

South Asian Art Exhibit, Metropolitan Museum of Art

hamar jigarwa se bhi, uu saans lutal
hamar suratiya okar aina mein terdha

My mother walks to the Ganesh statue, drawn
to its bronze, an image once stolen, now in the public

domain. Once he perched in Tamil Nadu. Once he sat
on Mount Meru. Once he was tin and copper. Once

my mother's mother knew her real name before
planters heated her and poured her into sand.

Return me to the desh, cross the sea, to our river?
Where do Pargana village's wheat fields green? Who knows—

Colonization still erases our memories.
Ma sings shards of prayer—*siri guru charan*—

to gods broken from temples, dancing gods cut down
at the feet, mounted uptown on 86th street.

*They even steal the breath from our throats;
in their mirror our faces warped.*

Massacre Ballad

in memoriam of August 5th, 2012 and of Paramjit Kaur, Satwant Singh Kaleka, Prakash Singh, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, and Suveg Singh

*suraj bhail chanda, bhor bhail kara;
amrika me aayieke ham bhaili sikara*

I didn't hide, but wove cowries into
my beard. My brother retreated to his Bible;

smearing his skin in paint and cried, *We're not like them.*
My sister wept for the return of the Queen,

swearing Her Majesty still watches after
her overseas darkies. My father was growing

linen and cotton fibers to weave a spangled
banner as his shroud. My mother clove her tongue,

misspoke her name and shut her guru's door tight
against her own child. She returned to starching

stained undershirts that absorb the toil
of who the newscasters called *real* Americans.

*The sun is moon-colored, the dawn pitch,
coming to America we have become prey.*

Both poems originally published in *Cutlish* (Four Way Books 2021)