

Afshan D'souza-Lodhi

POEMS

Catalan translation by Martí Sales

In the name of my mother, the most kind, sometimes merciful but almost always gracious

our mothers taught us to love / taught us to love unconditionally / when a man / breaks glass tables / while showing you his nostrils / you pick up the glass / cover your hands in bandages later / make sure you don't shake when you bring him tea.

We are the girls who lived. daughters who live past their first day are wrapped in *izzat* and shame and still they wonder why

the girls grow up wearing guilt and marrying men who break glass tables not glass ceilings].

they make her wear red on her wedding day so that when she bleeds it doesn't show.

gold adorns her wrists so that when she cooks she's reminded of the burning.

But the red dress protects her lack of virginity

and the gold, she counts that and keeps it close to her heart an escape route.

En nom de la meva mare, tan encantadora, sovint comprensiva però sempre impecable

les nostres mares ens van ensenyar a estimar / ens van ensenyar a estimar incondicionalment / quan un home / trenca taules de vidre / mentre t'ensenya les dents / tu reculls els vidres / després t'embenes les mans / t'esforces a no tremolar quan li duus el te.

Som les noies que van viure. les filles que sobreviuen el seu primer dia són embolicades en *izzat* i vergonya i encara es pregunten per què.

les noies que van créixer carregades de culpa i es van casar amb homes que trenquen taules de vidre no sostres de vidre].

la fan vestir de vermell quan es casa

perquè si sagna no es noti.

l'or li adorna els canells perquè quan cuini
 recordi les cremades
 Però el vestit vermell protegeix la seva manca de virginitat
 i l'or el compta i se'l guarda prop del cor una via d'escapada.

1.5 generation

[**ADL:** *Could you raise your hand if you were born in Spain? And could you raise your hand if you came to Spain before you were five years old? Before you were seven years old? And if you came after you were seven years old? So, there's no one here who is one point five. This is going to be for myself then. This poem is "One point five", and it goes like this.*

Sorry, I should explain that. Sorry, "one point five generation immigrant" is a term used to describe people that have moved to the country before they were seven years old. And so, they're stuck in this... They're not first generation because they are not old enough and they're not second generation because they were not born here. So, they're stuck in this in-between space. And I'm one point five generation.]

1.1 last night I cried / my dad came home and / told me an uncle had shouted at him for letting his daughter wear dresses / I cried / not because of the inherent sexism / the male gaze that will never let up in our community / but because when I imagined having a conversation / with this uncle, in Urdu / I couldn't / I got half way through telling him / what respect really meant when / I forgot the word for gaze / I couldn't come up with the equivalent / in Hindi or Urdu and / my mother tongue bit itself / While my emotions and basic words are still stuck / in my mother tongue/ i am only able to interrogate certain ideas in english / I cried because / even in my fantasies / I couldn't win / an argument against my / sexist uncles

1.2 it has been too long since / I stood side by side with my mother / in the kitchen to cook. writing down / recipes to dishes so I'll remember them / when I grow older / she switches them up when she tells them to me / adds extra tomatoes and yoghurt and / halves the spices. / she knows something I don't / the more / years I spend apart from her the / less spice my / tongue will be able to hold / as desi words no / longer fill my mouth / so will desi tastes vanish / from my palate. / I plate my food now with extra spices / an attempt to try and get used to the / feeling of *mirch* and pain / on my tongue / a feeling that will grow / to become more familiar as I move closer and closer to —

1.3 my body is familiar with the beats / of the *tabla* but / my ears / can no longer / take the high-pitched tones / of the singers / my sur stops / at me. / sa / re ga ma / pa / dha

ne sa / came before / do re me / but I only know the *raags* that feature / in the top 10.
 I listen to remixes of remixes / until all I can I hear / are the *dj dj dj dj / dj wale babu
 mera gana chala do.* / but still rejoice when Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's / *jaaniaa* / sends
 shivers down my spine. / I start the song again / my lips opening as if Nusrat's voice is
 my own / but still / even with his / voice guiding mine I miss / the beat and start / the
 next line too early. / my body / moves a half beat off the *tabla* / I pretend I'm listening
 in / double time / double time

1.4 women do not fit into saris / saris are made for whole women / 1.0 women / for
 those of us that are 1.4 women / the yards don't stretch enough / to make the right
 amount of pleats / to fall and grace our curves / when we walk / the gap between our
 blouses and our skirts / is bigger than the space between the ground / our falls but not
 bigger / than the rift between our history and us. / 1.4 of us won't remember / to pin
 the *pallu* / before we count the pleats / we will fold the threaded sari in on itself / and
 buy sari-inspired jackets / with labels that cost us more than a flight ticket back /
 'home' / I buy bangles from Amazon / because I'm too ashamed / to walk into a high
 street shop and ask the uncle for *chudiyen* / and pronounce it wrong. / my wrists may
 have been made / for the constant clanging of glass / against glass. / but smashing the
 patriarchy / makes me bleed / I bleed *sindoor*: vermilion / recognise it not from my
 relatives / but from watching daily dramas on Zee TV and Sony / as the pseudo-shock
 from the cliff-hanger ending / of that last episode hits me / my sari threatens to undo
 itself / expose my pale skin.

1.5 generation immigrant / I am not wholly / 2nd generation / assimilated / somewhat
 accepted into a / community / I am / 'too young when you came here to be 1st gen' /
 but / 'still foreign enough to have a "home" you should go back to' / I'm not enough
 / point 5 of me is in another country / —constantly / point 5 of me is struggling to /
 turn my tongue in ways I used to / point 5 of me cries / at the thought of my children
 / not being able to hold private / conversations in public / point 5 of me orders lemon
 and herb instead of extra hot / point 5 of me can't hold a *duppatta* straight / point 5
 of me forgets if this song was an original or a remix / point 5 of me will forget what
 channel *kyunki saas bhi kabhi bahu thi* came on / point 5 of me / point 5 of me /
 point 5 of me / point 5 of me / turns to the whole of me and questions her identity /
 1.5 of me sits on the borders and laughs back / one foot in each country / weight
 distributed so not to weigh anyone down / I take your spices / and mother tongue /
 and sequins and / *raags* and raise you as a / proud immigrant.

1.5 generació

1.1 anit vaig plorar / el pare va arribar a casa i / em va dir que un oncle l'havia escridassat per deixar que la seva filla es posés vestits / vaig plorar / no pel masclisme inherent / la mirada masclista que mai abandonarà la nostra comunitat / sinó perquè quan vaig imaginar que xerrava / amb aquest oncle, en urdú / no vaig poder / havia aconseguit mig explicar-li / què volia dir "respecte" de veritat quan / vaig oblidar la paraula "mirada" / no em venia l'equivalent / en hindi o urdú i / la meua llengua materna es va mossegar a ella mateixa / les meves emocions i paraules bàsiques encara estan atrapades / en la meua llengua materna / només soc capaç de formular algunes idees en anglès / vaig plorar perquè / ni quan m'ho imagino / soc capaç de guanyar / una discussió contra els meus / oncles masclistes

1.2 fa massa temps que / no estic al costat de la meua mare / a la cuina. apuntant / receptes de plats per poder-los fer / quan sigui gran / ella els canvia quan me'ls explica / hi afegeix més tomàquet i iogurt i / posa la meitat de les espècies. / sap una cosa que jo no sé / com més / anys passi lluny d'ella / menys espècies tolerarà / la meua llengua / així com les paraules en *desi* ja / no m'omplen la boca / també els gustos *desi* desapareixeran / del meu paladar. / Ara em poso moltes espècies al plat / per intentar acostumar-me al / gust del *mirch* i a la picor / de la meua llengua / una sensació que cada vegada serà / més familiar a mesura que m'acosto a —

1.3 el meu cos coneix els ritmes / de la *tabla* però / les orelles / ja no suporten / les veus agudes / dels cantants / el meu *sur* s'atura / en la nota mi. / sa / re ga ma / pa / dha ne sa / van venir abans que / do re mi / però només conec els *raags* / del top 10. Escolto els remixs dels remixs / fins que només sento / dj dj dj / dj *wale babu mera gana chala do*. / però encara m'emociono quan Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan fa / *jaaniaa* / se'm posen els pèls de punta. / Torno a posar la cançó / moc els llavis com si la veu de Nusrat fos la meua / però fins i tot / amb la seva veu de guia / perdo el ritme i començo / el següent vers massa d'hora. / el cos / s'aparta mig temps de la *tabla* / faig veure que l'escolto / al doble de velocitat / al doble de velocitat

1.4 les dones no hi caben als saris / els saris es fan per les dones com cal / dones 1.0 / per les que som dones 1.4 / la tela no dona / per fer els plecs que calen / per cobrir i realçar les nostres sinuositats / quan caminem / el forat entre brusa i faldilla / és més gran que el forat entre el terra / i els baixos de la faldilla però no més gran / que l'esquerda entre la nostra història i nosaltres. / les 1.4 no ens recordem / d'aguantar el *pallu* / abans de comptar els plecs / pleguem el sari com podem / i comprem jaquetes que semblen saris / de marques que ens costen més que un vol de tornada a / "casa" / jo compro braçalets per Amazon / perquè em fa massa vergonya / caminar per un

carrer del centre i demanar-li un *chudiyān* al meu oncle / i pronunciar-ho malament.
 / potser els meus canells van ser fets / pel repic constant del vidre / contra el vidre. /
 però destruir el patriarcat / em fa sagnar / sagno *sindoor*: roig / no el reconeixo pels
 meus parents / sinó pels serials que miro a Zee TV i Sony / quan el pseudo-xoc del
 final obert / de l'últim episodi m'afecta / el sari intenta desfer-se sol / i exposar la meva
 pell pàl·lida.

1.5 generació d'immigrants / no soc del tot / segona generació / assimilada / més o
 menys acceptada en una / comunitat / soc / “massa jove quan vas venir per ser 1^a
 generació” / però / “encara prou estrangera per tenir una ‘casa’ on hauries de tornar”
 / no soc prou / 0.5 de mi és a un altre país / —tota l'estona / 0.5 de mi intenta que / la
 llengua es retorci tal i com solia / 0.5 de mi plora / quan penso que els meus fills / no
 podran tenir una conversa privada / en públic / 0.5 de mi demana sense espècies en
 comptes de molt picant / 0.5 de mi no sap dur una *duppatta* / 0.5 de mi no sap si
 aquesta cançó és l'original o un remix / 0.5 de mi no recorda a quin canal feien *kyunki
 saas bhi kabhi bahu thi* / 0.5 de mi / 0.5 de mi / 0.5 de mi / 0.5 de mi / em mira fins el
 fons i em qüestiona la identitat / 1.5 de mi seu a la frontera i riu / un peu a cada país /
 amb el pes ben repartit per no carregar ningú / Agafó les teves espècies / la llengua
 materna / els lluentons / i *raags* i t'educo / com a immigrant orgullosa.

