

Familial Identity Diaspora and Orientation...

II:

“Mother, My Martyr”

By: Urbi Khan

*“By all means they try to hold me secure  
who love me in this world.  
But it is otherwise with thy love  
which is greatest than theirs,  
and thou keepest me free.*

*Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone.  
But day passes by after day and thou art not seen.  
If I call not thee in my prayers,  
if I keep not thee in my heart,  
thy love for me still waits for my love.”*

- *Gitanjali 32, Rabindranath Tagore (1910)*

I am alive today with love in my heart  
because of my mother  
Solely,  
because of her.

I am not thankful that I was born.  
when I make something of my existence  
in your presence –  
that will be the day I am thankful.

I am thankful for my brown skin,  
the one you call olive.  
I am thankful for my breath –  
born out of your wrath.  
I am proud to be of your kin.

you're my blessing  
with all the pleasing  
life throws at me.

oh Mother, mine – take these humble words  
and know that I mean them. I really do.

Maa, tumi amar sonar Bangla.  
“Maa, tor mukher baani amar kaane laage sudhar moto”

I appreciate you for you – who you simply are.  
now as I get older and bolder  
I understand what you mean to me  
and that you care

Grace. You speak.  
Sacrifice. You know.

Experience. You carry.  
with every glance,  
with every stride,  
with intelligence  
and pride.

you may have come from a childhood that has done you wrong.  
but it has made you, oh, so strong.

a girl so naïve and innocent –  
now a woman who rose out of the ashes  
like a red phoenix.

Lady Lazarus. That's you.

at your thirty, I came through.  
at my fourteen, I thought I was too good for you.  
What a shame – you never earned a dime.  
How dreadful – you had your first child at twenty-three.  
I would rather die.

oh, Mother mine.  
our life is your life.  
in your hands, we grow.  
your roots live through us  
and we, your fruit.

you talk to us –  
a daughter and two sons.  
about atrocity and fertility,  
about love and hate,  
about race and beings,  
about Allah and sexuality;  
about the blood, all red.

you teach us to be equal.  
to be real.

you've been born anew and in the now.  
And now together, we grow.

coming-of-age at middle age.  
at sixteen, I raged.  
How did you tolerate me burgeoning of utter annoyance?

oh, Mother, mine –  
now I know what it means when Maya Angelou spoke of

the Phenomenal Woman. That's you.  
when Tupac cried Dear Mama, "sweet lady, place no one above ya".

a woman with a heart of gold.  
a mother who will never grow old.

Mother. My martyr.  
I love you.