

POETRY

I'm from Elsewhere

by Shaira Sultana



"The Adorned Woman" by Maheshwar N. Sinha

Where the sun
doesn't burn
it tans

Where we paint
with mehndi
traced on brown skin

Savour ghee
on every plate
and sugarcane

We embellish our dishes
with turmeric
and chilli powder

Adorn our bodies
with gold trinkets
and bangles

Decorate our dresses
with tassels
and sequins

We build third-floor
rooftops to dance
in the rain

Craft toy watches
and finger rings
from coconut leaves

Give them
to our children
for play

But here, maple
is more common
than coconut

Snow slicks
the ground
instead of rain

And women
are free but
not completely

Where I'm from
His name is echoed
five times a day

Headscarves
veil beauty
without penalty

And safety is given
to the sisters
of the land.

Mehndi: A popular form of temporary skin decoration in South Asia, created from the application of henna paste on the hands and feet. *Mehndi* is more commonly known as henna tattoos in the West.

Coconut leaf toys: In Bangladesh, it is a common practice for children to make and play with coconut leaf toys from a young age. These toys are often made from thin coconut leaf strips and fastened by a series of knots and loops. The most common coconut leaf toys are flutes, watches, glasses, rings, and fans.