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HANA SHAFI

BAD BROWN GIRL

i can barely speak in my mother tongues stutter
my accent is bad
i hate jalebi
but i like aloo samosa
i'm a bad brown
girl i didn't join the
SAA or the ISA
i just didn't know
whether i was desi or irani
i said turmeric
before i said haldi
i go to white-people karaoke bars
i sang Nickelback with a tattooed man
i'm a bad brown girl
my family is from nowhere
and everywhere i'm not sure
i understand the meaning of the word
diaspora
but everyone keeps saying it
i'm a bad brown
girl i love my
culture
i hate my culture
i think my children one day
could be half white i worry
they'll never understand mama's life i worry
they'll understand completely
i'm a bad brown girl
i stopped attending Eid functions
i hear the community talk
do they like me?
do i like them?
i'm a bad brown girl
i rewatch Devdas with subtitles
i listen to qawwali but i haven't read
namaz in ages
goddammit i love everything
with pumpkin in it

i'm a bad brown girl
i worry i don't make enough
"brown girl art,"
but i'm a brown girl making art
isn't that enough?
i'm a bad brown
girl i could not be
your faux nostalgia of
the lost sounds of churiya
the winds whistling through the badghir i am
not sorry to be as i am
what the days made me
how the earth shaped me
neither a perfect sculpture
of the Orient nor the
postcard
on the success of assimilation