

The Seamstress And The Global Garment

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Brides of Dust

There are rooms in Pakistan which avoid me, old stone houses
carved from exile. At night the stone transforms
and women's voices cry, their smooth skin blends
into sandstone tomb.

She wears red chillies in her hair,
walks thirty miles for water and returns
to find her children turned to dust.
The rain is an offering she has not received.
Death find places to talk to her. Her mother's songs
are her grandmother's dreams, her daughter's nightmares.

There are flames and silence in these houses.
The sandstone women are married
to death. An old woman painted my hands
like a virgin bride while I searched her eyes for a flicker of belonging.

Three nights and two cultures I wandered
in desert lands, dreaming of sandstone women in village
houses, digging for roots, tumeric and
religion. Her head is sprinkled with water,
cleansing she passes prasaed to her daughter,
two hands, blessing. In the mirrors
of her kameez she watches
the eyes of sandstone women narrow and close.

She remembers
her mother never cut her hair,
she remembers
it coarse and grey. She remembers the eyes
of sandstone women. She remembers three cultures,
two nights, that roots make a difference. In her first language
she learns to say mother, in her second home. She remembers
sandstone women. In her dreams she goes home with them.

The boundaries of land shatter memory,
there is no map to lead my family
home. They travel to voices
and words become death. The colour of my roots
makes me shout. I am located in earth.
my feet have no voice. I am located in sound. I walk into language.

There are marriage rooms
in this story. She has more language
than difference. She speaks root words,
looks for rivers in the desert,
knows places to die with sandstone women. Closes her eyes.

kali mirchi

kali mirchi predicts the fall of nations
pursuing a palatable future
in the Malabar mangroves

her emerging flower spike
ripening red climbing the coffee crop
blackened skin abraded to white
to pepper a jar of Pataks

hurry curry

rain heralds her arrival
she pours herself into the land
in the post office she discovers *Pataks Original Mild Curry Paste* and begins blending
the ready-made with the soon to be made
her grandmother's words sizzling you can't make a curry in a hurry

she lowers the heat and adds the paste in a hurry
imperialism gives rise to the recipe's arrival
resisting the way curry had to be made
dissension – the right to her roots on the mother-land
the Kala Pani and Sound of Skye blending
could she put haggis in a curry

could she resist her birthright of curry
would her grandmother's ghost know it was with haste and a hurry
of blending
that this soil felt her arrival
in the mountains and vales of this land
until in the earth's womb a pact was made

and on her table acceptable ready-made?
lowering the tone with her curry
giving her tolerability in this land
if *Tescos* could do it in a hurry
globalised food had its arrival
aisles of ready-meals blending

chicken and tikka masala blending
allegiances made
departure and arrival
of the colonial curry
judgments made in a hurry
about who can migrate to the land

harvest the land
through blending
and mixing in a hurry
until the recipe is made
a bastardised curry
makes its arrival

blending promises made
we land a new kind of curry
hurry to await its arrival

The Sky Will Be Closing In 30 Minutes

Can all clouds please collect their small fluffy ones from the Sky Lark crèche.

Clouds must keep their misty outlines with them at all times, unattended wisps of milky air will be treated as suspect and destroyed by Mr Blue, head of Sky High Security Services.

Lavish yourself in To The Skies:
The largest supplier of clouds to be seen above the line of sight.

Will a member of Sky Security please report to Mr Blue immediately.
Will a member of Sky Security please report to Mr Blue immediately.

Bargain-Cloud-Day:
Three clouds for the price of two on rainy Mondays.

The Sky's The Limit:
The biggest mass of apparent canopy over our heads in the Universe.
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.
Sky: for all your weather needs.

Will a member of Sky Security please report to Mr Blue immediately.
Will a member of Sky Security please report to Mr Blue immediately.

The Sky will be closing in 5 minutes.
Please make your way to your nearest exit.

Glossary – Punjabi

Prasaed – a blessed food

Dhaniya - corriander

Haldi - tumeric

Jeera - cumin

Mirch - chilli

Masala – spice

Kali mirchi - black pepper

Kala pani – black water, crossing of Indians to the UK

Tikka masala - A marinade made from various aromatic spices

Bindi - a forehead decoration

Khana – food

Kameez – Indian blouse

Pani - water

Atta - flour

Noida - the New Okhla Industrial Development Area, India

Namak - salt

Kheema - minced lamb curry

Salwaar – loose trousers

Khush - gay