

Masala Chai Tea Latte

Carina Rawal

I stand in Starbucks, waiting impatiently for my drink
The one that used to be my mother's favourite too
"I'll have a tall chai latte, please."
"A chai tea latte?" the white barista confirms
I nod. I don't bother to tell her that chai means tea
So, calling it a chai tea latte is redundant

My friend asks to try my drink
She won't like it, but I let her try it any way
She is from Delhi
She has real masala chai with her breakfast
Makes it the way her mum made it
The way her Nani made it

When people ask me where I'm from, I say, "Canada"
When they ask where I'm really from, I say, "Canada"
Not because it's true, which it is; I was born here
And not because I'm offended, which I am
I say that I am from Canada
Because I do not feel Indian enough

My skin is brown
But I dress white, I speak white
I listen to white music and watch white movies
And I read white books; I am studying English after all
My aunties and uncles never forget to remind me
I am not Indian enough

But my skin is brown
I am acutely aware of the fact
That I am the only person of colour at my workplace
The other day, my co-worker said, “eating with your hands is gross”
I wonder if she knows most Indian food is eaten with your hands
Suddenly, I remember all the times I’ve brought roti to work

Eaten with my hands in the lunch room
She always says my food smells good
Does she think I’m gross for eating with my hands?
Why do I care if she thinks I’m gross?
What does she eat a sandwich with, anyway?
A fork and knife?

My mother was not a traditional Indian woman
She was the breadwinner for our family
But she could not make masala chai
So, we frequented Starbucks together
And gossiped in broken Punjabi
Both here and there



Break Time by Belle Villar