

Home

Childhood was a home,
the first one, where mornings were
as pungent as the juice of crushed
tulsi leaves and dripping bay leaves
pinched from sauteed spices,
and as piquant as cilantro floating in daal
like lotus leaves lounging in a pond;
where afternoons steamed
like slashed olives and tiny mango strips
drying in an open courtyard
like sun-baked leathery petals;
where rooms on all sides were
playschools yielding flickering voices
babbling lessons or nursery rhymes,
and jingling like a string of bells
on a little dancer's ankles;
where evenings wafted
and spread like resin-incense
to a few steps rising like a podium
and stopped at a green door,
for a three-year-old daughter,
draping her frock in mother's chador
and dragging father's shoes with tiny feet,
almost always interpreted home
as the green door, and the evening as
mother's awareness of the coming home of father.

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