Jay Shenoy

2/7/16

A.P. English Language and Composition

Dr. Lee

**The Forbidden Food**

My mother is infatuated with the color green. Each visit to the local Asian supermarket is a new adventure for her, in which she meanders the aisles and peruses through row after row of viridescent vegetables. She prefers legumes not only of the exotic variety, but also those with bizarre names: such detestable creations as “broccoli rabe” and “romanesco” have become staples of our family’s diet. When I was young, my mother and I used to leave the grocery store with a new vegetable each trip.

On a given night, like an impassioned scientist working feverishly in her laboratory, my mother whips her leguminous treasures into a formidable potpourri whose earthy, inviting aroma bears little indication of its acerbic taste. My father, my sister, and I, who have served as my mother’s experimental subjects for the past few years, are not deceived by the dish’s alluring fragrance.

“Guys, you *must* try this *karela masala sabzi*,” she implores, noting our reluctant expressions. “It’s fresh, all natural, and green. It’s the healthiest thing you’ll ever eat!”

“Just because it’s green and organic doesn’t mean it’s healthy,” I retort. “Take marijuana, for instance.”

In elementary school, my mother often packed me these delicacies for lunch. Surrounded by kids who proudly displayed their “Lunchables” boxes at the lunch table, I felt oddly out of place in my environs. When I informed my friends about what I was eating (referring to the food’s Indian name, of course), they remained perplexed. My *lauki chana dal*, in its glass container, appeared incongruous in the cafeteria setting, which was laden with industrial, sleek-looking Lunchables boxes.

I convinced my mother to buy these Lunchables in the second grade, apprising her of the social benefits that such a purchase would entail.

“Ooh, can we get that one?” I asked, gesturing excitedly at one of the boxes on the rack in Stop & Shop.

“Look at all these chemicals,” my mother said, reproachfully examining the nutrition label of one of the boxes. “Sodium diacetate, sodium ascorbate, potassium chloride-”

“You don’t even know what those are!”

“Yes, but wouldn’t you want to know exactly what’s in your food?”

I appreciated the way in which those yellow boxes were arranged upon the supermarket shelves in flawless, linear homogeneity, differing neither in appearance nor in size. In a sense, I wanted to be the same; I wished to exist in perfect unity with my classmates, and I thought that such a trifling act as eating Lunchables would help me assimilate to American society.

However, I inevitably purchased the meatless variety of Lunchables since all the other boxes contained either beef or ham. As an Indian,

Outline:

* Mother is in love with the color green.
* Potpourri: “so healthy”
* Lunch table in the third grade: bitterness of karela; “so many chemicals” “no beef”; Lunchables (cheese not beef): want to be an American
* No more than 15 South Asians in our town

What I perceived as \_ was in fact \_.

And while I will never subject my children to the likes of *karela sabzi*, I will certainly offer them more palatable items of the Indian cuisine.