

"people often ask me *was it hard to grow up in india*"

i remember big vats of soup steaming on delhi streets at night time six years old handing out styrofoam bowls to long lines of poorly clothed people waiting to be fed and then driving through mcdonald's afterwards i remember visiting a girl and her mother in a one-room clay house they built themselves with no glass in the windows the room smaller than my bedroom where they fed us and then the girl slept over in our house she slept in the big soft bed and didn't move all night i remember being amazed a person could sleep so deeply i remember in the morning she tried to steal my pink Barbie cell phone she had never had anything like it before and i yelled at her i was not generous i was not kind i remember visiting a house with the ceiling fan so low my dad cut his finger by gesturing too high it was

one room a whole family sleeping on one bed sharing with us chapatis and dal and everything they had of course there are other things i remember like white sand beaches and pink palaces *rangali* delicately laid on our doorstep water fights on *holi* and how we lined our balcony with candles on *diwali* and the whole city glowed yellow i remember i slept under mosquito nets and rode an air-conditioned bus to school my school was at a YMCA it had a pool and we had a maid i had a home i had a bed i was loved people often ask me *was it hard to grow up in india* and my answer is no it was not hard but i was born selfish and clinging they ask *was it hard to grow up in india* it's only now awash with shame and self-pity i can even write this poem *was it hard to grow up in india* yes forgive me for neglecting the poverty at the foot of my doorstep forgive my fist clenched around my pink Barbie cell phone