

## A Hindu in Catholic School

I don't believe in America,  
the land where my parents talk about Holi  
when the only colors I've ever felt  
are my brown skin in a white polo.  
The flash of the camera hit me like a sword,  
a photo that celebrated incense singing my nose hairs  
and choirs singing against my ears  
like the hard-hitting priest in a guru's robes,  
trying to blind me, crying  
god is with us—  
if only you sense him in nothing.  
If only you weren't so Indian.  
When I gathered with the school in black-and-white uniform,  
I thought I was at a feast with pilgrims.  
They wanted me to eat flesh. I said I don't eat beef,  
my parents don't eat meat. Please, I don't want to drink blood.  
At lunch, I clutched a veggie patty, did not eat it  
until I was in my mother's car, the Infiniti logo sparkling  
more than the framed creature—  
sorry, god—high up on the dashboard.  
She watched me from an ocean's length  
and could not see that I don't like Diwali.  
The cops always think we are trying to blow up the nation.  
They remind me of the nuns who never knew:  
when they greeted my parents,  
their joint hands formed a globe  
with me inside, a heathen in the New World.

*Written by Ad Gandhi  
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