

Back To Punjab

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In 2013, I released a song entitled “Back to Punjab” featuring California-based emcee Mandeep Sethi, and produced by Satnam Singh Chatha. The song and the connections between the verses play out like conversations between long-lost relatives writing letters to each other from across the oceans.

In the first verse, Mandeep speaks from the perspective of someone who has migrated from Punjab to the United States. He details the struggles he faces to find work, earn money, and at the same time, to financially support his family still in Punjab. His verse is tinged with regret for leaving. He conveys a sense of helplessness that he can’t physically be there to support his loved ones.

When putting together my verse for this song (see “Back To Punjab” below), I decided to write from the opposite perspective. My character is someone who has never left Punjab and is letting his friend in the US know of the injustices that have been taking place during the time they’ve been apart.

My verse shows how some of the aspects of home that we as Punjabis take pride in – language, natural resources, familial ties – have all been harshly impacted by the sociopolitical climate within India and Punjab, over the last few decades, and unfortunately, replaced with drug abuse, state violence, intergenerational trauma, and scarcity of resources.

The verse discusses how the place where one should feel the most free – in their own home – can become a cage. Despite everything this individual encounters, he still closes his verse with a positive outlook. He holds on to hope that things will get better for his home and his people.

Back To Punjab

My grandfather was massacred in the streets of Delhi,
 though I’ve never met him, fam says I’ve got his features in me
 flee the city,
 grandmother worked the widow colony
 but left and took her daughters to Punjab where the heart in me was made
 raised with my brothers by a farmer
 who would slave to save up, but underneath his armor
 had his heart broken
 gun smoking from the false encounters
 they put the dark around us, the cause of the loss of thousands
 hard to count them when they’re dying by their own hands

and ingesting the pesticides applied on their own land
the Green Revolution, abusive regime
revenue streams from liquor taxes, a future of fiends
got me stuck
my brothers in the same trap, vein tracks
belts wrapped around their arms, needles in a haystack
from heroin to opiates, tearing at the closely knit
and dealing with twice the terror for every bit of hope we get
so I wonder if we're deserving of our fate
when the water gets diverted out of state
and they're calling us insurgents of our faith
got me pondering a certain escape
beyond the temporary tourniquets they've placed
so I hold on, grow strong, now my skin is thicker
Punjab awaits its makers, awake us, and still I'm with you
a picture from my pen to show you it's getting deep
from the five rivers, where all of my ancestors sleep

Link to the Audio Recording

Back To Panjab (Produced by Satnam Singh Chatha)

<https://noyzhiphop.tumblr.com/post/44031413760/back-to-panjab-produced-by-satnam-singh-chatha>

Link for the previous version of the written piece:

Back To Panjab (Produced by Satnam Singh Chatha)

Mandeep Sethi & Noyz

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