

Welcome to Taj Mahal, America: Asian-run motels
and 7-11's, curry take-outs, and everyone knows when

you dial tech support, they connect you to India. I've seen
blond women wear bindis, white men with Henna tattoos.

Diplomats' wives getting their nose pierced on a Tuesday
morning. Bombay sparks trends in the west, where you can

buy little elephant statues for your shelves, get frozen masala
meals at Trader Joe's. I see it happen all week long. People

get high on Bollywood songs, hookah bong, novels about Sati.
Gurus talk karma and dharma and light a little incense: sex

can be yoga with your clothes off. Hippies, brown or white,
eat mangoes and paint monsoon murals, listening to Ravi

Shankar. A little sitar makes third world America drunker.
Rub some sesame oil on your skin before you log on to match

dot com, fix a computer-arranged marriage to someone named
Epicurean. Speaking of which, South Asian weddings last too

long: five days with five thousand guests flailing their arms
in the air like they're playing rugby. Tablas on the knees

of aunties. In Los Angeles or New York, you can't always count
on a virgin bride. She may carry a bottle of tequila she likes to hide

in the folds of her sari. Whether Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, every
knot's a risk. Nephews and Uncles laugh out the ears, shout cheers.

Five cell phones per samosa. Close your eyes: you'll see a school
boy pissing in the Ganges, hear okra-scented men shouting, *Taxi!*

Movies hollywoodize the slumdogs, film shiny fabric stalls—
mosques and temples selling blessings, taking bribes. Cattle-heavy

roads straddling rickshaws, Honda Civics. Neighborhood kids
playing cricket. Taj Mahal, America: on a map it may not exist.

But last night I dreamt I was a professor sitting in some
hole-in-the-wall office, smoking shisha, writing a book

on the hegemonic discourse of diasporic communities in America.
Some would call it curious. Some would call it kismet.

taj mahal, america



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