

## TARA ATLURI

### Smells Like Curry

On the front page of the *Times* of India  
A little boy starves to death.

His hips and ribs protrude  
As the government colludes  
To build a Mickey D's  
And Ronald McDonald serves Vegetable oil  
To try to appease Auspicious Hindus  
Who clamour and reach for pre-packaged  
soy  
That never quite reaches the lips of that  
McFamished little boy

But wait with the farm land eroding  
And baby's tummy still bloating as  
America plants golden arches  
Over golden Raj temples  
Beef aint the only thing that stinks around  
here  
You see  
India used to be worshipped as Mother  
As Sacred cow with rolling flesh  
Loving arms and heavenly breast  
Now Revlon sells fair and lovely lightening  
cream  
And slimfast sold in supermarkets takes the  
place  
Of home-grown lentils and beans

And maybe she's born with it  
Maybe it's just a marketing scheme.

And where have we been  
Hippy tourist with rail thin frame?  
Dude I went to India  
And besides the diarrhea  
My life will never be the same  
The same  
The same  
We all look and sound the same  
Have identical faces stench and names  
Are you Radha Shamiksha Sangeeta Mo-  
ammed or Apu?  
No  
Oh so which Cab driver quickie mart  
proprietor job stealing

Doctor engineer illegal immigrant are you?  
And the little brown girl in the suburbs  
grown thin to escape wastes away far  
away

From pictures of Fat aunties  
What Hollywood says is a Paki, a coolie  
woman's only fate  
And Mommy and Daddy don't want little  
Susie Q and Johnny Smith  
To make fun of the Chapathi, Pumpadum  
and Daal  
They say looks Runny like war wounds and  
Smells like Shit

So they feed baby fast-food fried fritters  
prepared by x-cons and teen moms  
made from sirloin strips of diseased beef  
Plucked from a cow once worshipped as  
mother  
As we teach our daughters that life giving  
hips and just unnecessary blubber  
And India imports the Hindu Big Mac  
Cause the IMF says foreign investment  
encourages growth  
But fuck health care  
After all it's time to trim the fat

And brothers and sisters with skin as dark  
as upper caste women  
Starving themselves so lovely and fair  
Are pumping out designer sushi and curry  
for yuppie hotel chains  
That fund jails  
But wait  
When they've eaten all our food  
Then what happens to this Asian invasion?  
Funny how much they love roti and raw  
fish  
But watch mouths and borders shut  
When it's time for immigration.

And I wonder what would it be like if we  
broke bread and not backs through  
Minimum wage slave wage imprisoned  
kitchen labour  
Planted seeds not seeds of female insecurity  
Shared meals not fences with neighbours

Instead of Cosmo and refried beans  
Instead of size two two cents and hour two  
hundred dollar jeans  
We sold our children their souls in soul  
food grown from the earth  
Taught them to nourish their bodies from  
birth

Miss India became Miss Universe  
And her stick thin frame was envied by a  
nation  
Where middle class women diet to wear a  
crown like Queen Victoria  
But British raj and beauty regimes  
Never stopped mass starvation

And the little brown girl who learned to  
hide her colour  
All her backwards traditions behind the  
progress of exlax, dextrim and poor  
nutrition  
Wastes away,  
Body never comes to fruition  
like Ripe mangoes that fall full and fresh  
and fully formed  
off trees in India  
Where Hindus trade golden deities for  
golden McNuggets  
And wise Indian mamas grow forlorn  
She learns that Curry stinks and her round  
body is unhealthy  
As starving child on world vision commer-  
cial becomes a pinup girl  
For the wealthy socialite women ingesting  
American salad  
Sucking marrow from our bones  
And colour from our pallets  
And curry aint even an Indian word  
It's what the British made up  
Cause they couldn't make sense of all our  
spice  
The spice they stole  
Taking so much more  
taking spirit from our flesh  
And marrow from our bones

But somewhere in me there is a hunger that  
recalls a time before  
There is a deep unsatiable growl  
That can't be filled by all their cabbage  
soup and raw carrot sticks

Hollow name brands  
Oops silly rabbit ecoli is for kids

Somewhere in me there is a hunger so deep  
and wide  
It can only be filled by the bones and flesh  
of every fat auntie  
Of every rich sauce and spice  
That eats through their designer tofu  
designer shakes  
Designed to turn our taste buds  
Not to mention out booty's white

Somewhere in me there is the spice that  
some queen street hipster will market as  
Monday  
night Masala  
A taste of the exotic  
For an extra 9.95 you can have the concu-  
bine Kama Sutra special  
just to make it erotic  
Well Fuck those culture vultures  
Who would have me buy back my culture  
for twice the price  
Prepared by slave wagers from whom  
white masters still leach labour and spice  
Honey I don't need no imitation  
I am the sacred cow in her full incarnation  
Save your prison produced produce and  
curry served up like death row sentence

If you speak the right language and your  
skin's light enough  
We can make it extra mild  
No thank you your sloppy seconds are not  
required  
You see I am already Brown sugar  
Sweet enough to feed every child

*Tara Atluri is a Toronto-based spoken word performer. She wrote this piece a year ago while visiting her family in India. She uses poetry to connect with people and to connect small every-day struggles with larger systemic oppressions. She believes change will only happen when we start sharing our stories. Contact Tara at taralalturi@hotmail.com.*