

KAVYA MAKAM

MEN OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Let the men serve;
Let the women sit on their asses.
Let the boys pour water into empty glasses
While the ladies sit at the table talking.
Push the men inside at dusk;
Let the women dance in the streets now.
Let the sunset set fire to their locks
Which they now wear loose.
Let the old women drag cigarettes on the street corner
And ogle the school boys who walk by.
Let the aunties play poker in the park past dark
While husbands sit at home
Wringing their hands, staring at the clock, cooking dinner.
You are upset, are you?
You are afraid?
Of what?
Smear menstrual blood near the pooja room.
Take rice in the left hand.
Women sit on the right side of the temple
Embrace a man in front of Krishna.
Men clutch their belongings close to their bodies
As they board the bus, talk in hushed tones.
A matchmaker
Evaluates an eldest son
Turns his head from side to side.
He is too dark
Who will marry him?
Does he have any redeeming qualities?
Can he cook? Clean? Raise children?
There might be hope yet.
Help him get dressed, pinch his side, tell him he is fat.
Let the women sit with a wide stance
Let her call the cab without fear
Let her eat beef
Call herself a hindu
And step into the temple left foot first.