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## Before the Barbeque

*Arunesh Babu*, Dalit writer/activist, M.A. in English Literature, Pondicherry University,  
Pondicherry, India.

I see my people's faces in the flames,  
Maybe for once happy without fear,  
After years of burning in it,  
We, today, cook to celebrate!

Under the rays of disco lights,  
Travelling across the dense night sky,  
We stood stagnant breaking twigs,  
Adding fuel to fight tonight!

With no promises nor oracles,  
For tomorrows and days after,  
We group and sing and laugh,  
Knowing not what the dawn awaits.

We kill not our women, but poor birds,  
Not for honour, but for the little organ,  
Groaning and moaning due to hunger,  
For years and years, to be heard today.

Guilty, I am to write verses,  
When my brothers work with fire.  
Nearing the stove, I stood hurt,  
Hurting my eyes and my pride.



With raw meat boiling in the pot,  
Tempted I, did starve a lot,  
Waiting waiting for fire to rest  
To eat before I lost my chance.

Wood, red and hot, half buried I see,  
In the grounds filled with gossips,  
Aside the liquor of working men,  
Consoling the daylight sufferings.

I don't know how they laugh,  
Swearing and sharing their politics,  
Being a obscure representative  
Of unrepresented voices together.

Now, my tittle resists me to share  
Whatever I wish to vent right away,  
Yet, I try before I fall by my people,  
To tell my tales to distant brothers.

**End Note:**

These lines were penned by Hsenura, as he saw his fellow student organization members preparing a feast for themselves before they get into a mass protest in the campus. They did not see any expulsion or suspension coming. They were living the moment, but with hopes for their people, speaking Rebellion and resistance stories and experiences. The inability to help them cook is also reflected alongside hunger in this poem.