

*Santosh K Dary*

**A Better Life**

I remember the life we left behind;  
lying under the veranda in warm nights,  
listening to Maajis fairy-tales,  
saw shooting stars as the fireflies danced.

I remember listening to the night,  
the hoots of an owl, whistling of crickets,  
the wake up calls from our cockerel  
as the blanket of mist lifts for another glorious day.

I remember chasing white butterflies,  
in the blossoming mustard fields.  
We sat eating sweet sticky mangoes,  
under the shade of a giant peepal tree.

I remember crowding around Maaji,  
when she milked the bakri.  
She let me catch the dhaar,  
streamed straight into my mouth.

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I remember the farewells to loved ones,  
as the train left the platform.

We whispered, waved, our goodbyes,  
our chunnis drenched in tears.

I remember the aeroplane journey,  
the humming and popping in my ears;  
my stomach fluttered with excitement,  
we were like birds in migration.

I remember England, my first thoughts,  
the never ending gloomy grey clouds  
as I breathed in the heavenly air:  
I saw angels with golden halos.

I remember living in a crowded house,  
behind firmly closed doors.  
In shared facilities, chaotic compassion,  
diverse languages - understood by all.

I remember when Beeji cooked,  
she kept doors, windows firmly shut,  
in an attempt to conceal the smell of curry,  
to the already hostile neighbours.

I remember sharing with three other children,  
 lying on an fraying single mattress,  
 trying to block out the cries, babbles  
 of a new born and her mother's sighs.

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I remember recreating a new life,  
 like altering a garments to fit my size;  
 thriving in tradition, transforming cultures,  
 like a variety of flowers, in a bouquet.

Today I review my life like a film,  
 enriched memories over five decades.  
 I smile, speak in the mutual language of love,  
 I've embraced this journey to a better life.

**Punjabi Words**

Maaji	grandmother
Bakri	Goat
Daar	stream
Bijee	Mother
Chunnis	a long scarf

## Weaving Dreams

For no found reason, I begin to weave;  
removing the layers of 'if and buts',  
mulling over the maybes, possibilities,  
gliding through darkness to find dawn.

For no found reason, I begin to weave,  
to escape the cage that bounds,  
in uncharted territory, no shelter in sight.  
lost on journey, as my tears forms rivers.

For no found reason I begin to weave,  
searching for blooms in snowstorms;  
to feel their scent forever.  
Let healing to be done and start afresh.

For no found reason, I begin to weave  
in the rain, happy rainbows.  
Stars sparkling like my *koka*  
treading on thorns to magic places.

For no found reason, I begin to weave;  
reach out, be boundless, limitless  
like the seconds on a clock.  
Magic rugs lift, smiling like my *bindi*.

For no found reason - I have woven;  
dropped stitches, stained with loss,  
held together with the golden thread.  
Done! My dreams have been woven.

### Punjabi words

Koka – Nose jewel

Bindi – Forehead jewel

**Santosh K Dary** is a member of the Punjabi Women's Writing Group and has attended a creative writing course run by Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in Wolverhampton. She has read her stories at the Wolverhampton and Ironbridge Literature Festivals and at events celebrating Diwali and Vaisakhi with other Punjabi Women. Santosh has contributed to collections of Japanese poetry, featured in *Ripening Cherries* published by Offa's Press. Earlier this year the Arts Foundry published her childhood experience in the *Living Memory Book* and *The Faith Initiative* magazine has also included her poem 'A Divine Journey' in its publication. Santosh took early retirement from social work with the local council office to spend time with her family.