

all encompassing.

white people and church steeples  
have consumed and crowded  
my life.  
since my conception (inception)!  
i have envied their complexion —  
their perception of life:  
so easy it seemed (to me)  
effortless and without need  
for correction!

brown people and cursed reflections  
had been suppressed and rejected!  
i was to be *fair & lovely* —  
a smart girl who studied...  
i wouldn't touch the books or  
stare at the mirror without  
guilt and terror—

who was this brown clown  
aimlessly dissociating in a  
big (small) southern town?  
i wore a gown of frowns:  
— a name mispronounced —  
my identity (religion and race)  
beaten and broken down!

a poet (a letdown), not a  
scientist or lawyer —  
a survivor of words and fists  
and of men who *persist!*  
dismissed from both norms  
here i write (*my own form!*)

i have broken the brown mold  
and have thrown out the white one!  
i have become who i am  
because i never succumbed  
to the suffocating whiteness  
or to the unforgiving brownness!

my color is a beautiful and  
rich caramel toffee —

my body is my temple:  
now it accepts me inside  
(past places i was denied)  
i am whole and purified!

i stand before myself:  
a justified soul with no remorse!  
Hayagriva<sup>1</sup>  
— (my own white horse) —  
i walk with no shame  
(but with suffering's scars).

i am brown, hindu,  
and a southerner, *too*.

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<sup>1</sup> An avatar of Vishnu who is half human with a white horse's head. He symbolizes bliss and knowledge.