

Swathes

You're bound for America at the age of 18,
with the hope that you can make
something of yourself,
a firecracker lying in wait.

The flight attendant passes by and hands you a packaged burger;
The processed mass that you attempt to choke down is
your first taste of America.

(hell, it's your first taste of beef)

You're greeted with smiles upon arrival –
Are these people trying to sell you something?
Teeth? Is this aggression?
What have I done to warrant this behavior?
You quickly learn that smiling at strangers is just an "American thing."

Similar displays of intended goodwill descend upon you,
which, honestly, makes you want to

hide.

You search out
other Indian students, letting their familiarity
roll
over
you
and
wrap
you
in
what you realize is your attempt at finding comfort.

Even though you grew up speaking
the same language as the one that the people that surround you speak,
you've never felt so much like a toddler
tripping through the alphabet.

The homesickness starts to ebb away as you toss yourself in your studies
and build bonds with others.

You fight your way into the workforce,
finding a place for yourself
in the fabric of this country.

And at some point it hits you.
More than half of your life has been spent in America.
You're...technically an American.
Hm.

It takes 9 years routing your way through student visas, work visas, and a green card,
but finally,
you become a citizen.

The day you are fully folded into this country's embrace
is a proud day.

You've made it.

