

# Two Poems

*Panna Naik*

## Debt

You and I  
two separate bodies  
but a single soul –  
a million efforts have been made  
to see this ideal come alive  
but somehow deep somewhere  
rings a perennial echo  
of separateness  
of each other's non-acceptance.

We are nothing else –  
just two pages of a book  
facing each other  
bound but separate  
just sewn together by predestined debts  
of mortal ties.

## Ceiling

Lying in bed  
staring at the ceiling  
I felt like reaching out:  
it seemed so close.

After an unsuccessful attempt,  
I put chair upon chair upon chair  
on my bed, stood atop this pyramid  
like an acrobat  
but still could not touch the surface  
that had seemed so close.

I cannot figure out  
whether the ceiling is much too high  
or my arms much too short.

*Translations from the Gujarati  
By the author and Saleem Peeradina*

A distinguished Gujarati poet, **Panna Naik** has been active on the Gujarati literary front for approximately four decades and has established herself as a major writer. She has written several volumes of pathbreaking poetry and short stories and has given a distinct voice to Indian women as evidenced by her worldwide following. Her poetry has been amply recognized and awarded by Gujarati literary establishments both in India and the United States. In addition, she has also done pioneering work in the teaching of the Gujarati language and taught second-generation students as adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Saleem Peeradina**, Associate Professor of English at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan, is the author of *First Offence* (1980), *Group Portrait* (1992), and *Mediations on Desire* (2003). He edited *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English* (1972), one of the earliest and most widely used texts in courses on South Asian literature. *The Ocean in My Yard*, Peeradina's prose memoir of growing up in Bombay, was published by Penguin Books in 2005. His poetry is represented in major anthologies of Indian, South Asian, and Asian American writing and appeared in the November 2009 issue of *WLT*.