

## **A Witch is but an Indian Mother in a Kitchen**

Ashish Kumar Singh

That's her space. Her territory.  
It's her inheritance, her share of the world.

Nothing here dares to move, even the air  
Holds itself still. I see her, from behind the door,

As she sits, squatting on the ground,  
The big black cauldron on fire, woods beneath

Crackling, flames lapping, her long brown hands  
(Always yellow with mustard)

Moving all over the little colorful jars  
Of condiments. The space smells

Of things—pepper, mint, lime, chilli and other  
Earthy knick-knacks.

When she's out, she seems  
Oddly out of place—like a fox on a road.

One can witness a symposium  
Of previous generations, of all the apparitions,

The matriarchs, the compatriots of this tiny  
Alcove, all those who ruled this very place, letting

Her know, among clatter of metals, the secrets  
Of Breaking the husbands, of keeping the children

Tamed. One can hear, the air so still,  
Getting filled with laughter, with conspiracy.

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