

Desi

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Reflections from the author

This written piece is about an American-born Indian girl whose parents emigrated from India. Each stanza refers to a certain event or feeling the girl experiences. She struggles to grow up between the conflicting American and Indian cultures and must come to terms with her identity. She is not necessarily embarrassed by her Indian culture, but finds it difficult to adhere to a culture that may not accept her based on the color of her skin.

The main inspirations are from the lives of my friends, myself, and Jhumpa Lahiri's 2003 novel *The Namesake*. *The Namesake* is a fictional story that explores the life of Gogol, an American-born boy with Indian parents, and his struggle growing up between the conflicting American and Indian cultures. Due to the parallels between my friends' lives, my life, and *The Namesake*, I am confident this is an accurate depiction of the experiences of Indian kids who grow up in America.

"How do you say 'Hi' in Indian?"

Someone always wants to know

She talks back to her parents in English

Her own mother tongue is her foe

Racing through Alex, Bailey, Casey, Drew

A speed bump at a Leah, Geoffrey, Kirsten

Pulled the brakes, but a train wreck at her name

Out of the ruins her shy voice corrects it again

Most kids have burgers, pizza, or hot dogs

But for lunch she gets twenty questions

“What’s it called?” “Is it spicy?” “Is it made of rice?”

Don’t bring that again is the learned lesson

None of her uncles nor aunts are related

Babysitting, hand-me-downs, food for free

Replacing a bloodline from eight thousand miles away

Seeds of trust grow into a new family tree

Her skin like the dirt, she feels stepped on

Mind soiled from the insult received

No matter what she does or what she feels

“American” isn’t how she’ll be perceived