

## Indian Movie, New Jersey

Not like the white filmstars, all rib  
and gaunt cheekbone, the Indian sex-goddess  
smiles plumply from behind a flowery  
branch. Below her brief red skirt, her thighs  
are satisfying-solid, redeeming  
as tree trunks. She swings her hips  
and the men-viewers whistle. The lover-hero  
dances in to a song, his lip-sync  
a little off, but no matter, we  
know the words already and sing along.  
It is safe here, the day  
golden and cool so no one sweats,  
roses on every bush and the Dal Lake  
clean again.

The sex-goddess switches  
to thickened English to emphasize  
a joke. We laugh and clap. Here  
we need not be embarrassed by words  
dropping like lead pellets into foreign ears.  
The flickering movie-light  
wipes from our faces years of America, sons  
who want mohawks and refuse to run  
the family store, daughters who dare  
on the sly.

When at the end the hero  
dies for his friend who also  
loves the sex-goddess and now can marry her,  
we weep, understanding. Even the men  
clear their throats to say, "What *gurbani*  
What *dosti*!" After, we mill around  
unwilling to leave, exchange greetings  
and good news: a new gold chain, a trip  
to India. We do not speak  
of motel raids, canceled permits, stones  
thrown through glass windows, daughters and sons  
raped by Doobusters.

In this dim foyer  
we can pull around us the faint, comforting smell

of incense and *pakoras*, can arrange  
our children's marriages with hometown boys and girls,  
open a franchise, win a million  
in the mail. We can retire  
in India, a yellow two-storied house  
with wrought-iron gates, our own  
Ambassador car. Or at least  
move to a rich white suburb, Summerfield  
or Fort Lee, with neighbors that will  
talk to us. Here while the film-songs still echo  
in the corridors and restrooms, we can trust  
in movie truths: sacrifice, success, love and luck,  
the America that was supposed to be.

*gurbani*: sacrifice

*dosti*: friendship

Doobusters: growing anti-Indian gangs in New Jersey

*pakoras*: fried appetizers

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