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## Poetry: Ali

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POETRY

## Poetry: Ali

*Gardens are a place  
where the ephemeral meets  
the eternal  
where the eternal  
meets the hand of man<sup>1</sup>—  
the hands of my father  
down deep in the ripe rich soil  
dwelling in the garden  
for 40 years of  
weeding  
watering  
pruning  
rootfeeding  
tending to  
the flowers  
he brings for me  
on special days like  
the rhododendron  
he planted  
when I was ten  
to bloom only on my birthday  
in May  
petals of grace peeking  
outside my bedroom window  
to the graceless child  
a father  
who knew the wisdom of plants  
cultivating a silent form of love  
I could not see then  
his heart in the soul of a flower  
ruby red in rough hands  
how his faith came in these moments  
blossoming*

I keenly remember now  
my kindergarden class  
in our backyard  
and how we sat in a circle

eating red delicious apples picked  
 from our tree  
 he put in a silver bucket  
 for our eager hands  
 and vanilla ice cream too  
 he knew that gardens  
 can make friends  
 to the only child of color  
 a rootedness to the unrooted  
 the fruits of his own spiritual labour  
 flowering


One recent Sunday I asked him:  
 dad, can you tell me about the garden?  
*yes, yes*  
*we have*  
*pink dogwood*  
*Japanese plum*  
*azaleas ... deciduous (he stressed)*  
*boxwood hedges*  
*I made them round*  
*five of them, for each one of us,*  
*rosa hunsa*  
*rowan mountain ash*  
*forsythia*  
*camelia*  
*clematis ... deeply fragrant it is*  
*crimson king maple*  
*yucca gloriosa*  
*lavender*  
*heather*  
*bamboo*  
*banana*  
*bartlet pear*  
*bing cherry*  
*peach ...*

And I started to feel the poetry  
 in the nature of his own creations  
 wearing the colors of his spirit  
 a unity in this work  
 with the hands that sowed  
 the earth that always gave back—  
 to him

*You have made me most happy by asking me, Anar  
as he brought me some Jasmine  
but, I was silent  
And on the way home  
I said to myself softly  
Oh, dad, you have made me most happy  
too*

## Note

1. Excerpt of a speech made by the Aga Khan at the inauguration of the Aga Khan Park in Toronto on 25 May 2015. Retrieved from <http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/31816>

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