

**Annotations:**

शहर बसाकर अब  
सुकून के लिए गाँव ढूँढते हैं,  
बड़े अजीब हैं हम लोग,  
हाथ में कुल्हाड़ी लिए, छाँव ढूँढते हैं

The cities have been made homes. Now,  
we search for the quiet in villages,  
how strange we are. .

What is the point  
of looking for shade with an axe in hand?

Other paratexts:

## **DEDICATION:**

To Kamini and Ganpatsingh Bhandari

## **PREFACE:**

An odd mix of things, poetry and recipes. What does verse have to do with tablespoons of turmeric? At first glance, nothing; but if one looks closer, it becomes apparent that what food does for the body, poetry does for the heart and the mind. The poetry in this small volume, written by Ganpatsingh Bhandari, has only been shared with his friends and family (both groups are expansive, to say the least). It has never been printed; instead, the poems (and often, things like jokes) are sent regularly over WhatsApp (the messaging app most popular in India), and typically in the morning, so that it is one of the first things a reader will look at after waking up. The image is burned into my mind: my grandfather, already seated at the table when the rest of us stumble out of bed, staring intently at his phone. No matter what we—his grandchildren and daughters—do, in those first hours of the day, nothing can pull him away from the messages he has to send. Though, interestingly, I have never seen him write these poems... who knows where, from what store of life, he is spinning them? And that is what you will find in his verse: thought-provoking reflections on life and its ironies, and what—in his experience—has led to contentment. His command over Hindi lends his poems a gentleness of motion, as if they are swaying side to side on a hammock. Unfortunately, the average reader might not be able to enjoy his writing in its original Hindi, and for that reader, I have done my best to translate the poems, with an eye for melody, rhythm, and of course, meaning.

The recipes are all Kamini Bhandari's. My family bickers constantly and about everything; and yet, I cannot count the times we have all come together over my grandmother's cooking. On that table, we only fight for who has had enough, and who can have a third helping, or a fourth. There is magic somewhere in her hands. What's more than being an amazing cook, my grandmother knows exactly *what* to cook for *whom*. Even a distant relative who has visited once and remarked, 'Oh, I love this thing you make!' will, if they return a second time, find that same dish waiting for them, or a dish similar enough that my grandmother thinks they will like this too. For her, food is more than what nourishes the body; it is like poetry in its ability to bring people closer together, to invite them to share in the joys of life. And so, this is what unites these two things in this collection; and what's more important, storytelling—which is at the heart of poetry—and food are the things that my grandparents used to teach us how to navigate life, and I hope that this collection is similarly illuminating.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This, unfortunately, marks the end of our brief insight into two large and full lives. The authors of this book, my grandparents, have seen their country undergo radical political and social change; raised four children and nine grandchildren; contributed to and helped build their communities; always, above all else, put their family first; and still, through all these transformations, managed to remain kind and empathetic. This short selection of poems does not do justice to the life of Ganpatsingh Bhandari, and neither these few recipes to Kamini Bhandari. Though it is what I want, it is impossible to document all the stories I have heard, and still hear, from their lips, or the things about them which I wish the next generation—and the next, and the next—to know; there is simply too much life in them to put into words. I leave you with this: take care of yourself, reader, and of those whom you love. This is the faith that has steered my grandparents, and how well.