

Maelstrom

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I once arrived on these shores,
and found a land ruled by kings-
great shipmen who braved the seven seas,
the ancient tigers of Kadaram!
I returned as exiles,
to labour the lands we once conquered, for it still
glimmered in our eyes - oh
suvarnabhumi!

In the stampede of time,
I got trampled upon.
Maliced as keling to which
I don't answer,
thambi and anneh a mere naysaying, your love
for appalams as
facetious as the head shakes you mimic.
I grow proud of the hairs that curl on my head, straighten down my chest
and spike out from my groin, against
the varied dark complexions you seem to mock yet grow amazed
by its lustre.

Taking comfort in the legacies of my kings in a faraway land
that I so easily gave away, flexing industry on
burdened muscles and calloused hands,
I now stand
suffocated, muffled, blinded and bound to the dark foliage
of the invisible Kalinga,
I now stand
vilified as the *pendatang*, *penyangak*, and *kafir*, even as
beef eating outcasts and coolies whose loin clothes your

grandfathers peeped upon!

We who thrust the gravel on your liberty paths - fuelled by
arrack and glistening sweat,
holding onto our darkening gratitude with the pungency of tar,
grinding our marble white teeth and entwining long
meaty limbs for good tidings,
we who bled white gold from trees you hadn't named,
and gave your children the worth of this world, though
the eellam a shadowy play of terror,
Kollywood, you deafened to the beating of Bollywood,
our spread of banana leaf rice you preferred over adulterated
mamaks, even naming
our athirasams after the earlobes of an unknown species,
it is you who have become corrupted like rancid coconut hair-oil, bitten
by every serpent you so fondly forfeited over us.

When the afterlife goddess intoxicates me,
I will break free,
the binding chains will one day rust,
I will fight,
when diplomacy blurs into
patriotic equality, no longer am I
enslaved by gratitude for the blue card, but by the
bond of brotherhood.