales and to explore the ideas that helped me to understand them so that readers may decide how well the clothes wear."

In Greek mythology, Theseus must enter a labyrinth to slay the Minotaur. Ariadne spins a long silver thread to help her lover navigate the deep, dark maze. "Unwind the thread as you go, and if you slay the Minotaur, follow the silver thread back to daylight." Dr. Cowan views this myth as a metaphor for the therapeutic journey. The relationship between client and therapist is the silver thread that enables a client to journey through his or her personal labyrinth and return safely to daylight.

For more information about *Aradine's Thread* and other counseling titles, visit www.lahaskapress.com.

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Case Studies in the Therapeutic Relationship

Eric W. Cowan

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of Tim's experiential world. This deviation amplifying process is a feature of second order change.

I found myself wanting to argue with Tim, to refute his decisions and to explain to him his rationalizations and denial. These were first order interventions that he could easily ignore. Second order interventions were aimed at eliciting Tim's ambivalence, subverting his denial processes, and allying with disowned parts of his inner world. Second order interventions also involved confronting the discrepancies and rationalizations of which he was only half aware, or stepping aside and forcing him to work to show me both sides of his conflicts. Sometimes a single word can provoke a second order change: Tim ruminated on my description of his demeanor as "furtive" (which was incongruous with his self-image). What he discovered in his willingness to engage with the "miracle question" surprised him as he created a new picture laden with possibilities. Surprise is a feature only of second order interventions.

Tim reminded me that often the therapist must let go of the idea of "removing" clients' problems and difficulties. Sometimes the best the therapist can do is to help the client discover other alternatives that are more expressive of the client's greater capacity for self-determination. As with many clients where ingrained personality traits contribute to problematic life circumstances, Tim's deep structure personality issues were largely intact at the end of our relatively brief work together. Yet there was second order change as well; his life would not have looked so profoundly different if there had not been.

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CASE EIGHT

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The Dance of Nayana

I resemble everyone
but myself, and sometimes see
in shop windows,
despite the well-known laws
of optics,
the portrait of a stranger,
date unknown,
often signed in a corner
by my father.

—"Self-Portrait," A. K. Ramanujan

Breathe, Nayana, breathe!" I said earnestly.

She reached out the hand that was not clasped to her heaving chest. I took her hand and sat next to her on the couch holding it. I put my other arm around her hunched shoulders. "You're all right," I said confidently, "don't worry . . . take long, deep breaths."

"I . . . I . . . can't," she managed to say between gasps.

"Yes, you can. I'm right here, and you're okay. This will pass in a few moments. Your heart's slowing down as we speak, and you are going to breathe like this. Watch me." She fixed her terrified eyes on me as I took a long, deep breath. I exhaled loudly. "Do as I do. Okay, in . . ." she took a breath, "good! Out . . ."

"I'm . . . going . . . to . . . die!" she gasped.

"No . . . eventually, but not today," I smiled reassuringly. Nayana tried to smile back at the joke out of courtesy but couldn't. "Okay. In . . . out, excellent! Again, together, in . . . out, good! Now you're breathing. You're doing fine, keep going."

She started saying something in Hindi.

"No, English, Nayana."

"My heart!"

"I know. Don't worry. It's slowing down right now. Can you feel it slowing down?" She shook her head, no. "Yes you can. Feel my hand squeeze yours, that's how slow your heart is going to get in just a little while. Feel that?" She nodded quickly, her eyes still fixed on me. I waited a while, keeping a steady rhythm on her hand. "It's slowing down now, isn't it?"

She nodded, "A little. Yes, a little."

"Good, don't forget to breathe." She obediently took another deep breath.

Ten minutes later I was saying, "Now you're doing fine. See. You're all right," I said soothingly.

We sat on the couch together, and slowly Nayana's panic attack passed and resolved into tears. She sobbed as I sat with her for a while trying to offer whatever reassurance I could.

"That's pretty scary isn't it?"

She nodded. "I'm sorry to surprise you," she said remorsefully when she could speak again. "It is so awful. I was in the car, and I didn't know what to do. I was only a few kilometers away when I felt it coming, so I rushed here. I didn't know what else to do. You must have a patient waiting for you."

"No, don't worry. I don't have anyone waiting."

This was Nayana's third panic attack in as many weeks. During these attacks, her heart would race, she would become short of breath, and she would be overcome by a horrible sense of dread, a foreboding feeling that she would die. Although I'm sure she would not agree as she sat there slowly regaining her composure, it looked to me like Nayana was making progress in therapy. At least her anxiety was now closer to the surface, even if it was overwhelming her at times.

Nayana's medical doctor had referred the 27-year-old Indian graduate student to me four months earlier. She complained of stomach and chest pains, headaches, muscle tension, and a variety of gastrointestinal maladies. She seemed to be "falling apart," she said. She reported to her doctor that she had always had minor medical problems, but it seemed as if all of them were happening at once and much more intensely than in the past. Stumped by her symptoms and unable to make a diagnosis (all her tests came back negative), her doctor made a series of referrals to specialists who, likewise, could find nothing wrong with her. Since she had recently returned from a visit to India she even consulted a special-

ist in exotic parasitic infections but he, too, could find nothing medically wrong with her. There was little question that Nayana was suffering from *something*, so her doctor referred her to a psychiatric resident who took a complete history, noting that Nayana met almost all of the symptom requirements for somatization disorder. He referred her for outpatient therapy and sent her file to me.

When I met Nayana in the waiting room for our first meeting, Ben, her American boyfriend, sat next to her holding her hand protectively. She asked if he could join us for our first meeting, and I agreed. Because of her cultural background, I wondered if Nayana might feel uncomfortable being in a room alone with a strange man.

"I'm not sure we need to be here," Ben explained, taking the lead as we sat down. "Nayana's got something wrong with her that the doctors can't find, and I think they just don't know what to do. It's not like she's crazy or anything. I mean her pain is real."

I nodded in acknowledgment, "Yes," I said to Nayana, "I understand from Dr. Meyers that you have been suffering from a lot of physical problems, and I don't doubt, like Ben said, that your pain is real."

"Oh, it's real all right. I can tell you it's real." She spoke in a lovely resonant voice, made even more interesting by the melodic inflections characteristic of English spoken with an Indian accent. "I have to suffer with it all of the time, and nobody can tell me why I have to do that," she said, holding an upturned palm under her heart, as if to refer to it. "I am not making it up at all." Her round light-brown face was earnest, and her large dark eyes seemed to appeal to me to believe her. Ben reached over and stroked her long, straight jet-black hair.

"I believe you, Nayana. I don't doubt that your pain is real," I said.

"Her physical pain," interjected Ben.

"Yes, her physical pain. I have no doubt that you are suffering real physical complaints. I believe you when you say that you have headaches, dizziness, nausea, cramps, stomach problems, and back pain," I recited her symptoms so that they would know I had the specifics. "I don't think for a moment that you are faking."

"Do you think that she's a hypochondriac?" Ben said, persistently. Something about his protectiveness was both amusing and endearing. I could see that he felt she was out of her range of experience with Western health care and was running interference for her.

"Yes, do you think that?" echoed Nayana. "Ben says that's the only reason Dr. Meyers would send me here, because I'm making it all up in my head."

"Nayana, do you often believe that your physical symptoms mean that you have something terribly wrong with you like cancer or a tumor or some disease?" Her eyes got wide.

"No, I don't. Do you think that?" she asked, alarmed.

I shook my head. "I'm not a medical doctor, but, no. So, I don't think you are a hypochondriac."

"What then? Why do I need to come here to meet with you?"

"I'm not sure that you do, but sometimes when a person is really stressed-out or emotionally upset or is troubled at a deep level about important issues in life, those problems can get translated into real physical problems that cause real physical pain. It's not a matter of it being all in your head. You can't separate the body from the heart and mind. Body, mind, and spirit are all just different aspects of the whole person. Often, when a person is out of whack, the trouble can show up anywhere in the system. It's not like the person can intentionally control just how this *imbalance* shows up. I don't know if you feel this might fit with what's happening for you, but it might be something for us to consider."

I wanted to frame what I suspected were her troubles in language that addressed their fears that I might think Nayana was "crazy." This was an explanation for which they were unprepared. Even Ben seemed to pause.

"It's a Western idea," I continued, "that you can split a person up into all these separate parts, separating the mind and body." She began nodding. "In your culture I think there is more attention to keeping them all together, yes?"

"Yes, that's right," she turned to Ben, confirming this.

"So, my question to you would be, and you don't have to talk about this right now" (I was thinking it might be better to wait until Ben was not in the room), "what might be happening in your life or in your private thoughts and feelings that might be troubling you, knocking you off center? Sometimes these troubles are not so discrete and go pretty deeply and the person can only describe a little part at any given time. Also, sometimes it helps to wonder, 'Why is this happening now?'"

They turned and looked at one another significantly but said nothing. "I gather from your faces that you are thinking of something."

"I can think of many things," Nayana said in her musical voice, clearly articulating every word. "One thing is that we are having many troubles together right now because soon I am supposed to return to India, and Ben would not be able to go with me. My family says I cannot stay here in the U.S. It is very upsetting to us. We would like to

marry, but my family is strict Hindu, and they say I cannot marry anyone but a Hindu person." She looked over at Ben. He was frowning. "I always thought that I would obey my family, but I have been in the U.S. for four years now and I would like to be able to make my own decision. But this is very hard." Her eyes suddenly brimmed with tears. "My family does not understand this. I live with my uncle, and he tells my family *everything* that I am doing here. It is this way in Indian families. They are very close, you know."

"Naturally, I want her to make her own decision," Ben said, taking her hand, "to do what she wants so that we can marry. I'm Jewish, so I know what it's like when parents want their kid to marry someone with the same faith and culture, but my family loves Nayana. They're crazy about her. They would love it if we married. We're hoping her family can adjust, and if not, well, I know it would be hard for her, but you can't let your family control your life forever."

"Ben's family is very good to me," Nayana confirmed. "I think they were a little suspicious at first, you know, but I am very close to Mrs. Zimmerman."

"No, they weren't suspicious of you," Ben said with a wide grin, "they loved you from the instant they met you. And Dad loves you too, he thinks your nose ring is exotic." Nayana laughed and smiled back warmly. These two were clearly very attached to one another. I enjoyed the feeling of bright, fresh romantic love in the room.

"So, it's very hard for you both. You both know what you want, but there are pretty serious obstacles to overcome before you can be together." It seemed clear to Ben, and at the time to me, that the plan for therapy would entail encouraging Nayana to voice her feelings and her new independence to her family. It was clear to the American men in the room what was supposed to happen.

"I don't know if we can overcome the obstacles," Nayana said.

"Don't worry," Ben reassured her, "we will."

"So, you think that my body is sick because my mind is troubled? They are talking to one another but not with my voice?" Nayana said, turning back to me. I liked her perceptive explanation.

"I don't know. Maybe it would be better to say that maybe your body is expressing some feelings and conflicts that are hard for you to experience directly or to put into words."

"What do I do?"

"Well, one thing is that you could come here each week, two times a week to start, and we could talk together and see if that's true. After a month or so you can tell me if you think our talks help you."

She looked at Ben. He smiled and tilted his head, as if to say, "You might as well give it a try." So Nayana entered therapy with both of us wondering how she might be somatizing whatever distress was not finding a more direct and conscious expression.

"I don't know what to say. How do I begin?" Nayana asked at our next meeting. She must have felt safe with me, as she had come to the appointment alone.

"Why don't you begin by telling me all about yourself so I can get to know you better as a person."

Nayana paused for a moment and then offered a very articulate account of what she thought was most relevant. She explained that she came from an upper-middle-class family in Bombay. Her father is a businessman, and her mother raised the children. She has two older brothers who are also college educated in Indian universities. One works in computer software, the other as a civil servant. Her family is not wealthy, but they are comfortable. They are all very committed to their Hindu faith, she explained. Her parents are very committed to the idea of immediate and extended family staying in close proximity.

Nayana came to the United States to attend graduate school in both civil engineering and architecture. She excelled in her studies and was about to graduate with her master's degrees in each of these fields. Her parents recognized that Nayana, at a very early age, demonstrated an extraordinary talent for mathematics, science, and anything that involved solving technical problems. (She had recently taken an IQ test and scored in the top 1 percent for these sorts of technical abilities. This contrasted with her verbal reasoning skills, which were "only" above average.) Her parents invested significant time and energy cultivating her special abilities and nurturing her talents. Their expectations were very high, and Nayana always met those expectations, often pushing aside her own desires in order to achieve and excel.

"I felt like I was different from the other girls," she said. "I rarely played or had free time because I was always working and studying."

"It seems like there was a lot of pressure on you to make the family proud, carry the family banner, even more than your brothers."

"Yes, because I had this special talent. That is normal for us. If you are a middle-class Indian family, education is everything. It is your way to get ahead, especially in the technical fields. And yet I always

knew that I was supposed to get married and have children too. I think even my parents did not know, still do not know, which is more important to them. It is as if they want me to do it all, but I am only one person, you know."

"So that's a lot to carry. That must have been hard for you to reconcile, those two conflicting expectations. How do you feel about it now? Which is more important to you, career or marriage and children?"

She moved her head in that uniquely Indian side-to-side wobble that indicates that one is faced with insoluble mysteries. She seemed to have few words for expressing her feelings about it.

Nayana's parents were reluctant to allow her to attend graduate school in the United States for fear of her becoming "Americanized." She gently persisted, and they relented when it became apparent that scholarships would pay her tuition and she could live with her uncle who promised to keep a close eye on her. The prestige of graduating from an American graduate program and the status this would confer on her and the family tipped the scales in favor of allowing her to leave India. She was sent abroad, she said, with a clear understanding that she would return to India to be near the family, accept an appropriate husband, have children, and eventually serve the family and her homeland with her new credentials.

All had gone according to plan at first. Although Nayana disliked much of what she experienced in American culture, she quickly discovered that she reveled in the extraordinary freedom she had as a woman on a college campus. Though Nayana lived with her uncle's traditional and strict family, she was free during the day to structure her time, activities, and social life as she chose.

Two years into her studies, she met Ben. He was intelligent, warm, and respectful of her newfound autonomy. He introduced her to his warm and caring family. Soon, secretly, because she could not reveal the relationship to her uncle, she began dating Ben. A few months into the courtship she had her first sexual experiences when she and Ben became lovers. She bashfully explained that she experienced some guilt over this compromise of her religious and family values. She was, she explained, expected to be a virgin on her wedding day. But she felt fulfilled in her emotional and sexual connection with Ben, and in her new culture it all seemed acceptable and normal. Ben was a sensitive and affectionate partner. Her feelings of guilt about being sexually involved and that she was deceiving her family gradually subsided as her connection with Ben became even closer. She began to fantasize about marrying Ben and

staying in the United States, and she even convinced herself that her family might accept this arrangement. (P)

"Then came the letter," she said.

"The letter?"

"The letter saying that since I would be coming home soon my father has arranged for me to be introduced to a number of eligible men. These, of course, are possible marriage partners who are from good families my father knows. He said they are waiting to meet me and that everyone is happy that soon I would return. It also said that I should listen to my uncle because they were unhappy to hear that I should listen time unsupervised with a Jewish boy. They said they hoped I was behaving like a true Hindu girl should do. They do not like that I would spend time with a man, especially a non-Hindu. My father, he is very stubborn. My cousin told my uncle about Ben, and he told my parents. Now they want me to come home to marry. They are waiting."

"So, even though you come from an upper-middle-class and educated family, your parents still expect that you will have an arranged marriage?" I had a hard time imagining that this bright articulate woman who in many ways seemed thoroughly modern had so little say in her own life choices.

"Oh, yes." From how I framed my observation she picked up its underlying values and went on to explain, "But it's not like it used to be, where you don't even know the groom. Now they introduce you to different men, you know, and you are expected to eventually find one who is acceptable."

I thought that these improvements to the system still left a long way to go. "But the parents of both groom and bride are still involved, proposing the mate?" I had a skeptical expression on my face.

She was amused by my expression. "Oh, yes, very much so. It is a marriage, in some ways, between families and not to be undertaken lightly. Perhaps it is a little more traditional in my family than in many Indian families. Some women in India have remarkable freedom. It all depends on the class and the family. But my family is very conservative."

"So how do you deal with that? It must be very hard for you after you have experienced the freedom you have as a woman here to contemplate going back into a more constricted role."

"Yes and no. My culture is very rich, and the closeness of the family and between families is a great blessing. In America, I meet many people who feel isolated like they have no family. It is remarkable how people live alone. In my culture, you are hardly ever alone," she laughed

a wonderful throaty laugh, "everyone is always into your business! It is impossible to get away and be by yourself like you can do here. But you feel safe too, and a part of a community. I never thought that I could marry an American boy until I met Ben. He is wonderful, and he comes from a family like an Indian family . . . very close. I suppose I never expected to fall in love! It was not in my plan, you know?"

"Yeah, sometimes it is unexpected."

"But where I come from it is only unexpected in the movies. It's fine if it is just a story and everyone says, 'Oh, isn't it a wonderful thing.' But don't try to make it happen in real life!"

"So now you have a real dilemma. You either go back to India soon . . . " "Within the next five months."

"Okay. Or you stay here where you have more independence and the freedom to be with Ben and try to convince your family to accept this very different picture of their daughter's life." I thought as I said this that my own biases were leaking out everywhere in our conversation. Independence, autonomy, freedom, self-determination, these were all assumptions and ideals that I took for granted as psychological achievements. But in Nayana's culture I had to remind myself, these were not the ideals that served the values of service, family, community, and obligation.

"Exactly. That is my dilemma. Stay here with Ben, or go back to India and meet those men my father has waiting and eventually marry one of them."

"And how are you leaning?" I began trying to keep my "values" questions as neutral as possible.

"I have been thinking that I must stay with Ben. I don't know how I can go back. I don't know how I could leave Ben. He would eventually find another, and I cannot think how I would feel about it."

"Well, let's talk about that. How do you feel when you think of staying with Ben here in the U.S.?"

"Very good and very bad. Good because I would be with him and his family. But my family will be very, very mad. Very mad," she said again, shaking her head. "They will think I have betrayed them. They will not accept that I marry a Jewish man who is not even an Indian. They might try to come here and force me to go back with them. If I did not come, they would say very bad things." She shifted in her seat nervously. "What might they say?"

"They might say that . . ." She stopped. She seemed stuck. It was like her mouth suddenly went into "pause" mode. The defense of "isolation

of thought" was so obvious that I was startled. I waited. She seemed blank. I prompted her.

"You were saying that what your parents might say about you is hard for you to put into words." I realized as I said it that I probably should have respected her effort to defend against whatever was too anxiety producing for her to say. Too late.

She began wringing her hands, her face became worried, and suddenly she grew *very* agitated. She looked like she wanted to jump out of her skin. "Doctor Cowan, I have to go now. I should not have come here. I should not have talked badly about my family to you. That was wrong." She got up and grabbed her coat, and walked toward the door. "Nayana, please stay. You're upset. We don't have to talk about it."

She paused considering, "Thank you, I must go, I must go."

I could see that I wasn't going to be able to stop her without physically restraining her. "Nayana, I will see you the day after tomorrow at our time," I said definitively. She did not respond to my statement but was too educated in courtesy to simply walk out.

"Thank you very much," she nodded, and then walked briskly through the door.

"What the hell was that?!" I wondered, standing alone in the middle of the room, shaking my head, trying to figure out the exact trigger. It was like a switch had been thrown. Was it what her family would say to her if she asserted her independence and married the man she wanted to? Or was it the tenor of the whole discussion of freedom, autonomy, defiance of her parent's wishes? She had said that it was wrong of her to talk badly of her family. How had she talked badly about them? Clearly whatever was going on in one part of her thoughts and feelings was forbidden by another part. I could see that I was dealing with a whole different set of internalized cultural reference points that I would have to understand more fully.

I had always had a fascination for India and its cultural and religious traditions, had read the *Bhagavad-Gita* three times, planned to eventually travel there. But what did I *really* know about what it was like to live inside the culture and to have that culture as part of the very structure of my psyche? Her culture was the metanarrative that permitted what was possible in her personal story; I had some idea of it but would need to better understand how it shaped Nayana's perception of herself.

One thing I did know. There was a rift in the continuity of Nayana's self-experience that mirrored the gulf between the two cultures she sought to bridge in her love with Ben. "East is East, and West is West,

and never the twain shall meet," seemed to describe not only the vast differences in worldview between two cultures but between the areas of her own identity as she participated in these two entirely different worlds.

I was relieved and pleased when Nayana appeared in the waiting room for our next session. When I met her, she was wearing a beautiful and flowing crimson sari. She wore sandals and ankle bracelets, and there were rings on her toes. Little bells tinkled from her wrist bracelets as she moved. I smiled as we walked down the hall, and I heard the delicate tinkling behind me. We entered the office, and she smiled and shook her wrists a little as I stepped back to admire her costume. Her black hair was pulled back and tied with a decorative band of silk, and her clear complexion was subtly made up with traditional Indian cosmetics that heightened the effect of her already large dark eyes. She smelled of sandalwood perfume. No wonder Ben was smitten! She had appeared rather plain in her T-shirt, blue jeans, and tennis shoes at our first meeting. She explained that she was dressed for an Indian traditional dance, which she was going to perform with some other students at a cross-cultural fair on campus. She was going there after our meeting. We settled into our chairs and talked of her costume and her upcoming dance for a while.

"Perhaps you would like to come to a dance sometime. You will learn a lot about Indian culture," she offered.

"I'd like that," I said.

I knew that after these easy subjects she would look to me to set the agenda, and for this session I was happy to do so. "Nayana, last session we talked about your feeling torn between two worlds that make very different demands on you. Actually, it helps me to see you dressed like this today, to see aspects of those two worlds represented in your clothes between last week and this. But last week you became very anxious and needed to leave our session early." She nodded bashfully.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude." She made a deprecating gesture with her arm.

"I didn't think you were rude; I thought you were very distressed about thoughts and feelings that seemed to come to you as we talked."

"Yes, there are many things that I should not think about because they are not good; they upset me."

"And what do you do when troubling things upset you like that?"

"I try to not think bad things. I try to think of something good and positive to avoid getting a negative attitude. A negative attitude is very bad. I concentrate on my studies so I can get something done."

Good, bad, positive, negative, upset. I realized that these impoverished and sterile words stood in for Nayana's masked feelings. I had not heard Nayana use any emotionally descriptive words like sad, angry, bewildered, pensive, hopeful. She may be a technical genius, I thought, but what had happened to her emotional world?

"Nayana, let's reflect on your experience of needing to leave last week." She shifted in her seat nervously. The bells tinkled. She nodded her assent. "Describe to me when you first felt very uncomfortable and anxious."

"I don't know, it happened so fast. That happens to me sometimes. I know that I felt bad that I had said bad things about my family. And right after that I said how I wanted to stay here with Ben against their wishes."

"Okay, so it seemed that you could talk about your life and family in India very affectionately. And it also seemed that you could talk about Ben, your love together, and about liking your freedom here, but when..."

"But when I talk about them together, at the same time," she interjected, suddenly animated, "it upsets me very much. I never do that! When I am with Ben, I try not to think about all those other things. I don't think about my parents and what will happen. I don't think bad things about them. It is like I am in a pretend world, you know, and Ben and I can be there together. But it is over here," she reached with her arm as far as she could to one side and touch the arm of the couch, "and this other life is over here," she did the same thing on the other side.

"You keep them apart."

"Oh, yes. Very separated. They must be. Otherwise I would not be able to be with Ben."

"Now I'm going to ask you something a little harder. You say that last week that sense of needing to get away came on you suddenly," she nodded. "Let's explore some of the feelings you were having right before that. What can you recall?"

She nodded, and paused. "I felt a little nauseous, and that always worries me. I am sometimes afraid when that happens that I will vomit."

"That would be very embarrassing, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, yes. I would be very ashamed. I felt a little dizzy too."

"Okay. So you were having those physical sensations. What emotions were you having?"

She paused and reflected. This appeared to be more difficult for her. "I don't know, maybe I was afraid about what will happen if I stay here with Ben."

"Afraid. Okay, that's one that's right there that you can get to easily. Keep reflecting, you're doing well," I encouraged.

She paused. She shook her head.

"Okay, let's do a little experiment." I thought she might resonate to framing our interaction like this. She nodded. "When your cousin broke your secret and told your uncle about Ben, and your uncle immediately told your parents; how did you feel?"

"Ashamed," she said instantly. Okay, another experience that was close to the surface and, I noted, one that was safe because it was a "negative" feeling directed toward herself, not disruptive to others or directed outward. It obviously endorsed her sense that she was doing forbidden things.

"Okay, and what about your feelings toward each of them."

She paused. "I didn't like that my cousin did that. I was upset. It was a secret. You should not break a secret." Now she was concentrating on the technical issue of breaking a promise.

"So when she *betrayed* that secret," I continued prompting, "did you feel something *toward* her?"

She paused. She looked hesitant, and she averted her eyes. "I suppose I was very *angry* with her. And I was angry with my uncle for telling my parents."

"What did you do when you felt that anger?"

"I went to my room and *wanted* to cry, but I share that room with Gita, so I just worked on my studies. Then I felt bad at being so mad at little Gita, so I took her to the movies." She said this without the least bit of irony.

"Did you say to either of them your feeling of being angry or sad?"

"Oh, no!"

"That's not allowed?"

"Maybe to my cousin, but not to my uncle. I am a guest, so I don't say anything to anyone that would be bad."

"So you had angry feelings that you couldn't express because it would be ungrateful to your host," she nodded, "and you had sad feelings that you dealt with by studying," she continued nodding, "and you feel that you

must keep your love for Ben a secret for fear of discovery. Nayana, I'm wondering where in your life it had been safe to express your emotions?"

She pondered this, a confused look on her face. "Do you think this is why I am sick all of the time?"

"I'm noticing that before you describe your emotions you name what is happening in your body. Nausea, dizziness." She reflected on this silently. "How about with Ben, do you share your inner thoughts and feelings with him?"

"Oh, yes." Then, "To a point," she corrected. "He does not want to hear too much about my family's desire for me to come home. He wants me to make my own decisions and do what I want to do. He sees more of the American me. He does not understand what that means to have my family's expectations, what I would have to give up if I tell them I will do what I please."

"So you don't push that. It becomes invisible."

"Yes, that is very, very true. With my family, my real life here in the U.S. becomes invisible. With Ben, my life in India becomes invisible."

"And as you try to satisfy all of them, you become invisible to yourself, your feelings and thoughts become lost to you as you seek to please them all. How do you do it? It sounds exhausting," I said softly.

Her large dark eyes became very wide as I was saying this. Suddenly they brimmed with tears, and she began crying. "I don't know how I do it. I can't do it anymore."

"Okay, Nayana, let's work on this a little," I said, gently. "What are you feeling right now?"

"I'm crying."

"Yes, but what are you feeling?"

"Upset."

"That's not a feeling. It's safe to say *whatever* you want in here. It's like no other place in the world for saying things, because no one else can know what you say." I had the sense that her emotional life had become dammed up because different parts of it were either compatible or not in her different relationships. Each valued relationship variously required that some aspects of her experience be elaborated and other aspects hidden. Her physical symptoms seemed to contain these conflicts and to express the squelched and forbidden emotions that disrupted her different relationships. The appearance of her tears was a very good sign.

"I suppose I am sad. Very, very sad," She whispered. Ah, that was a good start.

"Okay, tell me about that sadness, say *everything* that comes to mind about it, no matter how silly, scary, or ugly it seems."

Nayana did. In fact, she surprised me with her ability to give voice to her inner world. She was not nearly as unskilled as I has supposed. Rather, she seemed only to lack the complete interpersonal receptivity she required to risk such disclosure.

She cried as she described the hopelessness she felt about resolving others' competing expectations and the sense that no matter how much she achieved it was not enough. She cried because she missed her family and because they had made her the family standard bearer when she just wanted to belong. She cried because no one understood how she could not do it all: have a career, a marriage, children. She did not know how to balance her desire for freedom with her desire for duty and filial obligation. She wanted to marry the man she loved, and she wanted to go home. There was no way out.

Just before she met Ben, she revealed, she had been bulimic for a short while and then had stopped eating almost entirely. She lost 20 pounds. After she met Ben, she felt happy and content. But as her final year in the United States progressed, the reality of her predicament asserted itself into her secret and insulated life with him. Time was running out. She suddenly felt like a stranger in a very strange land. It was as if her "Indian self" became larger and larger and competed with the Nayana she had become through her new experiences with Ben in America. She was sobbing now.

"Then I just started getting more and more ill. The sicker I got, the less I could do my work. I'm not even sure I can graduate unless I catch up, and I don't know why I'm getting sicker."

"Nayana, as I listen to you there are a number of good reasons for you to get sick. Let me ask you something. What physical complaints are you feeling at this moment . . . nausea, dizziness?"

"No. Nothing. Just very sad and unhappy."

"Exactly. That's good." She looked up at me confused. Her makeup had run down her cheeks in long lines, as if the stream of color had drained from the reservoir of her dark irises.

"It's good that I'm unhappy and sad?"

"Yes, it's good that you're unhappy and sad, not ill. Unhappy is honest and direct and expresses what you really feel."

"I don't want to be unhappy."

"Of course not, but you are unhappy sometimes, and when you express it like this in this safe place, speaking to all the parts of your feelings, you don't need to trade your tears for being sick."

She nodded. "I think you are right. It is hard to do that though. I don't like to be unhappy and sad. You don't know, because I am caught between in too many expectations."

"You're right. I can't fully understand, but I see that you are trying to stand in your own ground and reconcile your Indian self and your American self. At the same time you're trying to honor all the people you love. You want to be able to please them all and have that be okay."

"That's exactly right," she said. "But nobody understands that. Even Ben cannot fully understand that. He loves me too much to see the other side." She took a tissue and began to wipe her face. "I have ruined my makeup, how will I dance?"

I liked the metaphor. "Perhaps it would be okay to see you, the dancer in the dance."

She got it. "I will stand out too much. You must fit in with the others."

"Is there any part where you are free to make up your own dance?"

"At some part, each dancer takes turns and comes forward to the center while the others move back. Then you can do something that you have made up while the others do the steps together."

"Ah!"

"But that is just a dance," she smiled, "but maybe someday in life too."

I tried, unsuccessfully, to mimic her Indian head gesture in response, and she laughed at me, then put her hand to her mouth for fear she might offend me. But she was still smiling.

"Nayana," I said at our next meeting, "you mentioned that unless you feel better soon you might not be able to graduate." It was our sixth session. Nayana's physical symptoms had already started to moderate significantly as she gave voice to her inner world in our talks. But I felt some resistance emerging around her giving up more of her symptoms.

"Yes, I'm behind for the first time with some projects," she said, "I have been feeling good a lot more, but then I sometimes feel too tired and ill to work all the time."

"And what happens if you do not graduate right now?"

She shrugged. "It just means that I have to stay until it's finished, maybe another semester at the most."

I decided to risk an interpretation that I had been pondering. "So if you are sick enough and you can't work, the whole issue of what happens next is put on hold. You don't go back to India, and you have a legitimate reason to stay with Ben for a little while longer. That sounds to me like a powerful incentive to stay ill. What do you think about

that? Do you think that what I have just said could describe a part of what's happening for you?"

"You mean that on the one hand I don't want to be ill because I feel bad, but I do want to be ill because it keeps me with Ben?"

I shrugged. "What do you think?"

"I love Ben very much. It's true that I would rather be with him sick than not at all."

"But at this time I hear that you don't want outright to say that you are not going back to India. You are not sure enough to go that far."

"I cannot say that right now, even though that is what I want to say to my family. I only want to say it if they will accept it. I don't want to say it if they tell me . . . if they tell me I can no longer be their daughter." She put her hand to her mouth, as if she would have preferred that those words not have been said.

"Ah . . . those are very high stakes indeed." I said, softly.

She nodded, keeping her hand to her lips.

In the following sessions Nayana and I continued to organize our efforts around a central theme: we went hunting for squelched and forbidden affects. We searched for those feelings that were hiding, cut off, reclusive, and shy. This process between us seemed revolutionary to her as we wondered aloud together, and I helped her to uncover and give words to parts of her emotional life that were merely waiting for a unconditionally supportive climate to become revealed. She reported that after our sessions she felt relieved and even happy for the rest of the day. Sometimes she felt better for the day or two after the sessions. She wanted more of that. But soon the sense of dread would creep up on her again, and she felt the foreboding oppression.

As the sessions progressed, I realized that Nayana's translation of emotion into symptoms was more accessible to scrutiny and analysis, less "deep structure," than most clients who tended to somatize their conflicts. Her feelings were not buried so deeply or inaccessibly as I had supposed. Nayana's complaints coincided with the impending crisis looming in her life, the time when she would be forced to choose between her life of freedom in the United States with Ben and her constrained but emotionally connected family life in the homeland where she felt more grounded in her culture and religion.

Nayana remarked that my interpretation about the "secondary gain"

as one part contributing to her physical symptoms made a lot of sense the more she thought of it. "I would do almost anything to stay with him," she said, "even make myself sick."

As we talked and she was able to address many of the emotions that had been waiting for a receptive and fertile relational soil, these emerging feelings increasingly took root in her own consciousness. She began to journal as well as to record her dreams. She brought both to the sessions, and they became richer as time passed. She was able to speak to her feelings of longing for her family while simultaneously expressing her resentment that her desired connection with them came at the price of the freedom she had learned to cherish. She spoke of her grief at the losses that were soon to come regardless of which way she chose, the path of self-determination, and choices in love, or the way of cooperation and affiliation and duty in family and marriage. As her inner world became more elaborated, so did our relationship. It felt more and more like we were partners. And always we could feel the looming crisis as the time for her expected return to India approached, the time by which she must make a decision that would change her life forever.

I must admit that I had to constantly monitor my own impulses to sway her to assert her independence. I sympathized with her desire to be free to create her own life, and I had to be careful to be empathic about the losses she would incur if she chose this route. I had to be careful to not see her father as overbearing and despotic and accept that, though Nayana experienced her father as stubborn, she also saw him as a model of devotion and caring. In her eyes he was doing what any good father would do from within his own cultural frame of reference.

One session Ben joined us. He was clearly getting nervous about what might happen as he began to understand just how deeply Nayana would be affected even if she did stay with him in the United States. I felt for him as he began to understand the dimensions of her predicament, began to admit to himself that there was a danger of losing her. Nayana's parents had written to say that they intended to come to her graduation and to help her get ready for the move back to India. They also wanted to visit her uncle and his family.

But Ben had a plan. He wanted to introduce Nayana's parents to his own so that their families could meet in the hope of easing the news that he and Nayana hoped to wed. We all discussed the possibilities,

and the lovers looked to me for suggestions about how they might manipulate the situation. Together we schemed. I felt a little like Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*, trying to circumvent impossible barriers or distill some potion that would get around the obstacles and free the young lovers to be together. But I had no potions, and Nayana and Ben had to reconcile themselves to the fact that the best they could do was to invite her parents to meet Ben and his family in the hope that this person-to-person contact might soften the strong resistance they expected to encounter. Nayana said she did not know if her parents would even agree to such a meeting. She pointed out that inviting them to meet Ben's family also meant revealing to her parents that she had defied their wishes and had pursued a relationship without anyone's knowledge or consent. She was ready to do this, but she was worried because such a disclosure indicted her uncle. His stewardship of his niece should have been such as to prevent her from such a deep connection. This could create some upset in the family and cause her uncle to become embarrassed and ashamed that he had not fulfilled his promise to appropriately watch over his niece. This was complicated!

One session, a few weeks later, Nayana reported this dream. "I was walking down my street at home in India. But on this street there was a wonderful temple, and my house was next to it, which is not true in real life. As I approached the end of the road, I saw a huge tornado coming down the center of the street from the other end. I watched in terror as it destroyed one house after another in a row. Then it would go to the other side of the street and destroy the buildings there. I thought, 'There is no way it will destroy my house; my house is too strong and God will protect it.' All the people were fleeing into the temple for safety. Then the tornado crossed the street and came to my house, and I was terrified because it started ripping my house to pieces. I was so afraid. Then it stopped. Then I saw with amazement that the temple was the only structure on the street left standing. I ran to where my house had been but all that remained was the foundation. I walked around inside where the rooms used to be. I was looking for my room, but I fell down a hole where the stairs had gone to the cellar. The dark cellar was now filled with water and debris, and it was swirling around and around. I cried out for help. I was being sucked down, and just as I thought 'I am going to drown!' the dream switched. I was suddenly riding in a car along a dirt road. I never looked to see who was the driver of

the car. The car turned off the main road and went up and up a long hill. It seemed like it went up forever, but it finally stopped just before the final crest of the hill. I got out of the car, and there was an old man with a shovel. I asked him, "What are you doing with that shovel?" and he smiled and nodded toward the crest of the hill. I walked up to the top, and I saw that I was on the highest mountain in a whole long range of mountains as far as I could see. I could see forever from that spot. I looked down at the ground, and I saw that a new ditch had been dug to put a new foundation for a house. I thought, "This house is meant for me! It had been prepared for me."

What a rich and multilayered dream! And how relevant to the circumstances of her life and therapy. I asked Nayana for her associations with the images and events. We didn't need to look far for the tornado; she was clear that all of the emotions that we had been evoking and exploring were like a huge storm. Her physical symptoms had lessened significantly, but she alternated between feeling relieved and being even more anxious and fragmented.

"And this storm, in coming down the center of the street, it's like it's tearing apart the two different sides of my life. Going from one side to the other."

Yes, the tornado had destroyed her personal house, a metaphor for the familiar structures of her inner life that were changing and being dismantled as her emotions became more accessible. But the temple, that larger and stronger structure of culture, faith, and belonging was left intact. The powerful metanarrative could not be buffeted by these storms. Did this mean that there was safety within for the dislodged aspects of her self-experience—all the people running for the dislodged? When she stumbled into the cellar of her old house, the forces that still threatened to suck her under were waiting.

"I thought, even though my house is destroyed, I will die in it. I was always afraid to go down into that basement as a little girl."

The vortex of water swirled with the debris of her anxieties, her fears, her conflicting emotions and loyalties, and threatened to drown her. But she managed to transform her crisis of being "sucked under" into a journey. In this journey she was not being sucked downward but was ascending higher and higher.

"The man standing there with the shovel, he seems to know that you are coming," I observed.

"Yes, he had prepared the site even before I got there, even before I knew I might build a house up there, you know."

"So what comes to mind when you think of that old man?" I was

thinking, "This is a part of you that anticipates what you need as you seek to build new houses in your inner life."

"You do," she said without hesitation in her distinctive Indian inflection. "You are always digging around," she chided, wagging her finger at me. "You are always preparing the site!"

Nayana had fully engaged in her therapy and was making huge strides. She had come to understand my role and what I could offer her as she looked for a new foundation for her life. I had my trusty shovel ready. But then something happened.

Two sessions later Nayana reported that she had been driving and had become lost in what should have been familiar terrain.

"I know the city. I don't understand it. It was as if everything looked like it should, but I did not know where I was or where to go. It was terrifying. I didn't know which way to turn. I asked someone how to get to a certain place, but they had never heard of that place so they didn't know either. I began to get panicky. I have never been this lost. I had to stop and call Ben, and he came and got me, and he couldn't understand why I would get lost in that place. I went to his house and cried and cried. You see what this therapy is doing to me! I cannot even remember where I am."

Her sense of dislocation made sense to me. Nayana's relief in our work not only evoked the sad, painful, and anxious aspects of her struggle but also left her feeling lost and disoriented.

As the time approached for her to either leave for India or announce to her parents her intention to marry Ben, she became more and more fragile. Then she had her first panic attack. It happened when she was shopping in a big department store.

"I was going to buy a gift for my mother, and a feeling came over me, and I knew I was in trouble." She had to sit on a bench and wait until her breathing and heart rate became normal again. But this event combined with her previous experience of becoming lost made her reluctant to leave the house.

The second attack happened a week later. I gave her a referral to a psychiatrist to consult about a medication to help control the attacks during this delicate phase of our work together. I didn't want her shutting

down her involvement with therapy under the assumption that "putting the lid back on" would prevent future attacks. Apparently the medication was not enough.

"So what was happening right before you had the attack?"
 "I was just driving, and I was reminding myself not to miss that exit or I couldn't turn around for a long time, and as I looked for it I thought, 'Did I already miss it?' and I began to get shaky and nervous, and then it happened, and I couldn't breathe. I pulled over, but it didn't get any better. I felt as if I would die. I just lay down on the seat and I thought, 'They will find me here dead!' Now I don't want to go anywhere without Ben."

"Does Ben take you everywhere now?"

"No, because he can't really come to my uncle's house. I have to drive myself. But now I'm afraid to leave the house."

"But you find yourself relying on him more when you are together?"
 "Yes, I do. That morning I received another letter from my father. He is making the arrangements for their trip and to prepare for me to come home. I think I want to be with Ben all of the time because it seems like . . . I don't know."

"It's happening, isn't it? The two paths are coming to a single intersection." She nodded. "What are you telling Ben about what you intend?"
 "Our hopes are in the meeting of our families. I have not said what will happen if it does not go well. I fear it will not. I think Ben assumes that even if it does not go well that I will stay here with him, but he knows better now that it is very hard, very hard, and he is uncertain what will happen. I don't know what I will do."

The following week, 10 days before her family was due to arrive from India, she was stricken with yet another panic attack.

"Breathe, Nayana, breathe!" She clasped my hand.
 Nayana was, as she said, "in the jaws of the tiger." Though she was now better able to articulate in our sessions what was happening in her inner world of thoughts and feelings, and though her physical symptoms had drastically reduced, her crisis was upon her.

Nayana brought Ben to her session two days before her parents were to arrive. They described how Ben's family was prepared to have Nayana's family to dinner. Nayana discussed how she would wait until halfway through their visit to broach the subject of her relationship

with Ben and her desire to marry him. For his part, Ben was prepared to move to India if that should be the only impediment to their being together.

Nayana invited me to attend a multicultural fair the following week where she would be dancing. Many of her family and friends in the Indian community of San Diego would be there. She said she would like to introduce me to her parents. Apparently they had been informed that Nayana was seeing me to, as she had described it to them, "help her cope with her medical complaints."

On the Saturday afternoon of the fair, Balboa Park was alive with activity, music, and people from all over the world. I wandered through the stalls and exhibits and past the demonstrations and performances. Mingling smells of spices floated on the air from tables filled with food from various countries. I sampled as many as I could before I went to the stage where Nayana was scheduled to begin. Most of the women, young and old, wore saris, the men wore plain white shirts and baggy trousers and sandals. All of them spoke with Nayana's voice and intonation. I was delighted to hear that the music would be live as a tabla drum began playing, a sitar began singing a melody, and the other instruments whose names I didn't know joined in. The dancers emerged from the tent and onto the low stage. Nayana was there. How graceful they were as they danced to the exotic sounds and rhythms. How beautiful the women's garments and movements were as their limbs undulated fluidly in unison. The audience applauded gratefully.

In the middle of the final dance, first one, then another, of the dancers moved from the group into the center and danced alone. Each improvised her own unique dance, apart from the others. Nayana moved forward, and as her head came up and her arms unfolded, she saw me sitting near the front of the stage. She smiled happily. She seemed perfectly at ease. ~~And~~ the impression that she seemed so in context, so "fit" with all of her surroundings in her beautiful garments with these people. I remembered our conversation about the metaphor of the dance, how it is both individual and collectively expressive, and I knew as we caught each other's eye that she remembered it too. She was in the center now, and she danced beautifully, improvising expressively, her arms, like reeds, bending gracefully, perfectly in tune with the half note scales and rhythms of the players. Then she moved back and merged

with the other dancers once again. I knew then what her decision would be if her parents did not approve of her marriage to Ben.

After the dance Nayana came over to me with her father and mother on each arm. She introduced us, and they were aglow with pride after their daughter's performance.

"Thank you very much," her father said sincerely, with his daughter's same crisp enunciation and intonation. He continued to hold my hand after our handshake, "Thank you very much for what you have done for our daughter. She has been having many troubles coping with her sickness." Nayana's mother nodded, "Yes, yes," she said, "you are good to her."

"You're very welcome," I said, taken with how sincere and gracious they were.

"Thank you, very much," he repeated. "In our country, we don't have so many like you . . . what do you say?" he asked his daughter.

"Counselors."

"Yes, not so many counselors; we have teachers . . . gurus who help the soul," he said, placing his hand gently on his heart while still holding my hand. "You are a good guru to our daughter."

"Your daughter is a wonderful person, and if I have helped her soul then I am very glad."

"Oh, yes," her mother nodded.

Nayana smiled, "Come on, Papa, let's get you something to eat or you will not be so pleasant soon. Thank you for coming, Dr. Cowan. It really means a lot to me."

"I wouldn't have missed it. Good luck," I said as they walked away. Nayana looked over her shoulder at me and nodded.

"How did it go?" I asked her as soon as we sat down. But looking at her, I knew how it went. Her eyes were puffy, and she looked exhausted. She sighed loudly, "It did not go too well."

"Tell me, tell me what happened," I said, not even bothering to strain my own impatience to get the story.

"I told my father and mother three days ago. I brought them to the park, away from my uncle's house. We had a picnic, and I told them that I was in love with the man that my uncle had told them about and that I wanted to marry him. My father was very angry. He couldn't yell because we were in a public place. He demanded to know everything, and I told him all about Ben and how I wanted to stay in the U.S. with

him, but that Ben was willing to move to India if he forbade me to stay. My mother was crying all of the time we were talking. He said that they should have never allowed me to come here, that it was all a big mistake. He demanded to know if I was a virgin." She paused.

"What did you tell him?" I sat utterly attentive.

"I told him not to ask me such questions. I told him it was unseemly for him to pry into such things. It was not something I wanted to discuss with him. I was suddenly very angry at his reaction! It surprised me so much that I could speak to my father in such a way as that. My heart was pounding and pounding so much. I thought, 'Oh no, I am going to have a panic attack!'"

"But you didn't have one, did you? The sword had finally fallen, and your own reaction surprised you. How did they react to your assertiveness?"

"My mother just cried. But my father said, 'You have been in this country for too long. You are becoming like an American girl.' I said, 'You have sent me here to become an American student, you have allowed me to come here and learn new things. I cannot help it if I have to change. If you lived here, you would change too.' I don't know how I said this to him."

"You really took him off guard! How did he react to your proposal for meeting Ben?"

"I did not tell him right away. We went back the house, and there he was yelling and yelling. Somehow, seeing him after all this time, he looks a little older . . . I don't know. I have gotten a little older too. Somehow, with all that yelling going on, I was not as frightened as I thought I would be. It was very unpleasant, and I cried and cried. My mother came to my room, and she was very kind. She brushed my hair and talked to me. She said that soon my father would calm down. The next day we were sitting at breakfast and I said, 'Ben's family has invited us all over for dinner, and I have accepted because to not accept would be rude.' My father became mad all over again. He yelled and yelled. He refused to go. He said we were going back home that day, but of course we could not. He got very mad at my uncle, but my uncle argued with him that it was not his fault, that it was his own willful daughter who had disobeyed."

"So the whole house was in an uproar!"

"Yes, even my little cousin came to me crying. She said, 'I'm sorry I told your secret.' She thought it was all her fault, you know. I told her no, that it was good that she told, that I didn't like that secret anyway. My mother said to my father, 'We must go to this dinner, otherwise

they will think we have no manners. Nayana has already committed us. She should not have, but she has, and there's an end to it."

"How were you through all of this?"

"I was so sad and angry. I felt like I would do what I want to do, and I don't care what happens. Then I would think of missing my family and my home, and I would just want to say to Papa, 'Don't be mad, I'm coming home.' Then I would cry again for Ben."

"You know, Nayana, what I'm *not* hearing you say is that you felt ashamed or guilty. You seem to be feeling grounded in yourself in a new way in relation to your family."

Nayana slowly nodded as I made this observation, and a little bit of a smile livened up her tired and exhausted face. "Yes, I hadn't thought of that. That's very true. I did not feel ashamed, even about telling my father to stay away from my sex life."

"So did you all go to the dinner?"

"Yes, we went."

"My God, and that was the first time they met Ben?"

"Yes, the first time. Ben's parents were very, very nice. My father does not know any other way than to be polite in return. Ben was very good and polite to my parents. We all talked of many things, and nobody talked about Ben and me being together. But at the end, when we were getting ready to leave, Mr. Zimmerman said to my father how he knew it must be very difficult to have found out that his daughter was attached to a boyfriend. He said that if he were my father he would feel the same way. He just wanted to say that they thought I was very special and that they should be very proud. Ben's father runs a company, and their house is very nice. It overlooks the ocean in Solana Beach. We were standing in the foyer, the door open and the ocean below. Ben's father said how much they think of me and that they hoped my parents wouldn't be too upset because Ben was very devoted to me."

"Wow! So that got to your father?"

"Well, no. I think it got more to my mother. And she and Mrs. Zimmerman seemed to like each other. On the ride home, I asked Papa,

"Does meeting Ben's family change your mind?" He said, 'Of course not, but they are very good people. Ben is a good boy.' He was less mad, and there was no more yelling in the house."

"Ah." So, she was still forced to choose. "So what now?" I asked gently.

She paused, and managed a weak smile. All her tears were used up. "Now I will go back to India with my family on the 8:30 flight the day after tomorrow."

"Ah." There was a long silence. "You don't feel that you can make your own decision?"

She looked up at me. "No, I *can* make my own decision. I *am* making my own decision," she said. "It sounds strange to you, I'm sure, but my family is too important. I want to marry Ben. I love him. But where I come from this is not everything. I could tell them that I will not go. But, in many ways, I want to go. I have been wanting to get back to my country where I belong."

I remembered how gracefully she danced across the stage in the park with the group of sari-wearing women, how relaxed and at home she seemed. The brief move to the center for her individual improvisation, then back to the choreographed dance with the others.

"You know, I think if my father had said, 'You are no longer my daughter,' that I would have stayed here. I would have defied him. But between all the yelling he said, 'You are my daughter, and you belong in India with your family that loves you and is proud of you.' And do you know what I said to him?"

"What?"

"I said, 'Papa, you are being a stubborn papa. But I have decided to come back home with you because I love you and my family too much to stay here. But you must do something for me. You must allow Ben to come to India to visit me. You must give him a chance too.' As I said this, I saw my mother, standing behind him, smile."

"Did he say yes?"

She shook her head sadly, and then she looked up at me. A smile played on her lips. "He didn't say yes, but he didn't say no either. He didn't answer at all; he just took my face in his hands and kissed me on the forehead."

CASE EIGHT DISCUSSION

Intersubjectivity and Culture

THE THERAPIST SEEKS to enter the personal world of the client and to understand and make explicit how that world is structured and expressed. When the therapist and client come from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they often possess a kind of "shorthand" of communication because their individual consciousness is shaped by

shared larger developmental influences and forces that surround them. They have in common recognizable cultural reference points. This similarity is not often the focus of awareness because it is latent and contextual. Of course, the therapist must be careful not to carelessly assume too much similarity. No culture is homogeneous, and the various influences of family, socioeconomic class, education, and so forth will play a significant role in forming the client's interpretive systems. It is challenging enough to explore the client's differently constructed subjective world when client and therapist share a cultural milieu. In this sense, *all* therapy is cross-cultural. But fundamental assumptions about "how the world is" diverge even further when client and therapist possess differently organized personal and cultural subjectivities. Then both participants are forced to examine what would ordinarily tend to be the invisible cultural "container" for their dialogue. The added differences in race and ethnicity, nationality, language, and values all must become available for scrutiny. The differing worlds of client and therapist can then come into contact and become explicit and open to change in the therapeutic conversation.

* Locke (1986) argues that therapists must attend to their own multicultural awareness by making sure they have engaged a number of issues in their own development. This begins with self-examination regarding one's own biases and prejudices and a good hard look at how these are shaped in the context of the culture from which they emerge. Often the therapist must make a concerted effort to recognize subtle configurations of racism, sexism, and classism that are latent in one's values and attitudes. The therapist must cultivate sensitivity to individual differences and the diversity that exists within cultural groups. Finally, the therapist-client encounter must reflect appropriate techniques and approaches that will help both participants reach across the gulf between differently organized self- and worldviews.

When Nayana entered therapy, I understood how her anxiety and physical symptoms were interrelated. There is universality in the various ways in which repressed powerful emotions and developmental longings become expressed as symptoms. It seemed clear to me that what Nayana needed was to break free of the constraints imposed on her. She needed to honor her legitimate but squelched feelings and ambitions by differentiating herself to a greater degree than she previously had been able to achieve. It was only later that I came to see how my own cultural biases initially *centralized* this liberation and set the agenda for its achievement.

* At first I resonated mostly to the part of her self-experience that fit with my values and cultural reference points. Partly this was because she and Ben were also focused on the new possibilities available to them as a couple. And what seductive possibilities they were: Her longing for romantic love; and her desire to realize her individual ambitions apart from others' expectations. When I saw Ben and Nayana together, these were impulses I was glad to endorse and support. My enthusiasm for these ambitions, however, made me somewhat less sensitive to her equally important and no less apparent desire to preserve her cultural identifications and safeguard her family unity. My bias was for independence before the costly sacrifices of affiliation, assertion of individual rights over compromise with family demands. But Nayana and I both quickly came to realize that she did not seek to reject one way of being in favor of another. Rather, she struggled to reconcile these conflicting forces, to balance them all within her so as not to entirely lose what was most valuable to her. Hers was the art of compromise, to find a new integration that would allow her to preserve not only the important aspects of herself that were becoming lost but as much as she could of what she most loved.

Interestingly, it was when Nayana appeared for her session dressed in her traditional Indian clothing that I became more alert to watch my own frames of reference. When she wore blue jeans, a T-shirt, and tennis shoes, I tended to see her through the lens of what she described as her "American can self." When I saw her in traditional dress, especially when I saw her dance, it seemed to evoke something very different from us both. Whereas before I identified with the part of Nayana that most represented her and Ben's ideas and objectives for their relationship, her flowing sari and tinkling bells invited me to see her in the context of her "Indian self," the self that connected to her family and faith. It was then easier for me to set aside my skepticism that she, or anyone, could be fulfilled while under such obligations as her family and cultural values demanded.

Significantly, it was this creative tension between our worldviews, I believe, that helped Nayana get the most from her therapy and arrive at a kind of resolution and integration of conflicting forces. As she struggled to accommodate her new and developing "American" identity, I tentatively represented one pole of that experience. At the same time I attempted to understand and be sensitive to the other pole of her Indian identity, one which she helped me value as it became revealed in our relationship. My initial bias that psychological health was represented by complete autonomy and independence gave way to honoring other

cherished realms of her experience. Nayana did not seek a resolution by choosing one pole over the other. Rather, she used our dialogue to illuminate the conflict itself. She was able to explore dimensions of her opposing emotions and conflicting impulses that had, until then, no legitimizing and clarifying interpersonal process in which to take shape. Once the sectioned-off and denied thoughts, fantasies, and feelings became more available to her, she was able to forge a new reconciliation of them with her deeply ingrained cultural and family imperatives. Nayana was able to find a way to *choose* her way of responding to their differing claims even though this involved sacrifice.

It is an important idea that differences in background ethnicity and culture can significantly contribute to the potentialities of the therapeutic dialogue rather than impede those opportunities. The notion that a therapist must share with the client the same race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality entirely ignores the basic premise of all therapy, which emphasizes the relationship. This premise is that elaborated empathy, that deep engagement with the client's inner world, reveals the various dimensions of that person's reality. We are always learning the culture of another person's life when we strive for this level of participation. The trick, when the client is from a different culture than the therapist, is to *centralize this part of the dialogue*, to explore how and where each person's subjective frames of reference intersect, or not, with the other's. Illumination is the goal, not uniformity, agreement, or even confirmation of existing internal structures. If I were in Nayana's shoes, I would not choose in the way that she did, and she knew this. But I value, respect, and honor the choice that she made. Through our work together, she was able to make that choice with deliberation and awareness, not unconsciously and because of anxiety-reducing capitulation. For those therapists whose worldview was formed in the milieu of the dominant or privileged culture, this means a deconstruction of attitudes and values in the service of self-awareness. Just as therapy challenges the client to try on new ways of perceiving, the therapist must also develop the ability to see the world through other lenses. Therapists not from the mainstream of the culture, who may, in fact, come from marginalized groups, are taxed with the same imperative, just in a different direction. They must also make a leap of imagination and empathy to read the blueprints, as it were, of another's culture and the self-architecture that it shapes and supports.

Therapists who have practiced with diverse populations have repeated experiences in their work of these cross-cultural illuminations. An incident that humorously highlights one such incident involved my

work with an expressive Hispanic lesbian. In the second month of therapy she observed that she could never talk to a "straight" therapist, man or woman, because the therapist wouldn't know "anything about where I was coming from." When I asked her why she presumed that I was gay, she advised me not to be elusive. She was certain I was because her friend, who had seen a gay therapist, had referred her to me. She also felt that I was able to understand her in a way that would be impossible for a straight man. After exploring her feelings about how my sexual orientation might influence my ability to help her, I revealed that I was, in fact, heterosexual, married, and had children. "Oh, my God," she exclaimed, "you're a *breeder* too!" Despite having a good laugh together, it took a few sessions for my client to get her "mind around" this "mix up." It later became apparent that her friend, in referring her to me, had not meant to imply that I was the same gay therapist he had been seeing. My client admitted that she felt our therapy, thus far, had gone well. At the end of therapy she disclosed that our therapeutic relationship had been the vehicle for her examining her own prejudices and fears. It provoked her to forge friendships with a number of persons who were not only "straight" but some of whom were straight men, a population that formerly she had completely avoided. Through our work, her own categories and biases, she said, had been shaken to the core.

Each culture and each family within that culture shapes rules for the expression of internal states and behavior. Nayana had learned early on in her life to censure any expression of emotion that might lead to discord. This censure was one significant contributing factor to her translocation of emotional conflict (and that conflict's attendant anxiety) into symptoms. Her learned constraint of affect was one aspect of Nayana's familial and cultural inheritance that I felt clashed with her personal disposition. It bordered on a kind of psychological oppression, and I felt comfortable challenging her to examine how it undermined her psychological cohesion.

This raises an interesting question with regard to cross-cultural therapy: In the therapist's efforts to respect the client's cultural background, must the therapist *ipso facto endorse* the client's internalized cultural mores? Does challenging cultural imperatives that also seem to cause the client distress reflect insensitivity on the part of the therapist? If so, does this not place the therapist in the role of an enforcer of the prevailing culture's standards, morality, and values? Is this the role the therapist wants to play?

My work with Nayana illustrates that while the therapist must honor the client's values, those values and attitudes must also be fair game for

examination and revision. When internalized cultural precepts and mores are subverting rather than promoting the legitimate growth of the person, then these, too, must be called into question. Being sensitive to cross-cultural issues is not a politically correct, namby-pamby assumption that all values, ideas, and cultural mores are good, that they are all equal and deserving of unthinking affirmation. To be multiculturally sensitive is not to affect a sham respect for superficial differences under the guise of appreciating diversity. Rather, being cross-culturally aware means to have attuned oneself to the social and developmental origins of another person's existence. It means to understand the interpretive frames of reference, emotions, thoughts, and conflicts that intertext contains. Only then can the therapist help the client to place his or her personal story within the larger metanarrative of the culture. Only then can the therapy process illuminate and examine that personal story and discover what promotes or subverts the client's potentialities. A therapist who is merely the representative of the prevailing cultural ethos would have, perhaps, counseled Rosa Parks to deal with her unresolved anger and sit at the back of the bus.

I prefer to think of my role of therapist as similar to that of the artist or poet. The artist, poet, and therapist must necessarily stand both within and outside of the culture so as to understand and reveal its dimensions. Perhaps this role contains something of that slightly disaffected observer, the odd fellow or witchdoctor who lives on the edge of the village, the one who is able to see the culture from a distance and not merely be its servant but to probe and question it. I feel queasy thinking that the therapist's job is to help a person who might be a casualty of the culture to "adapt" to that culture's demands so as to achieve the "normal." Instead, the reference points must emerge from within the client as to what will be preserved and what must be challenged or even discarded. In this sense therapy, like art, has the capacity to become a freedom creating, perhaps even subversive, activity in relation to the client's culture. The fundamental premise of therapy is to explore the possibility of new modes of being, and the therapist cannot ultimately predict where this will lead for the client. Nor can the therapist predict the implications of change for the people and institutions to which the client will return after leaving the consulting room.

Nayana's explorations led back to embracing her culture but with a different perspective as well as the self-efficacy to articulate that emerging creative power. Perhaps there is nothing more productively subversive than that. I challenged Nayana to question herself, to express previously forbidden affects and ideas, and through this she changed her

way of relating to others and to her cultural heritage. Nayana was no longer merely compliant with demands that she herself did not endorse. She no longer repressed her anger in the way that her previous "acculturation" demanded. She was able to both respect and confront her family and to protect the boundaries of her sexuality and feelings. Choosing to return to India and continue to negotiate for her relationship with Ben did not feel to her like subjugation but like a chosen compromise that aimed at preserving what she valued most, including her own feelings and wishes. She no longer needed to get sick to express herself but could use ideas and the courage of words.

As Nayana learned to accept and express her thoughts and feelings more freely and to censure herself less, she ultimately did not need to bind her anxiety by translating it into physical complaints. However, during the middle phase of therapy, when she had learned to better use language to identify and express her conflicts, her anxiety was much closer to the surface of her conscious life. During this phase she did not yet possess enough of a new "system" of meanings, a new consolidated self-image strong enough to contain this anxiety. Her panic attacks in this transitional period revealed that she was overwhelmed and fragmented. I must admit that during this period I questioned whether I had been a good steward of her growth and progress by allowing her upcoming "deadline" to rush the process. Ideally, new self-structures emerge gradually as the client internalizes aspects of the therapeutic relationship that provide strength and support and a container for emerging configurations of experience. Nayana, however, seemed to have her own schedule for growth. She had been poised and waiting for the right interpersonal environment, the right stage on which she could dance both parts of that graceful unfolding. One part of the dance was fixed, guided by the choreography of culture, history, and conformity. But that other part, that dance within the dance, broke free of established forms and came from her heart alone.