

eighty years young

By Milan Jagatia

no qualifications, degree or medals,
her English a Kenyan, Indian twang, she
birthed me, saved me from bombings in Tanzania

her life was extraordinarily ordinary
traversing continents, by ship and plane:
leap of faith despite the knot of fear in belly,
it was a fight....Go back home, Paki. Be Gone.

homesick tears rolled down her cheeks as
she trundled up an icy Dennett Rd, Croydon
to reach a laundrette, alone, kids in tow.
dreaming of a life of luxury lost,
as a trembling, coloured new comer

who absorbed every hurtful word, look n sneer.
mountains of microaggressions, and macro
accepted through gritted teeth with downward eyes.
it's self sacrifice to keep my job, to feed the kids.
i must go on, keep running on the wheel.
my love for my little ones, to succeed, spurs me on.

we move again. the London overspill, and
home county brings short term relief. work
goes on, 4, 8, 12, and 16 hour shifts
producing latch key kids who eat
home made curries and microwave junk.
i strive to keep afloat, i duck down
and stay low as scapegoats are hunted.

sacrificing more, to give degrees, road trips, white collar jobs,
rejoicing even as her kids reached glass ceilings,
bumped and fell and stood once more. she aged and worked
in this cold hostile land until 60 knocked on her door and
she beat cancer's vile threats with a slice of radiotherapy

to finally rejoice, eat and walk with friends galore.
I am wild and tame, once resentful and now soothed.
Eternally grateful to my unsung hero, Ma, Mummy, Mum.

Guardian Angels
By Milan Jagatia

As sorrow and self-imposed isolation hit
I reached out and found them
all around me like erupting castle walls
My band of merry women grows

They shared, strategically tapped,
with knowing looks they listened
smiled at me and guffawed
My band of merry women grows

As global isolation hit all
my web warriors were ready to fight,
to love, chant mantras and be patient
My band of merry women grows

I stand tall today because they are,
they exist and hold me in their arms
always ready to help if I call
My band of merry women grows