

# Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities

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## Restor(ation)

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# Restor(ation)

By: Dilreet Dhaliwal

you fed  
me with your  
smooth,  
wrinkled  
hands  
the purest  
magic  
universes are  
woven out of-  
*love*  
- to *Naniji*

magic like *Naniji's*  
can light even  
the darkest  
of places.  
- divine

do the people  
who sit  
in our moments of  
pain-  
then leave.  
do they  
permanently  
swim. laugh.  
live.  
in the deep sea  
of our  
brains?

when i die  
i will live  
in the sub conscious  
of the universe.  
because i know  
my compassion  
will live with souls.  
creating  
entire new worlds.  
i'll swim there. write  
poetry. sing.  
i'll finally be free.

*“Every act of sharing is an act of translation, an act that contains the possibility of becoming radically vulnerable” -Richa Nagar: writer, alliance worker, weaver, and teacher*

i'm a displaced soul. surrounded by six feet of snow.  
i dream of a village. where love isn't just nuclear. it's from the kin. of the many hands that raise beautiful spirits. lips that kiss fat cheeks. where my little hands pick up soil, dirt. clung onto my Nanaji's back, crying out to go eat eggs. where the water never stopped flowing. punjab.

i cry. i want to find them, next to the water. where they'll be telling stories. i want to munch on the punjabiness. telling them i was gone for a while, but i'm back now. mom's always telling me they say 'reeti left. but she never came back.' no, my spirits still there, roaming your house, begging to be reunited with my body. i feel it jerking. tugging. at me from this dorm. but the center of capitalism is here and over there isn't the same, anymore. my *being* hurts.

*liberation*  
in  
*collaboration.*

yes.  
*liberation.*  
but on my own terms.

i cry. i become  
the sea you  
live in.  
it is  
the reminder  
of how much  
i  
cherish  
you -  
still.

the motherland's been sucked dry. the british used the five rivers and the fertile soil, and turned it into money for themselves. the money they used to finance more bloodshed. the exploitation never stopped. it's the greed of corporations and puppet leaders replacing the richness with heroin.

our worth-  
defined by the  
proximity to whiteness  
and protestantism

- early British colonization, Punjab

they act like countries choose to be underdeveloped. that people choose to live in  
poverty. like we're just so subhuman we can't help ourselves. not that they shoved us so  
deep into their pockets, they won't let us out.

let it be clear.  
the only thing that  
separates me  
from them is  
opportunity.

their english  
is broken  
but now-  
after four years  
in college-  
my Punjabi  
is breaking  
too

- lost

i wrote and wrote for you  
until my *dil*  
broke thousands of times.

you named me *dilreet*.

coming to peace  
with  
realities at war with  
each other.  
i'm a warzone.  
- borderlands

the silk,  
smell of sweet tea.  
sugar on your tongue  
the *love*.  
of every moment of  
*understanding*

how can i ever  
*thank you*  
enough?  
- Ma, Daddy

eya and me.  
me and eya.  
cradling the soft  
blanket with the red  
roses knit together -  
blooming.  
on the creamy orange color.  
green  
leaves poking gently.  
i asked my Ma to teach me  
to draw the roses, too.  
the kind her Ma taught her.  
i just love them  
eya would say.  
i feel a need to protect them.  
- our resistance.

isn't it so mighty beautiful there are still flowers like us. rained. stiff. hardened. yet still  
blooming of pink, blue, yellow, orange, purple, red in the light. connected to humble  
resilient gracious roots. watered by sea salt tears.  
- to you.  
- i'd still rather be me.

the compassion  
makes your  
*being*  
glow

poverty  
is when  
you wake up  
in the morning  
to get on your  
knees to  
sweep the  
veranda which  
is  
dust.  
it's the dusting  
of the dust  
that never ends  
- Ma

first we  
must  
imagine ourselves  
as  
architects  
of the world.  
hands ready to  
 *mold.*

through respecting myself  
despite the shaking.  
breathing in vanilla.  
watching the flame.  
i melted with you  
- ma  
- how can I forget it is your *dil* that beats deep in my chest

waking up to the  
home of my soul  
- moments of peace

even after all that,  
you still stand  
straight.  
- keep going.

you are not  
ill.  
sensitive  
vibrating  
hallow,  
maybe.  
-with  
spirits  
nature,  
pain.  
- your superpowers

you said over and over again:  
*resiliency.resiliency.resiliency.*  
until it eventually began to form  
as an extra layer on my skin.  
- Duchess

the violence  
is not just  
outside of us.  
*it's us.*  
in  
the words  
we speak.  
in our judgement.

if actions cause  
the contradiction  
in the psyche,  
do the work.

a false  
sense of superiority  
is not  
confidence.  
it breeds dangerous  
insecurity.

you are the resistance. years of violence. yet here you are, speaking fire. ice. vanilla.  
oranges. carolina reapers. coconuts. i know a part of your spirit will always be here.  
protecting. dancing. laughing. transforming dirty ice on the ground into fabricy  
snowflakes with your whirlwind.

they readied  
men up-  
claimed they were  
the world's  
manliest warriors  
and sent them off to  
World War II  
to die fighting for their  
wars.

funny,  
the only mention of it  
is when I asked my  
father why my great  
grandfather speaks impeccable  
english.

but there is no mention of it  
in the history books.

- Sikhs fighting in Italy, WWII

you encouraged  
me to embrace  
my whole self.

- Sedic
- healing.

the trauma  
is heavy  
but don't  
you forget the  
Courage. Resilience. Strength.  
you carry of so many,  
too

- notes to myself

focus on the  
psychological work  
with benefits

- DLB, when it was difficult.

i still brush the brown-golden  
on my eyes.  
line it with black on top  
of long, black eyelashes.  
wrap the magenta, turquoise, navy  
scarf with the long  
golden streak around my neck.  
hug the grey jacket with  
silver linings Naniji  
placed softly in my hands.  
put my thick, curly hair  
into a half-messy  
bun.  
i am kaur.  
i am powerful.

they had  
no problem  
growing that  
poppyseed  
on land they colonized  
and using a drug  
to build riches  
but they'll call a War on Drugs  
when they don't profit

- british colonization, India (in trade route to China)

i place both hands on the soil.  
crying.  
how many strong  
souls crossed the  
same sacred land  
now forgotten-  
stories erased.

the way i remember  
your spirit  
is you leaning by  
*kaddu*  
*mooli*  
*karela*  
watering life,  
making sure i didn't  
step  
on life as i  
played in the backyard.  
- Daddy

if the writing  
writing  
reading  
researching  
is not for the flesh and blood  
but only for the pen and paper-  
keyboard and fingers-  
then what's it all for?

the opinions  
of my parents  
on the situation  
in Punjab  
are far more  
valuable  
than “experts”  
- on knowledge production

it's the 2:00 morning where I cry for the healing that is not there. for the wound that is  
ripped apart. where the bleeding doesn't stop; it's dragged out for decades but also  
pervading all time. sometimes, the blood oozes out, all at once, like the butchering of an  
animal. other times, the skin around the edges begins to thicken until it is forced out  
prematurely

they didn't  
see a Guru.  
they saw  
the brown  
martin luther.  
- british colonization, annexation of Punjab

it is not a disorder  
or an illness.  
it is your human  
experience  
as it is.

“Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority, **but to their inhumanity and fear.**” - **James Baldwin**

she's not a bitch-  
isn't it difficult to live in such a  
violent world.  
to deal with all the microaggressions  
adding up.  
clouding your world into  
one of *mistrust*  
*fear*.  
*caution*.

“did you hear, they ripped the pages out of Guru Granth Sahib,” i say to my mother on the phone after reading articles upon articles of the situation online. right when the words escaped my mouth, I knew I'd said it wrong. No. she explained, [in Punjabi] fine, you said it to me, but don't ever say that to anyone from our community again. Say *Katal Karthi Guru De Ang*.

sometimes, I feel  
as if my heart will  
explode out of my chest  
because the anger-  
the anger-  
it's enough to  
rupture  
the world

'anger is an  
unmet need'

- Sedic
- the words I needed to hear.

i hold up  
the world  
for moments at a time.