

Mother tongues and Father Laws

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How many languages are
written on your tongue?

Or how many tongues

Do you carry in your mouth?

Ask those who write love
letters in future tense,

How many dynasties
have died loveless in their family.

How many women menstruate
in rainbow colors

Or how many brides scrape
their husband's ordinances like
henna off their hands.

How many children smell books
and carry more paper cuts than
Chimney burns from plastic lies.

The men who don't know the
weight of tears on eyelids
but bricks armed on their vertebrae

If the man had guns in lieu of hands
would his beloved target still be his lover?

Those who worship terror, do they carry bombs in their chest pockets?

They tell me my culture is outlined with kohl,

And we are mere teardrops on its edges

I tell them our culture is the tip of an iceberg,

It floats above the sea of its own liturgy
A part of it still yearning to drown back to its roots.

Our mother tongue has fought wars

With our own fathers,

Our books carry literature but still aren't literate

The folklores *ammi* narrates me before bed

were written with burning hands,

epochs have shrank in their abdomen

but their sparks don't ever die.

The stories of tooth fairies,

have politically upgraded to tongue wizards

They who cut their tongues and

keep them safe under pillows

wishing for human rights

I often wonder,

What is the culture of a dancer's feet

Or the religion of a singer's throat

Who does a writer's pen bleed for

Or if the hands of a sculpture understand

which God he carves.

Cultures aren't separated by

alleys of tectonic plates,

Asia kisses Europe

or American subcontinent imitating the

creation of Adam

Our costumes may vary

but our breasts and chests

carry the same heart

We have same hands
soaked in blood or painted in palm lines
from wombs to tombs
is the water mass of culture
Some of them drowning,
Some of them floating
Others in between,
Half decayed and half deserted.
How do you identify,
Your own legs
In this clutter of culture?