

poetry portfolio



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Who am I?

My name is kayal vizhi and I am a nineteen year old poet, spoken word artist and aspiring writer who possesses the immense need to create art and I do so consistently, consciously and quite compulsively. I discovered the power of the pen at the age of six and since then I have been driven to recreate the magic I often found when reading books. I am a daughter of the Indian diaspora and I have lived in Sri Lanka for ten years where I continued to write. But it was upon moving to Canada that I was struck with the realization that perhaps writing is more than an instrument of recreation; it is a way of life. My sentiments are aptly captured in the words of Eugene Ionesco who states, "A writer never has a vacation. For a writer's life consists of either writing or thinking about writing."

The summer I turned 17, I was introduced to the spoken word scene in Toronto by my mentor Lishai Peel, and since then I have been able to share my work within the artistic community of the GTA, Ottawa and Austin, Texas. However, I strongly believe that my purpose cannot be merely contained within the spoken word community. I aspire to become a writer, a novelist, a memoirist. I am currently crafting my first anthology of poems that seeks to weave personal narratives about the women in my family with South Indian and Tamil history within Sri Lanka. I hope to use this poetry workshop as a means of sharing poems from this collection and receiving feedback while continually polishing and honing my art form.

I find solace in words of Pablo Neruda, Rainer Maria Rilke, Rumi to name a few. But it is truly the radical love of the women in my life that inspires art and I am immensely grateful for this life.

i will sit on your lap

and feed you bits of guava with salt

i will let you taste me

later in the evening, after i had swept the mango leaves

off the verandah and fed the dogs

i will make you a cup of lassi with lumps of jaggery

you will kiss me in between my breasts

and tell me, here my skin is the softest

- kitul | kayal vizhi

i am wind, weary of travel

i want to come home to the quiet in your name

- nilla | kayal vizhi

i

i catch poems in the deep river of my womb

ii

long ago, colonial “captains would spill cinnamon onto the deck and invite passengers on board to smell Ceylon before the island even came into view”

my alone too is a spice and my collarbones are a geography of longing
searching for stories, not land, not men

iii

i find myself in my most naked, naked solitude

- untitled| kayal vizhi

Saro simmers, slow dances in the kitchen
teaches the stove a thing or two about fire,
breaks tea cups when she fights with her husband.
long after her husband broke her,
their children will scald their lips
when drinking their evening tea,
they will still hear her rage
in the clinking of china,
they will catch bits of their mother,
the artist of disappearance,
appearing in brief, hot sips of liquid grief.

- saroja | kayal vizhi

i chop coriander with mint

there is no radio, but the sea outside my window is enough

the longing in my brown skin is enough

i clean the knife with my tongue

and think of you

- come home | kayal vizhi

a wild woman lurks in you,
all earth and sandalwood,
she has known you,
since the day you spilled like a river
into the mouth of this world,
blood in between your mother's legs

- goddess | kayal vizhi