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Expectations

(Poems in English)

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HAZARA SINGH

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EXPECTATIONS

by

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Ludhiana

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• 3-C Udham Singh Nagar,
Ludhiana-141001 (India)

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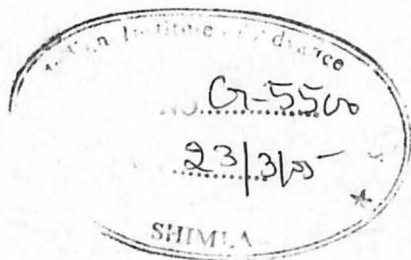
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Dedicated to
My children and grandchildren
Who keep me imparting
‘The Zest to Excel’

‘Truth, knowledge, love and dignity
Are the fruits of knowing oneself.’

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1. *What is the purpose of this study?*

2. *What is the research design?*

3. *What is the sample?*

4. *What is the data collection method?*

5. *What is the data analysis method?*

6. *What are the results?*

7. *What are the conclusions?*

8. *What are the limitations?*

9. *What are the implications?*

10. *What are the future research directions?*

11. *What are the references?*

12. *What are the appendices?*

13. *What are the acknowledgements?*

14. *What are the contact details?*

15. *What are the other relevant information?*

Preface

My first book of poems in English, *Aspirations*, was published in 1980. Dr Jagdish Chander, Professor and Head, Department of English, Punjab University, Chandigarh, after going through the manuscript had, quite providentially, written the foreword thereto before his sudden demise. *Aspirations* earned a brief but impressive review from Dr Narendarpal Singh, Editor, *Byword*, New Delhi. Omitting therefrom a few poems, dealing with topical themes, and adding the ones composed subsequent to its publication, the second book, *Yearnings*, was published in 1987. Dr Amarjit Singh wrote the foreword. Dr Harinder Kumari Majithia, Editor, *Eureka*, Porbander, was the first to publish her comments thereon. Soon, thereafter, an eulogizing review by Dr Sulekha Sharma, Director, Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh, appeared in *The Tribune*. Many journals extended the courtesy to reproduce her assessment. It impelled a few more academicians to send their appraisals.

Poems from these books have been included in more than two dozen anthologies within India and abroad. In far off Argentina, Ms Virginia Rhodas translated the poems 'The Sunset' and 'A Tree to Man' into Spanish and published them in the verano number of *International Poetry Letter* (Carta Internacional de Poesia), Buenos Aires in 1993 and 1996 respectively. The Famous Poets Society, Hollywood, Los Angeles, adjudged the poem 'The Person I Am Looking For' for their top recognition in 1995.

Two critical appraisals viz. 'Humanist as Poet' by Dr Amarjit Singh, Professor and Head, Department of Journalism, Languages & Culture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana and 'Hazara Singh as a Poet' by Dr B.K. Dubey, who has been assessing the output of Indo-Anglian poets of the post-

independence era for a higher academic attainment, appeared in various journals. Dr Atma Ram, Director of Education, H.P., Simla sent a comprehensive questionnaire for interview through correspondence. The All India Radio, Jalandhar also invited me for the talk 'How I Became a Poet'.

Expectations is my third book of poetry. It contains all the poems composed by me so far. The texts assessing *Aspirations* and *Yearnings*, referred to afore, have been included as its back matter. Overlapping of expressions, here and there, in the appraisals dealing with a single source is unavoidable. These poems reflect my knowledge about the world, gathered through life-long experience.

Ludhiana

Hazara Singh

1 New Year Wishes and Greetings

With faith and fervour ring in the new
Ring out the old giving its proper due
The old was new, when we hailed it last
The new 'll grow old for time runs fast.
New and old are mere man's view of time,
They are the Eternal's rhythm and rhyme.
Time is ever young and knows no wrinkles
As red as a rose each morning twinkles.

II

Time fritters itself when man feels sad
But runs smooth when he beams glad.
Time only reflects man's state of mind
And glitters golden, when he acts kind.
Let us discover what makes many sad,
What keeps a few so excited and mad.
None will then look before and after
An era of peace may thus dawn faster.

III

Pride, hate and fear keep a man blind
Conceit isolates, malice makes him unkind.
With his stiff neck and the closed mind
Peace or goodwill he ever fails to find.
Pride that puffs up from colour or race
Discards real worth and prizes mere face,
Is an act quite unjust, inhuman and base.
Shall man bear long such a deep disgrace?

IV

God give us men of noble heart and vision
Just in outlook, gifted with pure reason.
Who run not after fame, or power and pelf
Think first of mankind, not of gain or self,
Are not led by passions, masters of their mind
And live for a purpose with no motive behind.
With such pious wishes, let us hereby greet
The New Year to perform a bliss-giving feat.

— o —

2 **The Person I Am Looking For**

If you do not get lowered in your own eyes
When you raise yourself in those of others
If you do not succumb to gossips and lies
But dismiss them calmly saying 'Who bothers'
You may be the person, I have been looking for.

II

If you crave not for applause when you win
And look not for sympathy while you lose
If praise makes not your head toss and spin
And after a setback you offer no excuse
You may be the person, I have been looking for.

III

If you listen to counsel without getting sore
And re-assess yourself in the light thereof
If you pledge not to be obstinate any more
And accept others without frown and scoff
You may be the person, I have been looking for.

IV

If you have the will to live and courage to die
You are a beacon-light for people far and wide
If you ignore the jeers and thus expose the lie
That virtue and success do not go side by side
You are the person, I have been looking for.

3 **The Human Spirit**

I am the striving spirit of man
Which seeks social justice and equality
Dignity of individual for one and all
To bring about an era of love and peace.
In India, the land of sages and saints
The caste system denied me dignity and worth
For it imposed way of life on basis of birth.
In the continent metaphorically called dark
Segregation made my life disgracing and hard
Called me a nigger having a tainted heart.

II

In erstwhile USSR, where revolution swayed
My brain was purged and the mind estranged
On the bait of golden age in an iron cage.
Religious intolerance and bigoted beliefs
Explode often in riots to browbeat me.
False alarms are raised to create panic
Anarchists intrigue so to harm or harass me.
Equity eludes me thus in many parts of world
Yet unfair codes and norms fail to depress me.
I keep striving for all-round excellence.

4 Culture

Culture, an ardently sought elegance
Has been aptly compared to a bee
Which picks honey from buds and blooms
Sweet in taste and nourishing as manna.
The soft wax procured from a honeycomb
Is rolled into pretty pencil-like candles;
A source of light when darkness falls.
The bee thus brings sweetness and light.

II

Darkness is a simile of ignorance
Whereas light is a symbol of knowledge
Sweet words and the righteous deeds
Make a person lovable and refined.
Ignorance, a grave sin as well as vice,
Spoils the grace and weakens the mind.
A man of polish in search of knowledge
Is in right earnest to imbibe culture.

III

'As busy as bee' is a golden saying
A cultured person seldom sits idle
Love as sweetness, knowledge as light
And work as worship bequeath culture.
While making man in His Own image
God conceived him as a cultured being.
An idle brain is the playmate of devil
A man of culture beams bright with grace.

5 Clean and Bright World

A reformer and a man of letters
Face nagging in mundane matters
Snubbed as meddlesome or reckless
Chided also as unwise and useless.
Such cynics even berate a sweeper
For them he is a filthy creature.
But if the sweeper stops to work
Rubbish and waste gather in bulk
The lanes and homes begin to stink
Disease soon after may set to slink.

II

A reformer, the cleaner of social life
Operates his moves as a surgeon's knife
For cutting off harmful customary rites
Against the evil he thus firmly fights.
The vicious resist a robust reform
Because of challenge to a wicked norm.
The reformer is recklessly maligned
Moves to browbeat him are designed.
If he in dismay loses heart and hope
Evil perpetuates its grip and scope.

III

A writer soars in higher domains
He is seldom led by worldly gains.
He ignores what his slighers say
For fools fail to hold a wise at bay.
The realms he creates with his pen
Do not crumble every now and then.
Treasures of knowledge, he discovers
Do not lie locked in guarded towers
They enrich freely the world at large
In spite of what a leg-puffer bawls.

IV

Cleanliness being next to godliness
A sweeper improves the worldliness.
Excellence being the moto of man
A reformer strives the best he can
To ensure the pace of healthy change
And thus nip the evil in its range.
Pen being mightier than the sword
Keeps a writer truthloving and bold.
The sweeper, reformer and the writer
Make our world cleaner and brighter.

— o —

6 Language of Colours

Colours have a language
Which observes no grammar
Neither written in words
Nor conveyed through sounds
Though silent yet quite expressive
Its message is seldom lost
It creates no jargon or ill-will
Its thrill is a constant delight.

II

Colours even when more than one
Cause no confusion nor result in babel
Their appeal increases, beauty bewitches.
They gladden like playful babes
Send a thrill even through a stoic mind.
The Creator too adopts their language
To indicate the changing moods of nature.
And the fascinating cycle of seasons.

III

Colours radiate beauty and joy
Combining in the cosmos they transmit light
While splitting they form a rainbow.
Complexions of man in the world
Are as varied as the colours in nature.
Black or white, yellow or dark
Are the hues used by the Creator
To instil into man the lesson of colours

7 Lonesomeness

A word, which is as widely abused as love
Is *lonesomeness*, all idlers complain of it.
The loftiness of love, not many can grasp
Because they mistake it for craze and lust.
Recluses take the seclusion as saintliness
For they exalt self-denial to a holy quest.
In the present day world of stress and strain
Stretches of lonesomeness give amusement.

II

The fruitful company, a good book gives
The heights, an artist or a writer scales
The introspection offered by lonesomeness
Are among the joys of this impugned bliss
A noisy company dulls a sensitive mind
Often stuffs the brain with nonsense
A talkative being feels bored, if alone
A gifted person is company to himself.

III

Lonesomeness inflicts those with boredom
Who do not tune themselves to songs of life.
Watching from a corner the children play,
Strolling in the blooming parks and groves,
Listening to the symphony of chirping birds,
Observing the beauty of setting sun,
Are the acts which ward off boredom.
If unable to create, one may appreciate.

8 Poetry

Poetry is not a romantic thrill
Sent by beauty, youth or wine
Nor it is a mode of invocation
To be inspired by powers divine.

II

Poetry on birds, buds and hills
Soaring clouds and changing season
Lovely moon and the hues of rainbow
Has waned with the growing reason.

III

Poetry is not a choice of words
For creating rhythm and rhyme
It is a spontaneous expression
Of feelings noble and sublime.

IV

Man is no longer a helpless tool
In the hands of chance or destiny
The despair vanishing from his mind
Lends weight to such a testimony.

V

Released from the grip of myths
Man is evolving his new entity
His mind is getting broadened
Under benign effects of liberty.

VI

Poetry is not the gift of a Muse
But a free and precise description
Of the musings of a fertile mind
With no binding to metre or diction.



9

The Trio

Religion promises heaven after death
 Science assures it on the earth itself
 Both have their vast conflicting domains
 One preaches faith, the other pursues doubt.

‘By conquering the self one conquers the world’
 Is the main canon which religion adopts.
 ‘Through quest for truth, discover the universe’
 Is the method which science suggests.

Religion holds life as a predestined role
 Reward or punishment of earlier births.
 Science claims it as a wonderful leap
 An evolution from apes to human beings.

‘A tug of war has, thus been going on
 Between them to better the lot of man
 Contentment is the sermon of religion
 ‘Struggle to strive’ stresses science.

Contentment creates understanding and love
 Offers a hand to help the weak and needy.
 Stiff struggle, the touchstone of science
 Causes tension through pulls and pricks.

Blind faith in religion is held as bliss
 Which eclipses brain for elevating the mind
 Truth-revealing science is a source of conflict
 Infernal in effect despite the assured heaven.

Whether East or West, we invoke the Trinity
 For seeking holy light and peace of mind,
 The trio of letters, science and religion
 May evolve for man an exalting position.

10 On Friendship

A friend is a sort of oasis
In the vast desert of life.
Friendless person is a stranger
Even among a jostling crowd.
The friend is an unfailing mirror
Which reflects one's true self.
That is why the sages say
That a person gets judged
By the friends he keeps.
Knowing a friend is to know oneself.

II

Friends bear four different hues
Often vast in number but varied in nature
They keep on swelling like human desires
Happiness lies in judging them both.
By reining desires one reigns all over.
While choosing friends for one's march in life,
One puts oneself to a crucial test
Whether to be a bubble doomed to burst
Or a guiding star destined to shine.
Here are four facets which friendship holds.

III

While one is on a seat of power
Friends throng to him from far and wide
Like flies swarming to an uncovered pot
Getting favours through backbiting and flattery.
When power like wealth takes to wings
They also flee leaving the patron high and dry.
Such are friends as long as it serves their ends
They even bite the hand which they earlier kissed.
Stabs and kicks hold a valuable lesson
Learn in time to keep off such parasites.

IV

There may be a few with an urge to serve
But may lack the nerves to suffer therefor.
Better than parasites, but not friends indeed.
Such followers share readily gain and pain.
If it is all giving, they change the bandwagon
Convenience and not conviction is their device,
They serve their ends by changing garbs.
Have no hesitation even to hurt by slander,
The benefactors they earlier adored to sky.
Such be shunned as fairweather friends.

V

Friendship is a selfless sacrifice
It ignores gains but shares pains
It does not play the second fiddle
For being a team of equally gifted souls.
A time may come when even friends part
On matters where judgements differ
Then the objects higher than self are at stake
Such partings are a tribute to each other
None hits the other below the belt
Because each is true in his own way.

VI

A person clear in his thinking and goal
Noble of mind but firm in dealings
Neither puffed by praise nor hurt by slander
Striving always how he can share
The talents with which he has been blessed
By the merciful Almighty in His Grace,
Is never alone even when lone.
Is the pole star in the firmament of life
He is in the fourth stage of friendship
Friend of all but befriended by few.



11 Fire : Hot and Cold

Fire, despite its dazzling flame
Blurs seldom our power of sight
The flame with its sizzling heat
Gives joy to every home and hearth.
But the cold fire of envy and hate
Though neither has smoke nor flame
Yet consumes our power of reason
And robs life of the joy, it holds.

— 0 —

12 Forgiving and Forgetting

To forgive and forget is a godly act
Better than prayers and mass rituals
Only those pray aloud to invoke God
Afflicted with minds wavering and weak.
Appearances often are a cover for deceit
That is why God chose to have no shape.
Cursing is a consuming vice and sin
Robs worldly joys and the bliss of heaven.

— 0 —

13 Enemies Within

One needs no foe to be harmed or degraded
While one succumbs to an eruption of anger.
The frothy tongue shouts foul and filth
Thinking turns suddenly base and perverse
The dear and near suffer lash of wordy bash
Knowing not their fault or displeasing lapse.
When the fit subsides and sanity prevails
Then one regrets that unpleasant outburst.

II

One looks serene while at peace with self
Feels inclined to share one's best talent
Earns acceptance with growing endearment
Master of self and well-wisher of mankind.
Anger and pride are latent enemies within
When greed and avarice sneak to abet them
Rouse insatiable lust for the diabolical acts
One crumbles due to that cracking implosion.

— o —

14 **Why Blame Others**

Why blame others for problems of one's own
Created by inflated ego and biting malice
Ego swells the head; malice harms the mind
They cloud power to think and sense to feel
Thus loosen the tongue making it unkind
Which keeps estranging even kith and kin
Perturbs the sleep, mars the joys of life
Adds to tension pushing up blood pressure.
Thus a person normally sensible and benign
Develops a mental disorder of acute kind.

II

Psychiatrists diagnose it in their jargon
Obscure in meaning, but awfully damning
Counselling, medicines and clinical tests
Make that unsocial wretch a mental wreck
Fleeced by rising bills, shunned by friends
Slighted by targets of his negative trends
Shows symptoms of insanity now and then
Lifted to mental hospital in the long run
What an end of a malady self-created!
Branded as insane, battered and berated.

15 **Sobriety**

A craze for blurting an opinion
On every topic, even if not requested
Is an indiscreet act, seldom heeded.
The interruptor fails to take the cue.

II

If one keeps on talking not caring to listen
Exposes simply the inherent shallowness
Of one's ability, experience and knowledge.
Such a talker is shunned by one and all.

III

Restraint in forming or expressing opinion
Before analysing the background of a matter
Reflects sound and objective thinking.
Views of such a one find a ready liking.

IV

An attitude to let every one speak
Capacity to listen to all with patience
And ability to sift all that is stated
Are the traits of a sober and sane person.

16 Tension

Tension or depression reflects a weak mind
When the prey thereto gets readily tense
While even a routine matter deviates a bit;
Or the continual remorse about a past mishap
Keeps casting periodic fits of depression.
An unsteady mind professing to be sensitive
In spite of its intense endemic suffering
Fails to learn that grit sustains calmness.

II

A steadfast person seldom feels nervous
Accepts the ups and downs as a fact of life.
Girds himself timely for settling a strife
Remains calm even when suffers a set-back.
Faith in God keeps him firm but righteous
Does not give up till the wrong gets undone.
Thus inspires the wavering to get earnest
Admired by one and all for the uprightness.

— o —

17 **Ingratitude**

Ingratitude bites deep
But whom, when and how?
It irks and pinches only those
Who care not to be just to all.
They pick and choose, thus, often
Are not led by equity and merit.
When their favourites also behave likewise
They denounce them as ungrateful wretches.

II

The denouncers, as well, be denounced
For they are frivolous and not generous
They pamper some overrating their worth.
When the patronised show their true colours
The light-headed patron ought not grumble.
Both are birds of the same feather
One hastened to unwisely pat
The other chose his time to stab.

18 On Erring

He who does never err
Is God, merciful and omniscient.
One who on having made an error
Realizes his slip or miss
And pledges not to do so again
Is man, reflecting His image.
That who keeps on erring
Not knowing how he goes astray
Is a brute, wicked and bestial
Doomed to subhuman life.
He who flaunts his error
Without any feelings of remorse
Is the devil incarnate
Worse than even a brute.

— 0 —

19 Bed of Thorns

Bacchus has wrecked more men than Neptune
Nagging has broken more homes than Bacchus
Backbiting is more ruining than nagging
Suspicion hurts deeper than backbiting.

II

A person tormented by a suspicious self
Is his own foe among a host of friends.
He loses clear thinking and peace of mind
And tosses on a bed of thorns all his life.

— 0 —

Hatred is like the raging *loo* in summer
Which withers the leaves, wilts the stems
Scorches greenery in parks and fields
Makes lovely places look desolate
Dries rippling ponds into wastes of mud
Raises clouds of dust in its range
Parches the lips, staggers the brain
Causes untold hardship to nature and man.

II .

When hatred permeates the human frame
It sizzles fine feelings into wickedness.
It chokes the reason, depraves the mind
Robs the grace through frets and frowns.
The hated may not feel its pinch and prick
The hater gets singed by his own hissing.
Hatred is a grave self-inflicted torture
A horrible sin or a mental disorder.

21 **Know Thyself**

Air has existence but is not seen
Fire is visible yet can not be caught
Water can be contained, but has no shape
Rocks are solid but are without life
Plants have life but are fixedly rooted
Birds and beasts move about but have no mind
Only man has all these attributes
That is why he tops the order of nature.

II

If man knows not the relative benefits
Of his body, movements and mind
He is no better than a bush, bird or beast.
Purity of mind, clarity in thinking
A sound body and an aesthetic taste
Lead to the balanced growth of a person.
Truth, knowledge, love and dignity
Are the fruits of knowing oneself.

22 A Decisive Moment

One shivers with cold
Trembles with fear
Quivers with excitement
Fumbles when not truthful.

II

Of all these four happenings
Fumbling is, no doubt, the worst
It is caused by falsehood
Which chokes uprightness.

III

Quivering is the lack of self-control
While feelings struggle to storm out
Emotions pushing off reason
Physical system thus losing its balance.

IV

Trembling ensues from the fear of death
Losing sight of a veritable truth
That death is an inevitable end
Enjoined to be faced with calmness.

V

Shivering is of different sorts
May be due to cold or fever
But if inflicted by remorse
Marks a decisive moment in one's life.

23 Golden Jubilee of Independence

Celebration of the golden jubilee of independence
Offers occasion to ask ourselves 'why, how and if'.
Why did India, masterstroke of geological process,
Enlightened by the sages, cleansed by the saints,
Defended by the invincible, served by the submissive,
Become enslaved? Degraded, defrauded and plundered.

II

Knowledge, monopoly of a few, kept the masses ignorant
Saints, craving for salvation, earned barren seclusion
Warriors, bound by subjective vows, bypassed the goal
Workers denied worth on the basis of so-called birth
Were rendered fatalist by the parasitic priestcraft.
Our past did not co-ordinate heart, head and hands.

III

The caste divide did not let nationalism grow
Faith in the hallowed past ignored the real present.
Whereas the West got stirred by progressive ideas
Smashed shackles of its past to explore new vistas
Indians remained inert impaired by obsolete taboos
Falling an easy prey to various guiles of invaders.

IV

If the Hindutva objects to the plural social fabric
Denying regional urges under its declared purges,
If minorities fail to revise their parochial outlook
For acquiring equity and the dignity of individual,
The discords which often caused our subjugation
May make a ritual of the golden jubilee celebration.

V

Democracy gets derailed under the dynastic rules.
Politics sans principles incites the subversive moves.
When the elected exploit the masses by dubious means
'Power flows from barrel' the anarchist begins to preach.
Hence a resolve to resist the clique of money and muscle
Shall complement the noble ideals of our freedom struggle. □

24 India Goes Nuclear

The scholars with their bookish knowledge
Influenced by dogmas or the utopian ideas
Are as cut off from the stark reality of life
As have been our sages, wise but escapists.
Views of the former may not be worthwhile
Picked from journals or seminar proceedings
Are either not to-date or are manipulated
Often unrelated to the grass-root situation.

II

The recluses regard the world as illusion
Hence stress negative approach towards life.
White-collar scholars are reckless consumers
Knowing little about the plight of workers.
Those who perspire to produce get fleeced
A few who process to sell it roll in riches
Run parallel economy with the black money
Which the armchair learned fail to inveigh.

III

Society is doomed when the chasm widens
Between policy makers and working classes.
Public servants recruited on so-called merit
Have crammed knowledge of various sorts
But alien to people they are paid to serve
Ditto file notes contrived by vested groups
To abet wily rulers in latter's misadventures
The masses get gnawed by such human vultures.

IV

Principles of policy laid down for the State
For securing a just equitable social order
Seem to be a conveniently abandoned resolve.
India which professed to be the light of Asia
Has been graded a poor and corrupt management.
Strikes, riots, defections and loose alliances
Are being adopted as expedient political norms.
But hurray! India goes nuclear despite all odds.



25 The Netajan

Why this clamour about an olympic medal
Whether gold, silver or some other metal?
Why sprint to swelter or vigorously pedal?
Physical feats are not a lucrative mettle.
Barbarians box and the thick-headed wrestle
In legislatures the netajan rush to grapple.
Quite secretly all shady deals they settle
Their cliques they, thus, conspire to nestle.

II

Rathyatra, our ancient hero-worshipping game
Is organised to wash away an innocuous shame
Now and then a city is chosen for a new name
To rehabilitate its snatched historical fame.
Whatever charges the prosecution may frame
To expose scams leading to financial drain
Are frustrated through nefarious campaigns
By wiles the *netajan* fend the unfair gains.

— o —

The *netajan* is a sarcastic reference to the politicians of contemporary India. The poem was written in 1996, when India, the second most populous country of the world, drew almost a blank in the Olympics. It exposes also the degeneration of our political fabric.

26 Goddess of Justice

Goddess of Justice! it has been a solace
That you cover your eyes to be impartial
But it is disappointing and distressing
That you have also been gradually crippled.
Do not seem to move even at snail's speed.
Cases in courts, lower or higher, keep piling
Not in millions but crossing tens of billions
An aggrieved, thus gets caught in a swamp.

II *

Justice delayed is not mere justice denied
Rather the wrong seeking redress worsens.
Justice depends on how much one does spend
Many lawyers observe not the avowed ethics.
A wronged client often feels cheated instead.
Judiciary finds no time to lay down case law
Its collateral role to mend any erring system.
Goddess of Justice is both blind and helpless.

27 The Tireless Tiller

I am a tireless tiller of the lovely land
Rich in soil, with traditions glorious
Imprints of my valour shine on time's sand
Toiling in peace and in wars victorious.

II

To achieve the freedom, the price I paid
Was the rivers Ravi, Jehlum and Chenab¹
On the banks² of which history was made
By the lovers and martyrs of the Punjab.

III

To make up the loss, thus sustained
I stored mighty Sutlej in Gobind lake³.
The deep Beas is also being contained
By the Talwara Dam for irrigation's sake.

IV

I tunnelled into and slashed tortuous hills
With metalled roads linked towns and hamlets
Dammed the rivers with rare engineering skills
Dug perennial canals for irrigating the deserts.

1. Out of five rivers of the Punjab, three, viz. the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jehlum, fell to the share of Pakistan in 1947.

2. The resolution for the independence of India in place of dominion status was passed by the Indian National Congress in its Lahore session held in December 1929 at the bank of the Ravi.

The famous love lore in Punjabi *Heer Ranjha* and *Sohni Mahiwal* describe the romances which took place on the banks of the Chenab.

Martyrs Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev after their being hanged to death were cremated near Hussainiwal Bridge on the Sutlej on the night of March 23, 1931 by the then British Government in India.

3. Gobind Sagar of Bhakra Dam which is called the economic temple of India.

V

Braving the scorching heat and the freezing cold
I reclaimed the deserts and cleared the forests
Discarded the practices primitive and old
Followed the advice given by farm scientists¹.

VI

The arid tracts where once blooming damsels
Died of thirst finding not a drop of water
Love-lorn, running after the pugmarks of camels²
No more echo the wails of a Punjab's daughter.

VII

Cleared of scrubs now are the fertile fields
Where vineyards blossom, cotton bolls shine white
Punjab has taken the lead in agricultural yields
My toil and valour have raised the nation's might.

VIII

Thus my skill set in the green revolution
To base the freedom on pillars of prosperity
My enviable skill and unfailing resolution
Have raised high the head of our posterity.

— o —

-
1. Acknowledges the fruitful work done by the Punjab Agricultural University.
 2. Refers to the tale of *Sassi Punnu*, another love-lore in Punjabi, where the beloved died of thirst in a desert while searching for her abducted lover.

28 To a Grandson :

On His Thirteenth Birthday

As you celebrate the thirteenth birthday
Enter your teens without swing or sway
Be upright in whatever you do or say
Shedding off that which causes dismay.

II

Life contains more jeers than cheers
Which lend meaning to passing years,
Teaching to face all sort of fears
For marching ahead sans sobs and tears.

III

Find out that, you have the best to give
With a lofty pledge, thus, strive to live
Those who became great, likewise, did
From the chosen path they seldom slid.

IV

I send you, thus, my heartiest wishes
More valuable than the mundane riches
Free of formal high-sounding cliches
Impressing what elevates and bewitches.

29 Raymond Griffith

Raymond¹, you came as a draught of breeze
When nature bloomed bright in the last spring
A message of faith and friendship you did bring
Which helps universal love to grow and increase
Your cheerful words make everyone feel at ease
Because with a note of hope they do always ring
Through rhyme and verse, like saints you sing
'Love all men, so that hate and fear decrease'. 8

Your name which bears the prefix 'ray'
Is a symbol of that what it literally means.
Those who named you so, did clearly foresee;
'As the sun sends light likewise what you 'll say
Is to shed knowledge and to reflect love's beams'.
Raymond, how can we forget Jeanne² and thee? 14

— o —

-
1. Dr Raymond Griffith taught English at Punjab Agricultural University in an honorary capacity during 1973-74. The sonnet was written to bid him farewell on February 7, 1974, while he was on his way to South Korea to take over as Professor of English in the Kyung Hee University at Seoul.
 2. Mrs. Jeanne Griffith, his wife had also been Professor of Paediatrics at the Christian Medical College, Ludhiana; an upright lady and a competent teacher.

The great Abraham Lincoln, torch-bearer of equality
Apostle of global goodwill, path-finder for humanity
Rough diamond in appearance, noble in his feelings
Upright in his thinking and humane in all dealings
Laid down his life to establish for all the right
'To live with heads high, free of scare and fright.
Colour or religion which often depends on birth
Should not deny anyone the reward of real worth.'

II

Lincoln could not bear that in the land of liberty
Blacks were not citizens, mere pieces of property
Owned by white masters, kept under social fetters
For life-long labour on wages of crumbs and tatters.
With ill-gotten wealth, masters lived with pleasure
And rose to oppose stoutly each progressive measure
Slaves doomed to a life of ceaseless toil and boredom
Got lynching as justice, if a bid was made for freedom.

III

On being elected President, Lincoln abolished slavery
Grit shown in the Civil War spoke high of his bravery
His friends grew cold, the opponents rose as rebels
Indifference to liberation was seen at many levels.
Contempt as well as ridicule, hurled from every side
Changed not his conviction, rather higher it did ride.
Patience and calmness shown in a strife or battle
Are traits of greatness and the tests of rare mettle.

IV

When the Civil War with double strength was won
With no malice in his mind, ill will towards none
He hastened to assure all whether foe or friend
That era of hate and fear had come to a firm end.
When all, Black or White, Red Indians or Gentile
Shall live as brothers without any grudge or guile.
A racist and a diehard, a man devoid of reason
Killed out of vengeance this leader of great vision.

V

'Log-Cabin to White House' is a memorable event
The account of a life - honest, amiable, decent
Fatherly, fair, fearless, diligent and humorous
Even the rabid opponents found him magnanimous
Tall man with a big heart destined to be great
Died for an ideal which altered mankind's fate
People singed with hatred or sulking under fear
Find Abraham Lincoln, an unfailing guide and seer.

— 0 —

31 To Rabindra Nath Tagore

Tagore! If you come back to the earth today
You 'll be pleased to find that your dream
That with hope and honour mankind may gleam
Is coming true and showing too the right way.
The longing expressed through your famous lay
'Where The Mind Is Without Fear', it does seem
Is cooling gradually the racial ego and steam.
'Peace for progress', people all over firmly say. 8

Knowledge glows in the lands, once called dark
Colonial rules which divided most of the world
Into camps of slaves and masters, far and wide
Are fading fast and with faith all people hark
To *Song Offerings**, the hymns that seek to herald
That to progress, tolerance is a steadfast guide. 14

— o —

*Corresponding English title of *Gitanjali* for which Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941) was awarded the Noble Prize in 1913.

32 Gandhi in Africa

With a self-imposed obligation
Called White man's burden
They flocked abroad
With rosaries in hands
Wearing long loose robes
To lands either called dark
Or those inhabited by heathens
For showing them light
To bring them, thus, in Lord's fold
For they loved the natives as their own.

II

The love soon changed into the one for gold
White ivory and pastures, lush and green
Though the man; black, dark or brown
Did not see much of the promised light
Yet thereafter sun did not set on the Empire
The rosaries and pastures changed hands
Messengers of the Lord became landlords
The White man's burden bonded the coloured
The obligation turned into segregation
The beloved natives became mere chattels.

III

It was M.K. Gandhi who showed them light
Truth was his slogan, fearlessness his weapon
Pride and hate were alien to his war cry
He kissed instead the hand that slapped
An apostle of peace, a votary of goodwill
Though frail in frame yet strong in mind
Not with a rosary but with a spinning wheel
Not by raising armies but through peaceful means
He revealed the image envisaged by God for man
On His earth all have right to live free of fear.



33 Mahatma Gandhi

We were a motley crowd, proud of caste or clan
Devoid of feelings or notions which make a nation.
Your precepts and practices made you an apt mason
Clans evolved as a nation under your lofty plan.
All fears vanished, our faces no longer looked wan
Your plain words and firm deeds served to awaken
A process of integration they did inwardly hasten
In the march for freedom you remained in the van. 8

You treated the untouchables as children of God
You raised woman high in every aspect of life
You gave us the Tricolour to symbolize our aims
Your spinning wheel shook off the Crown and Rod
You laid down your life for ending communal strife
'Gandhi! The Father of Nation' every Indian claims. 14

— o —

34 Kartar Singh Sarabha

Sarabha! you came as a meteor to show us light
When darkness of slavery had spread to all sides
Your conscience was aroused by taunts and chides
Hurled at us, now and then, by the arrogant White
It was hard to bear national insult and slight
In the World War First you found favourable tides
Rallying the Indians in U.S. made homeward rides
To end the foreign rule through a valorous fight. 8

As ill luck would have it your efforts failed
But the spark, you kindled, grew into a flame
Bhagat Singh held the torch after you had left
Your words at the gallows, by him, were hailed
'Sarabha, my guiding star' he would often claim
In the struggle for revolution, he, thus, got deft. 14

— o —

Kartar Singh Sarabha (1896-1915) was in the U.S., when the First World War broke out. He firmly held the view that England's difficulty was an opportunity for India. He organised a patriotic band, who on return to India, aimed at exhorting the Indian army to stage an uprising, reminiscent of 1857 army revolt against the foreign rule. The movement failed unfortunately.

Kartar Singh was hanged to death at the tender age of 19 in the Central Jail, Lahore on November 16, 1915. His last wish at the gallows was that he might continue to be born in India and be hanged to death every time in his prime till the motherland got liberated. Bhagat Singh (1907-1931) who was hardly eight then, used to adore Sarabha as his mentor.

35 At the Tomb of Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh, you kissed the gallows in your prime
To break the chains which enslaved the motherland
Left at an age when the young do well understand
How lovely the world is with its pleasures sublime.
You declared that imperialism was a heinous crime
Against man, whatever be his colour, race or land
And to wipe it out, you raised a revolutionary band.
Sulking India got upsurged by their heroic rhyme¹. 8

The Great War for freedom denied us the same
Though we shared its price on a far off shore ²
Jallianwala Massacre as reward instead was paid
You decried the petitioners for their being tame.
Sarabha was your mentor in the revolutionary lore
Even the deaf did hear the bang, you deftly made³. 14

— o —

Bhagat Singh and a band of other militant nationalists founded Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A). They believed in using every available forum to expose the hollowness of imperialism. Bhagat Singh exploded a blank bomb and threw printed leaflets on the floor of Central Assembly, New Delhi on April 8, 1929 to stage protest against repressive legislative measures. The leaflet began as "It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear".

1. The slogan 'Long Live Revolution, Down Down with Imperialism' raised by H.S.R.A. created an unprecedented political awakening all over India.
2. Refers to the participation of India in the First World War fought in Western Europe by the Allies against the Axis Powers to save democracy from the onslaught by dictatorship.
3. Refers to the opening line of the leaflet thrown by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt on the floor of Central Assembly on April 8, 1929.

Tagore felt shocked and Gandhi was plunged into grief
 One spurned the knighthood bestowed for Noble Prize
 The other realized that helping the Empire was not wise
 In her march for freedom, India thus turned a new leaf
 When bedlam by Dyer at Jallianwala defied all belief
 Who rushed his troops thereto, determined to chastise
 A public meeting called to condemn the Rowaltt Device
 The carnage was upheld by O' Dwyer, his die-hard chief. 8

Udham Singh felt stung and pledged himself to avenge
 The massacre and, thus, defend India's right to be free
 Patiently paused and pursued for more than twenty years
 Killed O' Dwyer in U.K. itself to seek the avowed revenge
 Ram Mohammed Singh Azad! secular India symbolizes thee
 And welcomes home your sacred ashes with grateful tears. 14

— 0 — .

When the British, forgetting their war time promises, staged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar on April 13, 1919 to teach the Indians a lesson in loyalty, the whole of India felt shocked. Tagore relinquished the knighthood and Gandhi lost faith in the belief that India could get self-rule by co-operating with the British. Udham Singh (1899-1940) vowed to avenge that humiliation. On March 13, 1940 he succeeded in redeeming his pledge at Caxton Hall, London by killing O' Dwyer, who as the then Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, had defended the massacre by the army. During the trial Udham Singh gave his name as Ram Mohammed Singh Azad to symbolize his aspirations of free secular India. He was hanged to death on July 31, 1940. His remains were brought to India by his grateful countrymen in August 1974.

37 **Subhas Chander Bose:**

Liberator of the East

Subhas! you restored lost honour by reviving our valour
When stupor of slavery had made us a worthless number
Your clarion call awakened us from an age-old slumber
Our heads rose high and the faces shedded their pallor.
You spurned the I.C.S. in spite of its pomp and glamour
Deeming it not laurel but sheer dead weight and lumber
Because the march to freedom, it did intriguingly cumber.
You believed in action and not in protests and clamour. 8

‘To Delhi’ was the war cry of the I.N.A. you raised
When you asked for gold, people offered blood as well.
The Empire which claimed that on it the sun never set
Crumbled thereafter for it was quite shaken and dazed.
‘Liberator of the East’ you tolled imperialism’s knell
Your epochal exploits, how can we Indians ever forget? 14

— o —

The role of Netaji Subhas Chander Bose (1896-1945) in leading the Indian National Army for liberating India weakened imperialism in the Far East.

38 Thus Was Born Sonar Bangla

The high values that mankind had long cherished
For upholding which many upright lives perished:
'Peace on the earth and equality for each man
With no mark of pride puffed by colour or clan.
Where the pulls held by religion, gender and birth
Do not deprive a person of the rightful worth.
Where no ill will rages against a race or language
With an aim to wipe off any rich ancient heritage'¹.

II

When warlords² cracked down on an innocent people
Millions were uprooted by the rabid and revengeful
When vanguards of freedom³ and those of revolution⁴
Got locked in an embrace to push a nasty resolution⁵
And joined hands with fanatics in a race of repression
To crush the will of people; result of fair election⁶
Thus, the secular fabric of a non-aligned nation
Was sought to be wrecked by an odd triple relation⁷.

The poem narrates the liberation of Bangla Desh and the attitude of two big powers, U.S.A. and China as well as of Andre Malraux of France towards that development.

1. The gist of values incorporated in the International Charter of Human Rights prepared by U.N.O.
2. The crack-down of Pakistani army on the people of East Pakistan in March 1971.
3. U.S.A.
4. People's Republic of China.
5. Resolution on events in East Pakistan by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1971.
6. Denial to the elected representatives of East Pakistan to form government in spite of their majority in the central legislature.
7. Pakistan, theocratic state; U.S.A., a democratic republic and China, a totalitarian regime.

III

Declaration of freedom made by George Washington
The ideals which inspired the great Abraham Lincoln
Who laid down his life to save his new-born nation
From the curse of slavery, a cause of degradation.
Moves of Woodrow Wilson¹ to form League of Nations
Gospel of Four Freedoms² harmonising human relations
Were all forgotten or belied by Richard Milhous Nixon
When he aided the Pindi junta to nip their Bangla victim.

IV

When foes of capitalists and builders of a new order³
Attacked its neighbour to settle a long dead border⁴
When they charged Soviet Union of getting revisionist
They had their own designs, subversive and expansionist.
Neither Taiwan was got back nor Vietnam they did defend
But to honour an impostor⁵, an invitation they did extend.
Vietcong, they did forget; Mukti Bahini, they did condemn
Treaty of Peace and Friendship⁶, they could not welcome.

-
1. President of U.S.A. who played a major role in founding the League of Nations after the First World War.
 2. Doctrine of Four Freedoms; freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear, put forth by President Roosevelt in his State of Union Address in January, 1941.
 3. People's Republic of China.
 4. Chinese aggression against India in 1962.
 5. Invitation extended by China to Nixon, discredited President of U.S.A.
 6. Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between India and U.S.S.R. on August 9, 1971.

V

The call of Andre Malraux, the noble French preceptor
Whom even the mighty de Gaulle accepted as a mentor
To raise a legion of thinkers, artists and the writers
To rush to Desh of Bangla to join the freedom fighters
Just as George Gordon Byron fought for Greek revival
Malraux could not bear Sonar Bangla crying for survival.
All hail his motherland for the path shown to humanity.
After Jean Jacques Rousseau gave the call for equality.

VI

That Joan of Arc, Indira, saviour of uprooted million
The jewel¹ of her nation of more than half a billion
Faced boldly the challenge posed by a rabid neighbour
In her duty and conviction she did not flinch or waver
Took no note of the Dragon² with all its loud rattling
Ignored the Seventh Armada³ and its bluff of hackling.
Gave a befitting reply to Yahya⁴ in a planned manner
Thus was born Sonar Bangla with its sovereign banner.

— o —

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1. Refers to the award of Bharat Rattana to Mrs Indira Gandhi.
 2. People's Republic of China.
 3. The Seventh Armada of U.S.A. which rushed into the Bay of Bengal in an abortive attempt to help Pakistani army besieged in East Pakistan.
 4. President of Pakistan.

39 The Wail of a Bangla Girl

Oh ghazis and mujahids, the khans and crusaders
Posing to be saviours you fell on us as raiders
Robbed the Desh of Bangla, outraged innocent women
Caused havoc and horror, spreading out as vermin
Killed our wise people, burnt the places of learning
You were fiddling while Dacca was dismally burning.
Reckless arson and abductions, carnage and plunder
Were your wicked pastime till you fell to surrender.

II

Why was I raped? A daughter of same religion
Why was I ravished? A chaste promising citizen
Was I an aided armour to be installed in trenches
Tortured and tormented, gripped in lustful wrenches.
Torn from kith and kin, shorn of womanly treasure
The child, I do carry, is not my sin or pleasure.
I invoke the U.N. Forums that backed the crusaders
Thousands wail like me, victims of wicked raiders.

The Pakistani military junta, under the pretext of restoring law and order killed 30 lakh people, raped 3 lakh women, drove out 10 million people and destroyed 5 lakh houses, bridges, mills and educational institutions in East Pakistan (now called Bangla Desh) during 1971

In line (i) ghazi or mujahid is an equivalent of crusader and the khans sarcastic nickname for Pakistani army rulers.

III

You nibbled my bosom like a wolf and a vulture
Drove me to your bunker disdaining my nurture
Every house as a brothel and a crop of bastards
Were sought to be implanted by you wily dastards
My body stands defiled with spirit still unbroken
The genocide so inflicted would ever be ill-spoken.
I ask the Chinese damsel and the American maiden
How do they acquit you when I with shame so laden ?

IV

To get rid of you, my brethren shed their blood
In our lanes and rills it flowed as red flood
Infants got orphaned, parents lost their children
Forget not, what I lost, oh my gallant brethren.
The jewel of chastity was robbed as my share,
Thus I was humbled and put to shame and scare.
The Sonar Desh of Bangla built on my sobs and tears
Should do all, it can, to dispel my doubts and fears.

— 0 —

40 The Unbroken Will

When the oppressed, their will still unbroken and high
Rose with vehemence to protest against rabid repression
It was not an internal problem or a move for secession
However shrill was Dragon's¹ hiss or Uncle Sam's² cry
Upsurge was not nipped though hard the Khans³ did try
Girls were raped enmass, an unheard state suppression
Millions deserted their homes scared by that obsession
U. N. Forums still kept believing the C.I.A. intrigued lie. 8

The notion⁴ of two nations instilled by communal fears
Which once uprooted millions⁵ was downright rejected
When Mujib declared bigotry as wholly alien to culture.
Hamlets became the citadels forgetting wails and tears
Teenagers formed legions⁶, challenge was, thus, accepted
Their gallant actions were beyond everyone's conjecture. 14

The sonnet is a tribute to the people of East Pakistan whose will could not be broken by the atrocities of Pakistani army.

1. People's Republic of China.
2. U.S.A.
3. Yahya Khan, President of Pakistan, who ordered General Tikka Khan to suppress ruthlessly the people of East Pakistan whose representatives in spite of their majority in the central legislature were not allowed to form the government on ethnic considerations.
4. The theory of two nations on the basis of religion put forth by the Muslim League.
5. Both ways large scale migration of people after the partition of India in 1947.
6. Formation of Mukti Bahini (Liberation Troops)

41 To Our Pakistani Brethren

How long will you writhe under fear and hate?
How long will you threaten of fire and sword?
How long will clouds of war hang on our fate?
How long will arms consume our toil and gold?
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood.

II

The same high and majestic range of hills
Protects our north from winds, fierce and cold.
The banks of the same winding rivers and rills
Cradled our culture, still inspiring though old.
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood.

III

The warm tides of the same Arabian Sea
Roll along our coast from south to west
Thus nature has linked us wherever we see
Then why let ill will harm us like a pest?
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood.

IV

The hymns, we chant, are by the same saints
The songs, we relish, are from the same lore.
Why not forgive and forget all baseless taints
Promise to live in peace and quarrel no more.
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood.

V

Poverty is the worst enemy of our lands
Wars, hot and cold, make us further poor.
To help each other let us join our hands
No other counsel than this shall be truer.
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood. □

The poem was written on the eve of Simla Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan held in the last week of May 1972.

42 China and India

China and India whom nature made as neighbours
In mere ill will should not waste their labours
Both have age-old ties, cultural and religious
Cradles of civilizations, noble and prodigious
Lands that gave birth to the Buddha and Confucious
Who showed a way of life, inspiring and illustrious.
Should follow themselves teachings of those sages
For creating goodwill where rancour wildly rages.

II

Both want mankind to be saved from degradation
Inflicted by imperialism or racial segregation
All nations big or small, people black or white
To freedom and dignity have got an equal right
All seek peace and equity, not economic favours
Authors of *panchsheel* need nip all such waivers
Aid that is given with intentions quite malicious
Holds peace and progress at the mercy of perfidious

III

Work and will of people tend to make them great
Aids, arms and pacts make them feel second-rate
To look upon the world as nations big and small
Like that of League of Nations 'll cause UN's fall
To adopt a policy it likes, each nation has the right
Why do Big Powers crush it with their naked might?
The settlement of dead borders did not call for war
The faith of nations in *panchsheel* it did terribly mar.

IV

Portugal has accepted that Goa was rightly liberated
That Taiwan is kin of China, India has openly stated.
Kashmir acceded to India not due to any coercion
People later endorsed it through a fair election
Every time they beat back acts of sneak aggression
To defend the plural fabric of secular Indian nation
Treaty of Peace and Friendship* was not an act of treason
To extend the zone of peace was its sole but solid reason.

— o —

* Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between India and U.S.S.R. in August 1971.

43 A Tree To Man

Man! I am your life-long friend
While your ancestors were apes still
For protection on me they did depend.

II

Plucked my leaves and dug my roots
To save themselves from pangs of hunger
Thus they lived on my bark and fruits.

III

My shade saved them from scorching sun
They burnt my wood to ward off cold
None gave them such comfort and fun.

IV

If you keep losing your love for me
Floods and storms shall rage wild
Blotting out all progress made by thee.

V

The earth shall offer no sights to cherish
Groves and fields will turn into deserts
Homo sapiens are, thus, doomed to perish.

— o —

44 The Art of Life

A reliable friend in all ups and downs of life
Is one's health; an enviable wealth, none can steal
Adds to pleasure and hails challenge to face strife.

II

Virtue of patience that helps man to conquer the self
Is the second great talent, which all ought have
Keeps off anger and lets not crave for show and pelf.

III

Intellect which shows light, whether it is day or night
Distinguishes man from every beast, bird and reptile
Creates in him His image making him noble and right.

IV

If man acquires too a kind and sympathetic heart
To help with his gifted nature the weak and needy
Heaven on earth he finds, for he leads life as an art.

— o —

The requirements of a happy and fruitful life are health, patience,
intelligence and a sympathetic heart.

45 Prayers, Smiles and Curses

Prayers soar high
Smiles beam straight
Curses tumble down.

Prayers invoke welfare
Smiles convey acceptance
Curses hurl ill desire.

Prayers are elevating
Smiles are blissful
Curses are suicidal.

Prayers seek 'Live and let live'
Smiles approve and inspire
Curses condemn one and all.

Humanism emanates from prayers
Goodwill spreads through smiles
Discord follows curses.

46 **Death**

A heart-rending event in childhood
A bolt from the blue in youth
A welcome relief in old age.

II

An inevitable event for the sage
A shrieking terror for the weak
A reward of life for the brave.

III

An oblivious end for the common
An immortal life for a martyr
An impartial arbiter for one and all.

IV

A device of soul for transmigration
A reunion with God for the faithful
'Dust returns to dust' says a mystic.

V

A festival in company with friends
A theme for sublime verse for a poet
'Mere physical end' for a realist.

47 Sweet Versus Bitter

Sweets please but tempt the palate
Making the indulgent quite infirm
Glutton, obese, thus, prone to stress.

II

Bitter herbs have a horrible taste
But possess a wonderful healing effect
Which ensures normal physical health.

III

Truth though adored as divine virtue
Yet is called bitter when stressed
Sweetness may offer cover to falsehood.

IV

Bitter experience gives worldly wisdom
Sweet smiles often allure and beguile
Bound to harm through deceptive charm.

V

Sweetness is not being branded as virtue
For bitter words cut deeper than dagger
Excess of either is not a wise course.

48 I Am Man

I am man, not that created in heaven
Out of the remnant mud by The Almighty.
I am man, not that pushed out of heaven
As punishment and thrown below on earth.
As he tried to pluck the fruit of knowledge
At the tearful entreaties of his spouse.

II

I am man, not the supreme among His creation
But evolved through ages from monkeys and apes.
I am man, who will himself make a heaven
Of this earth, which is not the centre of universe
But a speck on the brim of astronomical disc
To live on which is not exile but quite a thrill.

Beginning with a reference to the Biblical Story of Creation, the poem alludes to the latest human expectations emanating from the concept of social equality and liberty.

III

I am man, for whom knowledge is not forbidden
But who flies in space to explore its horizons.
I am man, master of his fate, captain of his will
Not to reach heaven, but to make one, is his goal.
Where real worth, not mere birth, gets its reward
Where the mind is broad; the head cool and clear.

IV

I am man who as an ape frisked on hills and dales
In merry groups without any feeling of high or low.
I am man, equality is whose heritage, not mere right
Freedom is whose way of life and not a wistful dream.
Nature was a common weal with no haves and have-nots
'Right to own' has marred whose happy way of life.

V

I am man, who adores not poverty as a divine bliss
But treats it as a loot through unfair distribution.
I am man, for whom colonial rules are a crime
That offends against human dignity and equality.
I'll brook no more the pinch of race or colour
Through fairness for all will work for excellence.

— o —

49 The Glory of a Woman

I am woman, not that who led to the banishment
Of Adam from heaven and his fall below on earth
They misjudge me and wrong themselves who think
That I am man's misfortune for I entice him oft
They lead empty lives with minds quite depraved.
I neither caused the loss of paradise nor tempt
Those who meditate aloof to communicate with God
I symbolize heaven itself if they care to perceive.

II

I am a mother, my lap is as blissful as heaven
It is a free gift and not mere promise after death
It is not denied, even if my offspring go wrong
They do not pray for it, rather I yearn for them.
Love is God; my life personifies this divine virtue
I give my all, I serve and suffer but never grumble
Because I am a mother; a sister the best well-wisher;
A wife who inspires; a daughter, obedient and noble.

The poem was composed in connection with International Women year.

III

I am not full of guile, jealousy is not my instinct
Frailty is not my name nor I am the cause of wars
These are the ravings of minds, petty and perverse
For they take me as a doll without any will or soul.
I do not want to be a better half, but the just half
With no craze to possess him, but seek a fair deal
He only lowers himself when he distorts my image
For I am sacred as heaven and pious as the saints.

IV

When wars vanish and double norms are not practised
When riches spoil not a few; poverty debases not many
When custom and law do not repress, rather liberate
The human soul from shackles - social and political
Then my glory will radiate with all its sublimity.
If with a few stray chances I could show my mettle,
How dazzling shall I be, when I get ungrudged equality.
My fetters harm man as well; equity liberates us both.

— o —

50 I Am Child

I am child, not a hoe that needs sharpening
I am not spoiled, if the rod is spared.
I am not a melon that expands in dust and mud
I may be made of dust, but let me not roll in dust.
Oh my dear parents and the wise nation builders
There is need to cast off all such harmful beliefs.
The hoe is lifeless and the melon has no brain.
I am father of man, a sacred trust lying with you.

II

Punishment instils in me pretence and deceit
It spoils the rare wealth that exists in me
It fills my innocent mind with fear and hate,
Curbs my fine instincts and the joy I could feel.
If education strives to make me good and noble
Do your precepts and acts uphold that high aim?
What you preach, so often, you do its opposite,
Such a gap in your words and deeds shocks me.

III

Dear parents, if you got me by a pledge or prayer
You deceived yourselves and were unfair with me.
I am neither a divine gift nor a mark of fate.
I am also not a legacy of your earlier lives.
Am I not a product of your social urge and needs?
Do I not adopt the path, which your footsteps show?
If I am good, I reflect the success of you all
If I am bad, you let down the trust deposited in you. □

The poem challenges the sayings like 'Spare the rod and spoil the child', 'A child and a hoe, if beaten occasionally, remain sharp', 'A child and a melon develop better while rolling in dust' and 'A child is an inevitable blessing of God', which being obsolete are not in tune with the modern outlook based on persuasion, affection and precept-based practice.

51 To a Child : A Father's Pledge

Dear child, my ties with you are a sacred trust
Not of mere flesh and blood, but to make of you
A noble and enlightened citizen of tomorrow.
In anger or conceit, I will not criticize you
For that may impel you too to berate others
I shall not let anyone be overbearing with you
As that may rob you of the spirit of cooperation
Which extends to one and all due consideration.

II

I shall cheer you to add to your confidence
Will not ridicule you ever as to err is human
And a child, so jeered, gets timid and sullen.
Even when found wrong, not in acts wilful
I will not chide you, so that you may learn
To confess and live, without guilt or guile.
I shall see that all things irksome or hostile
Do not make you rash, fretting or frowning.

III

I shall commend you, where it is due, but
Correct you at once with words and deeds
When you go wrong, so that you may learn too
To cheer others and confess faults of your own.
I shall be fair with you to make you just
Never let my fondness overlook what you lack
For then you may lose sense of righteousness
Which we all need to improve the quality of life.

IV

I shall arrange security for you, only if required
To let you develop faith in self and in others
And feel obliged to reciprocate so in your turn.
Your acts done in good faith, will find my nod
As an atmosphere of affectionate understanding
Shall teach you to love all, which action is divine.
Thus I shall carry out the trust to fulfill the pledge
To gift to posterity a nice specimen of humanity.

— o —

52 Empty Homes and Nests

The carefree period of childhood is decreasing
But that of old age is on gradual increase.
The children loaded with bag-like satchels
Awakened before they had sufficient sleep
Dragged to bathrooms, hastily dressed
Holding lunch packets, stand at a bus-stop
Waiting for the school van, yawning cheerlessly.
Aspirations of parents; seeds of promising future.

II

Taught in a medium other than the mother-tongue
Made to cram like parrots dull bookish stuff
Which often their 'Miss' comprehends not fully
But dictates directions in the report book
What the parents are to do to assist home work.
Though the corporal punishment is prohibited
Yet the strict voice of Miss hits as hard as rod
'Shall report to Mother' is her master threat.

III

The child returns home in an expectant mood
But finds it empty, mother not yet back from work.
There is no sibling to play with and wrangle
Which memories often stir cheer in later life.
A working couple with their planned family
Strives, thus, to provide innovators for future
Administrators, researchers and business managers,
Who leave the parents for exploring opportunities.

IV

Such parents with manifold retiral benefits
May not need regular financial support
But miss with a pinch the filial love and care.
Longevity, an offshoot of preventive cure,
Has robbed the old age of its many aspirations
Children returned from schools to empty homes
Retired parents learn to manage the empty nests.
Empty homes and nests are altars for progress.

— o —

53 **The Poor Keep Poor**

The poor keep poor despite social change
They starve while food exists in plenty
They look wretched half-naked in rags
With no dearth of wool, leather or yarn.
They lie on roadsides or swarm to slums
Under scornful shadow of vast mansions.
They accept poverty as prelude to heaven
Which makes the earth a veritable hell.

II

Poverty perpetuates, if mind keeps poor
Ignorance is a sin as well as sacrilege
Idleness tempts devil to play his pranks
Blind faith in fate frustrates self-help
God helps only those who help themselves.
Begging for alms, they lose self-respect
But use not their hands, heart and head
A unison that keeps raising self-esteem.

III

God is truth; truth elevates the mind
God is love; love enriches ways of life
God is just; equity suffers no indignity
Work is worship, profaned by the idlers.
As cleanliness complements godliness
Living with filth around keeps debasing.
Work and knowledge develop one's self
Revealing glory vested in a human being.

54 An Orphan's Outcry

It is impressed every now and then
That a mother is as high as heaven;
As sacred as the birthland itself;
A perennial fountain of selfless love;
A lighthouse in dark tempests of life;
An angel that wards off pranks of devil;
A source to invoke when all seems lost.
Dear God! let Thy wisdom dawn on me
As to why, while I was still an infant
You chose to recall my mother from earth.

II

You being omnipotent require no help
I, an infant, in all respects was helpless.
You being formless need no physical care
My tiny frame required someone at hand
To feed and clean; to pat and lull to sleep.
You being omniscient need no precept
Whereas I required advice at every step.
Oh, The Merciful! that bereavement lacked mercy
Oh, The Almighty! how that might was right?
Pray, dispel all these darkening doubts.

III

As I sat one day so gloomily brooding
A soothing throb set my mind at rest
As if the Creator conveyed thus to me:
'All seasons have their winsome flowers
Drab autumn thrills too as blooming spring
Children are like flowers of fascinating hues
The gardener knows better what 'll grow where.
I chose you to blossom in an arid desert
Self-help alone could teach you to endure there.'
Thanks dear Lord, I got more than I lost.

3



55 Nudity

Some hail nudity as an art
A few take to it as a mode of saintliness
Many hold it as a whim of the depraved
But the animals have no such sense.

II

A babe is born nude
A corpse before burial is bathed nude
Idols for worship are cut as nude
It is not unusual for man to go nude.

III

Dress which is peculiar to man
Symbolizes his march on way to progress
His climbing down the trees to the caves
Exploring the lands and flying in space.

IV

Nudity does not always deprave man
But dress rates him oft vain or wretched.
Even a preacher in his ceremonial robes
May not be as forthcoming as a naked sage.

56 Lolling

Lolling, indolence, laziness or idleness
Are the stages where one avoids to work.
Each mood reflects a peculiar bent of mind
Which the indulgent manages to defend.

II

Flight of fancy of an ease-loving person
Aspiring to achieve without any effort
All luxuries that wealth can purchase;
Such castles in air are called lolling.

III

Indolence is a happy-go-lucky attitude
Of those born with sustaining means.
They feel at home with the sycophants
Holding that pleasure is sole aim of life.

IV

Laziness is a tolerable craze for sloth
A lazy has no ambition to march ahead
Being complacent finds plenty in scanty
Seldom appreciates those who are earnest.

V

An idler does not like to do any work
Is crafty enough to defend his lapse
Turns deaf ear to advice and reproof
Contrives to live at the cost of others.

VI

Lolling is mostly the pastime of a human
Led by emotions; allergic to rhyme or reason
Puffed by vanity - adoring it as self-esteem
Heaves sighs of despair when faces reality.

VII

Indolence is the indulgence of a pampered few
Offspring of thoughtless prosperous parents
Like to be pampered till they can squander
Doomed to become paupers sooner than later.

VIII

An average person is lazy by disposition
A leisurely approach is his way of living
Maintenance of status quo is his conviction
Any innovation, he is reluctant to accept.

IX

An idler knows how to fabricate an excuse
Is often snubbed as a favourite of devil.
Ordinary politicians dominate this brand
Next come beggars and all such parasites.

Lavish gifts offered in a formal manner
May not reflect feelings, warm and kind
They often lend glamour to sneak desires
Marring thereby their worth and delight.

II

Greeting a visitor with a gracious smile
A sound advice given on a birthday meet
A word of cheer to a person in grief
Are peerless gifts in value and effect.

III

A costly gift expects reciprocal exchange
In form of service for an undue gain.
Its joy is neither lasting nor gladdens all
The donor beams vain, the taker feels small.

IV

Gold or garments, gadgets or diamonds
Are gifts which adorn, but do not inspire.
A book or a painting relevant to occasion
Is a priceless gift of elevating expression.

V

Gifts displaying price, lose their worth
Prove burdensome rather than causing cheer
Miss widely the mark for which they are made
Because they are shorn of affection and grace.

Moods of man are like changes in weather
Elated or depressed, morose or turbulent
Depending upon the sensitivity of mind
Or sensibility of approach to ways of life.

II

Any disturbance in the elements of nature
Light or heat, dust or air and the water
Causes changes in weather, rough or fine
Affecting moods of man by their manner.

III

Human nature, when swayed by the vices;
Pride or anger, lust or longing and the greed
Changes its moods in unpredictable ways
Exposing itself as bestial, normal or sublime.

IV

Human beings seek to trace the conflict
Even in domains of religion, science and State
Between virtue and vice, alert and inert
Haves and the poor or whites and the coloured.

V

As long as man seeks to analyse the clash
Between ego and love or power and knowledge
His mind shall remain a complex of moods
Brutish or humane and wretched or noble.

59 Tears

Tears rolling down the cheeks
Tell touching tales as they trickle
Depending upon the state of mind
Or attitude to the sways of life
Of the person who sheds them.

Tears with wails echo a dirge
A burst of grief at a bereavement;
A child lost or the spouse snatched
Untimely demise of a sibling or parent
Such tears depict the distress of mind.

Silent tears and wringing of hands
Reflect remorse of a disturbed mind
For having done a wrong in haste
Or not being able to rectify a fault
One thus regrets an inadvertant lapse.

Chilling sobs and tearing of hair
Stroking the forehead in despair
A scarf drenched with dripping tears
Upholds without any apparent proof
That the perturbed person is innocent.

Piercing sighs occasionally heaved
Tears in torrents shed when alone
A face showing outward calm
Testify that a pioneer honest and noble
Feels let down by his wavering band.

Cries of joy and spontaneous tears
A face beaming with sudden cheer
Incoherent expression of an emotion
Show that a prayer having been blessed
Hope is replacing suspense and gloom.



60 Retirement and Death

Retirement from service and death
Are similar stages in the span of life
Both mark the end of an activity
With its overall glory or indignity.
The date of former being known
Willy-nilly all get prepared for it.
The time of latter being uncertain
Many pray inwardly it may not come soon.

II

The tributes paid on these occasions
Are dissimilar in their expression
Formal speeches at a farewell meet
May not mean what is being said.
Sentiments expressed through a condolence
Are often spontaneous and touching.
Retirement does not end the worldly game
While death is the exit from the stage.

III

As longevity is on gradual increase
Post-retirement odds may confront many.
Retirement will be a blissful reward
If taken in a stride as prelude to *sanyas*
For passing the ripe years to help mankind.
It may remain a bond and a pinching bane
If one still keeps craving for hired work
And does not liberate oneself to hail death.

61 Lord! Bless them Too

When I look back on my adulthood days
To assess the gains or lapses on my part
I regret not my humble or belated start
For hope lit those days with cheering rays.
I heed not what, with glee, an upstart says
For he brags that virtue is an awful fault.
I live for a cause keeping self gains apart
Being upright, on my mind, no guilt weighs. 8

Conquest of self is my sole mode of prayer
Belief in goodness adds to my grit and will.
Fearless expression is my bliss-giving gain
With that I peel the cant layer after layer.
God by His Grace endowed me with this skill
Lord! bless them too who are selfish or vain. 14

62 The Sunset

In the mellowed evening of my life
I often sit in a corner of the roof
To watch leisurely the setting sun
Which makes me pensive by and by.

II

The silvery hair on my wrinkled face
Flow like flakes of snow in the breeze
The spectrum spreading over the horizon
Casts fascination with its charming glow.

III

The soothing scene makes me deeply serene
With gratification my face begins to beam
I too feel like nearing the destined goal
And perceive a kinship with the setting sun.

IV

After every sunset the sun rises again
To impart light and warmth to the world
Likewise the cycle of birth and death continues
To enlighten mankind with knowledge and love

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63 My Love

I am in love, deep and fervent
Not with a charming damsel in her prime.
Nor it is with my conceited self
For I crave no more for praise or pelf.

II

I am lured not by palate or lust
I stand liberated of envy and hate
I need no costly dress to increase my charm
For my new love has its own bliss and calm.

III

I love my old age which lends me grace
No longer enslaved by sensual desires
Lashed neither by anger nor stung by hearsay
Listened to with respect what I choose to say.

IV

If offered again the wildly vigorous youth
I shall not barter it for my wrinkling face
My mind is serene, my head thinks clear
Oh! old age, how intently I hold you dear.

64 The Second Childhood

As one advances in age, rather gets old
Adoration as a senior citizen rises as well
Childhood endears with its bubbling innocence
A mellowed face casts its own soothing charm.

II

A child endears for being still nearer God
In old age too one invokes God time and again
The innocence of a child makes even a stoic smile
Grace of old age instils reverence in one and all.

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III

Grandchildren feel at home with a grandparent
Caress the silvery hair with respect and love
Thus the infants and the old become playmates
Old age, often, is the coming of second childhood.

65 Old Age Pastime

Old age often is a drifting process
That pushes one away from social circle.
Declining energy calls for discreet caution
While walking, eating or even in talking.
Traffic rush renders the roads unsafe
Changing culinary tastes are hard to relish
The over-ambitious young tolerate no advice
One gets estranged even with the near ones.

II

One waits wistfully for the postal mail
Expecting letters from friends once so dear
That without them life lacked its cheer.
The letter box is mostly found empty
Or contains offers about how to invest
Or what to purchase at concessional rates.
The isolation displays symptoms of despair
Despite the recreation assured by gadgets.

III

Some people take to keeping the pets;
Dogs, cats and even wing-clipped birds
So that wagging tails, purring warm rubs
And the chirping notes ward off loneliness.
Any sustaining company such pets seldom give
Solicit lot of care to share their affection.
A prolific pen provides pleasant pastime
Lets not the wielder feel lone, when alone.

66 Epitaph to a Scholar

During a greater span of a scholar's life
A few heed him though he yearns for humanity
While he delves in books and wields his pen
He is often derided as a plodding dabbler.

II

But after his formal condolence meet
Where verbose tributes are paid to him
He starts reliving with a discovered entity
Commended in reviews and quoted in texts.

III

Strange are the ways of literary world
A living is ignored but a dead adored
While alive he braves slight and scorn
After death is with compliments mourned.

67 The Zest to Excel

In the mellowed evening of one's life
Gratifying phase of a fruitful strife
With children well-settled far and near
Empty nest at peace ; mind calm and clear
Master of time to plan work or leisure
No hurry, living with a placid measure
The only urge is to keep improving the self
With no craving to seek any power or pelf
Yet lonely feelings creep in many a time
Saddening a bit the calm rhythm and rhyme.

II

But a visit or letter from an offspring
Gives the empty nest a thrilling swing
Reminiscence of events touching or sweet
Raise the wrinkling hands to bless and greet
An elation is stirred by the filial cheers
The eyes glisten, washed with joyous tears
Bubbling affection warms both body and mind
Feelings of loneliness recede far behind
The will to improve revamps the fading zest
With an added grit to excel in that quest.

Foreword to Aspirations

(Dr Jagdish Chander)

I have gone through the collection of poems 'Aspirations' composed by Shri Hazara Singh with profit and pleasure. Some of these poems are attempted to recreate historical moments and others, a tribute to men and women whose achievements have become a part of history. All these poems are marked by a warm humanity and love for values that impart meaning and significance to human effort. I have been particularly impressed by Shri Hazara Singh's sensibility that can distil poetry out of contemporary situations. His firm grasp of English idiom, sensitivity to the rhythm and nuances of language and masterly use of traditional verse forms and stanzaic patterns make his poems fine specimens of poetic art.



Review of Aspirations

(Dr Narendarpal Singh)

Aspirations is a collection of poems by Professor Hazara Singh which ought to be a must reading for Indian students studying in the universities. Not only it engenders the spirit of patriotism, but also broadens the vision and inspires us to look around us with greater insight and intensity. Political happenings and events around India are no less important subjects for poetry than one's personal longings and woes of love. I do hope that Prof. Hazara Singh will continue to write more in this strain for it is time that poetry in India gets away from being purely and utterly romantic.



Campus Times, November 1980, P.A.U., Ludhiana

Foreword to *Yearnings*

(Dr Amarjit Singh)

I am elated to know that Professor Hazara Singh is bringing out another collection of poems under the title *Yearnings*. I have read them many times; in fact, I had the privilege to read them first of all, when they were composed. I have watched with keen interest the efflorescence of Professor Hazara Singh's poetic talent. He started writing poetry at an advanced age. So he is a poet of the 'head' rather than of 'heart'. Moreover, true to the Indian tradition, he believes that poetry is for improving an individual and not just for entertaining him. In this respect he is akin to the great poets of the land of five rivers such as Dr Mohammed Iqbal and Professor Puran Singh.

The very titles of the forty two poems in this collection illustrate his concept of poetry. Generally, Indians have a habit of creating unhappiness around them. Professor Hazara Singh's poems make people realize that happiness is the supreme goal of life, and no one can be happy unless he is in harmony with his fellow beings. His poetry transcends geographical borders. For him the Chinese and the Pakistanis, too, are our brethren. He inspires us to emulate the Indian revolutionaries and men like Abraham Lincoln. His is a joy-giving poetry which is not ethereal but is earthy. He does not describe a waste land or depict individual neurosis. He believes that by correct approach man can convert this earth into heaven. He puts before us the ideal of a 'Clean and Bright World'. He truly remarks,

*"The sweeper, reformer and the writer
Make our world cleaner and brighter".*



Preface to *Yearnings*

(H. S.)

The poem 'Poetry' in this text is an appropriate preface thereto. *Aspirations* to *Yearnings* marks a transformation in my attitude and expression. The former was published in 1980 and dealt mostly with persons and events that had become legends in history. A due consideration was given along with the matter to metre, rhyme, and rhythm; the ornaments of poetic expression. As one advances in age, the verity of eternal values begins to impress the heart and the head equally. Accordingly *Yearnings* contains the reflections which communicate restraint and introspection.

Writing in English has an added advantage and a corresponding obligation. The advantage lies in the fact that English being the language of peoples belonging to different lands, races, colours and religions offers a wide spectrum of readership. As people all over have a yearning to live with understanding and reciprocal appreciation, a writer in English has an obligation to address himself to the global fraternity for strengthening the bonds emanating from rationalism and humanism. *Yearnings* is a modest endeavour in that direction.

Poetry is often complimented as being next to gospel in its domain and approach. An effort has been made through these pieces to expound the ethical precepts, not in a mystical but in a lucid manner for deepening their effect. Concepts derogatory to women and harmful to children have been exposed. Poems like 'I Am Man' and 'The Glory of a Woman' can claim to be science poetry. *Yearnings*, thus, reflects my faith in the motto 'World brotherhood and understanding through poetry'.



Review of Yearnings

(Dr Harin Kumari Majithia)

A beautifully bound collection of forty two poems, *Yearnings*, is authored by the well-known Indo-Anglian writer, Hazara Singh. His versatile personality gets portrayed impressively through these verses, covering a wide spectrum of human aspirations and the pursuits suggested therefor. The poems 'I Am Man', 'The Glory of a Woman', 'Know Thyself', and 'The Art of Life' set the trend in that direction. One is indeed lifted above the routine involvement with ordinary emotions, when the poet exhorts :

*"If you have the will to live and courage to die
You are a beacon-light for people, far and wide".*

(The Person I Am Looking For)

His subtle perception of mundane affairs and the clarion call to fight against injustice, whatever be its form, moulds our determination for striving accordingly:

*"I 'll brook no more the pinch of race or colour
Through fairness for all will work for excellence".*

(I Am Man)

'To a Child - A Father's Pledge' is quite educative for the otherwise busy parents and reminds them of an equally important obligation of winning the child over instead of winning over him :

*"Dear child, my ties with you are a sacred trust
Not of mere flesh and blood, but to make of you
A noble and enlightened citizen of tomorrow".*

'Epitaph to a Scholar' refers to the questionable way of the working of literary organisations and the prevalent indifference which the writers, not believing in manipulated awards, have to put up :

*"During a greater span of a scholar's life
A few heed him though he yearns for humanity
While he delves in books and wields his pen
He is often derided as a plodding dabbler".*

Poems like 'Hatred', 'Lonesomeness', 'Tears', 'A Decisive Moment' and 'Moods' reveal the deep insight which the poet has got of the complex human nature.

The success of *Yearnings* lies in the fact that the reader's curiosity keeps sharpening even by the time he reaches its last page and yearns still to be told more and more by the poet.

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Yearnings - Pure and Very Noble

(Dr Sulekha Sharma)

In Hazara Singh's poetry the poet is supreme and is foregrounded. The reader does not think in terms of poetry but in terms of the poet and his commitments and there is something vulnerable there, a shadow of the lost enchanted world. The poet has arrived at a spiritual Byzantium which he populates with choice people and ideas and values.

In the "mellowed evening of my (his) life" he sits with a handful of gleaned memories, yearnings and nostalgia. Informing the choice is a structural moral order of piety, tolerance and selflessness. It is an exclusive world made desirable by offsetting it with a sense of lost golden age. His yearnings are peaceful, tranquil but purposeful.

Reader's yearnings are triggered off for the majestic world that produced men of the order of Netaji, Bhagat Singh, Sarabha, Lincoln, Tagore and Gandhi (Mahatma). These were socially committed men who engaged empires and changed the destinies of nations and restructured human conscience. The poet's concerns are empirical and material, this-worldly and related to the social state of man.

By reminding us of those men, of their achievements and of their larger than life predicaments, he is pointing a finger at the depraved social conscience of today's leaders, in power or out of it, of wanton killers and of brutalised condoners, scramblers after power and blindly intoxicated thereby, behaving like rogue elephants among lambs. Where is Lincoln, the :

"Apostle of global goodwill, path-finder for humanity

.....
Upright in his thinking and humane in all dealings",

who :

*"Laid down his life to establish for all the right
To live with heads high, free of scare and fright",*

and after having won the long tortuous war :

*"With no malice in his mind, ill will towards none
He hastened to assure all whether foe or friend
That the era of hate and fear had come to a firm end".*

Mahatma Gandhi's :

*"Precepts and practices made you (him) an apt mason
Clans evolved as a nation under your (his) lofty plan".*

Bhagat Singh

*"..... kissed the gallows in his prime
To break the chains which enslaved the motherland".*

The poet in vain looks for the person who :

*".....does not get lowered in your (his) own eyes
While you (he) raise yourself(himself) in those of others".*

The linguistic choices for poetic expression also are witness to the stilled water in the subconsciousness. The verbs have no movement. Almost all of them are auxiliary, delineating relationships and juxtaposing subjects and complements, objects and compliments, subjects and adverbials.

The diction is reminiscent of Popian era with its highly moral tone. Words like envy, hate, vice, sin, wicked, bestial, remorse, devil, incarnate, *sanyas*, faithful, scorn, virtue, upright (an almost forgotten virtue), desires, sings, flaunts, doomed, lured, *etc.* abound and resound here and there in the text.

Of course there are poetic concerns too ; 'Lonesomeness', 'My Love', 'The Sunset', 'Death', 'Nudity', 'Moods', 'Bed of Thorns', and 'Tears'. There are also reflections as life's crucial anxieties; 'Culture', 'Poetry', 'A Decisive Moment', 'On Erring', 'Forgiving and Forgetting', and 'The Art of Life'.

Hazara Singh's volume of verses should be read to arrest our confounded strays into the jungle of beastliness and to remind us of our heritage of humanity.



The Tribune, June 11, 1988, Chandigarh.

Poetry Time, Vol. XIV, No.4, Autumn Number, 1991, Berhampur.

Indian Book Chronicle, Vol. XXI, Nos. 3 & 4, March - April, 1996, Jaipur.

Metverse Muse, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1996, Visakhapatnam.

Delectably Different : A Review

(Prof. K.S. Venkataramu)

Prof. Hazara Singh's poetry is delectably different from the generality of modern poetry of Indo-Anglia; for he belongs to the tradition of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Michael Madhusudan, *et al.*

Prof. Singh's neat iambic pentameters are exceedingly pleasing to the ears of those who are accustomed to the cadence of lyrical poetry, be it classical or romantic. His sonnets on great men of past, such as Tagore, Gandhi, *et al.* are written in such an impeccable copy-book style that they appear to have been made to order for a secondary school teacher to teach his wards.

The poet, in his preface, has very aptly observed :

*'As one advances in age, the verity of eternal values
begins to impress the heart and the head equally'*

and it is the essence of these eternal values that has obviously imparted restraint and introspection to the poems in *Yearnings*.

Dr Amarjit Singh in his foreword has also rightly observed that Hazara Singh is a poet of the head rather than of heart.

Despite his self-imposed restraint, his sane voice and the inclination for words of sober hue, there are many pleasingly memorable lines in Prof. Singh's poems here and there :

"The sweeper, reformer and the writer

Make our world cleaner and brighter"

(Clean and Bright World)

"Pride, hate and fear keep a man blind,

Conceit isolates, malice makes him unkind"

(New Year Wishes and Greetings)

*"A word which is as widely abused as love
Is lonesomeness, all idlers complain of it"*

(Lonesomeness)

and

*"Darkness is a simile of ignorance
Whereas light is a symbol of knowledge
Sweet words and righteous deeds
Make a person lovable and refined".*

(Culture)

It is likely that the young, with their exuberant drive and corresponding indifference towards ethical restraint and reflections, may not be touched by Prof. Singh's mature poetic expressions, but the aged know what is good for the world. They find in his poetry solace to alleviate the pains and tribulations of mankind.

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A Mixed Treat

(Prof. K. Jagannathan)

Yearnings by Prof. Hazara Singh offers a mixed treat, which elevates the mind, sharpens the intellect and enriches vocabulary of the reader through elegant diction.

In *Aspirations*, his first book of poetry, Hazara Singh observed mostly conventional rhyme, rhythm and metre of classical poetry. But in *Yearnings* he did not stick to such impositions. He states, instead :

*"Poetry is not a choice of words
For creating rhythm and rhyme
It is a spontaneous expression
Of feelings noble and divine".*

(Poetry)

The first poem in *Yearnings* 'The Person I Am Looking For' delineates impressively the concept of an ideal human being :

*"If you crave not for applause when you win
And look not for sympathy while you lose
If praise makes not your head toss and spin
And after a setback you offer no excuse
You may be the person, I have been looking for".*

In 'I Am Man' he exposes the frailties in human nature, inbred by unequitable social order and resolves to rectify them :

*"I 'll brook no more the pinch of race or colour
Through fairness for all will work for excellence".*

The poems 'To Our Pakistani Brethren' and 'China and India' advocate the desirability of forgetting the causes of ill

will and learning instead to live with peace and mutual understanding.

The sonnets on martyrs narrate inspiring their role in eradicating imperialism :

*"You declared that imperialism was a heinous crime
Against man, whatever be his colour, race or land"*

(At the Tomb of Bhagat Singh)

"Liberator of the East, you tolled imperialism's knell".

(Subhas Chander Bose - Liberator of the East)

Like the verses in Bharthuhari's *Nitisatahas*, many poems in *Yearnings*, viz. 'Gifts', 'Moods', 'Hatred', 'Ingratitude', 'Know Thyself', *et al.* convey impressively the eternal values. 'The Sunset' is in consonance with our scriptural belief about the immortality of soul :

*"After every sunset the sun rises again
To impart light and warmth to the world
Likewise the cycle of birth and death continues
To enlighten mankind with knowledge and love".*

Yearnings is a fascinating collection dealing with a wide spectrum of subjects. The reader expects that the poet will keep aspiring and yearning.

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Humanist as Poet

(Dr Amarjit Singh)

Hazara Singh started writing poetry rather late in life. Earlier, he used prose for creative, critical and journalistic pursuits. As an experienced teacher of languages and communication, he must have a valid reason to switch over from prose to verse. Surely in his case, change of medium cannot be like changing horses in midstream. In response to a questionnaire he spelt the reason therefor as :

'Poetry is an art with a purpose. The adage that a picture is worth one thousand words is equally applicable to poetry. A piece of verse, in spite of its brevity is more suggestive than a long exercise in prose'.

He also holds that the main purpose of poetry is to elevate the readers. He does not subscribe to the 'pleasure principle in poetry', but stands for 'literature of reality and confrontation'. He aims at improvement through education. He believes firmly:

'God has blessed every creature with a distinctive quality, which should be discovered and developed to make this world richer in thought and nobler in effect than the one in which one was born'.

Apart from his reformatory zeal, the other aspect of Hazara Singh's personality that gets reflected in his poetry is his active association with the struggle for freedom. It is palpable in the choice of subjects, their treatment and the general tone of his poems.

It is said that a teacher teaches, a good teacher illustrates and an ideal teacher inspires. Hazara Singh in his teaching

career, spread over there decades, inspired two generations of students by placing before them the aspirations of outstanding personalities of the world as models. Paying a full-throated tribute to Abraham Lincoln, he writes :

*“Rough diamond in appearance, noble in his feelings
Upright in his thinking and humane in all dealings
Laid down his life to establish for all the right
To live with heads high, free of scare and fright”.*

In a way, he is continuing the same task through his poetry even now for a larger audience. He says :

*‘As one advances in age the verity of eternal values
begins to impress the heart and the head
correspondingly. The poems of my post-retirement
period are addressed mostly to the global fraternity
for strengthening the bonds emanating from
rationalism and humanism’.*

He strives to create an awareness among the readers to bring about an era

‘Where the mind is broad and the head, cool and clear’
so that the dignity of individual and collective glory of human race get enhanced.

Thus, Hazara Singh has a message for mankind that is divided here and there by caste, colour and considerations; communal, political and economic. He has deliberately chosen poetry as medium to impress the much needed message of liberty, fraternity and equality.

Some persons assert that poetry should not be didactic. On the other hand, we have in India a long tradition of poetry being used to refine morals, to bring about understanding among communities and to create harmony among nations. This was so in ancient times, in medieval period and holds equally in modern age. The greatest poet of the Punjab in the twentieth century, Dr Mohammed Iqbal used his poetic talent to create a 'new man' and thus a 'new world'. Hazara Singh in this respect

is, in a way, continuing the oriental tradition of poetry for a 'better life' and a 'better world'.

Hazara Singh has published poems in numerous national and international journals, and brought out two volumes of verses, viz. *Aspirations* (1980) and *Yearnings* (1987). Some of his poems have been translated into Indian and foreign languages. The poems in *Aspirations* were divided into different sections i.e. events, neighbours, great men, martyrs, etc. Late Professor Jagdish Chander in the foreword thereto called these poems 'fine specimens of poetic art' and observed

'... these are marked by a warm humanity and a love for values that impart meaning and significance to human efforts'.

The poet therein confined himself to a selected range of subjects and stuck to traditional verse forms and stanzaic patterns. These self-imposed limitations had advantages as well as disadvantages, because while on the one hand they indicated the writer's admiration for certain legendary persons and reflected his mastery over traditional poetic devices such as rhyme, form and diction, on the other hand they certainly obstructed the free flow of his creative talent.

In *Yearnings* Hazara Singh broadened the choice of subjects and transcended the traditional forms and patterns. Dr. Sulekha Sharma, in her review of the book in *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, wrote :

'The poet has arrived at a spiritual Byzantium which he populates with choice people, ideals and values'.

In addition to historic events and historical personalities in this volume, he writes about life, death, joy, sorrow, envy, hatred, ingratitude, love, friendship, forgiving and forgetting, culture, etc. He is endeavouring to know himself and exhorting the readers too to know themselves. In his own way he is restating the ancient Indian wisdom which tells people to discover their own selves i.e. *tatvamasi*, 'that thou art'.

In an introspective mood he writes :

*"Conquest of self is my sole mode of prayer
Belief in goodness adds to my grit and will.
Fearless expression is my bliss-giving gain
With that I peel the cant layer after layer.
God by His Grace endowed me with this skill
Lord! bless them too who are selfish or vain".*

Self-knowledge has given to his poetry a new lustre and extended the sphere of his love even to encompass those who are sizzling with negative emotions and thinking. He forgives them and seeks God's blessings for them so that this world becomes a tranquil place to live in. Evil no longer disheartens him and death does not frighten him. The setting sun is no more a metaphor for the approaching end. He sings joyfully :

*"After every sunset the sun rises again
To impart light and warmth to the world.
Likewise the cycle of birth and death continues
To enlighten mankind with knowledge and love".*

Hazara Singh, the humanist, became a poet and now he is set well on his way to becoming a seer.

Dr Sulekha Sharma in her review *ibid.* observes :

*'Hazara Singh's volume of verses should be read to
arrest our confounded strayings into the jungle of
beastliness and to remind us of our heritage of humanity'.*

Hazara Singh's poetry is profound, elevating and ennobling.
Late Dr V.K. Gokak compliments him as :

*'All these reveal an innate sensibility which
is lighted up by experience and intensified by
a highly sensitive temperament'.*



Poetcrit, Vol VIII, No. 2, July, 1995, Maranda..

Kavita India, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 1995, Muzaffarpur.

Poets International, Vol. X, No. 7, October 1995, Bangalore.

Metverse Muse, Vol. I, No. 2, July 1996, Visakhapatnam.

Hazara Singh as a Poet

(Dr Bijay Kant Dubey)

Hazara Singh, formerly Head, Department of Journalism, Languages & Culture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, has made a valuable contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry through *Yearnings* published by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. He started writing poems in English at an advanced age hence mellowed experience precludes youthful fancy in his poetry. Dr Amarjit Singh who wrote foreword to *Yearnings* observes :

'...His is a joy-giving and healthy poetry which is not ethereal but is earthy. He does not describe a waste land or depict individual neurosis. He believes that by correct approach man can convert this earth into heaven'.

Hazara Singh took part in the freedom movement; suffered imprisonment as well as forfeiture of scholarship, medals and other academic rewards as a consequence thereof. The partition of India in 1947, which uprooted millions, was another holocaust which he braved in the prime of his life. These calamities did not embitter him, but made him a realist. The strength of mind, clarity of head, tolerance in behaviour and optimism in outlook, which he developed while facing with grit the vicissitudes of life, form the background of his writings. The wrath of imperialism against freedom fighters did not narrow his nationalism, rather blended his urge for freedom with rationalism and humanism. While he pays tribute to martyrs and revolutionaries of the freedom struggle of India, who carried out a determined campaign against imperialism, he lauds too the role of benefactors of humanity at large, who laid down their lives to eradicate racial discrimination and religious fanaticism.

In the sonnet 'At the Tomb of Bhagat Singh' he extols the martyr :

*"You declared that imperialism was a heinous crime
Against man, whatever be his colour, race or land
And to wipe it out, you raised a patriotic band
Sulking India got upsurged by their heroic rhyme".*

He pays a full-throated tribute to Abraham Lincoln also in the same vein :

*"Tall man with a big heart destined to be great
Died for an ideal which altered mankind's fate
People singed with hatred or sulking under fear
Find Abraham Lincoln an unfailing guide and seer".*

He hails Mahatma Gandhi likewise :

*"Your plain words and firm deeds served to awaken
A process of integration they did inwardly hasten
In the march for freedom you remained in the van.*

.....
*Your spinning wheel shook off the Crown and Rod
You laid down your life for ending communal strife
'Gandhi! The Father of Nation' every Indian claims".*

According to him, even a manual job for its being a labour of love, is commendable for it makes the world worth-living:

*"Cleanliness being next to godliness
A sweeper improves the worldliness*

.....
*The sweeper, reformer and the writer
Make our world cleaner and brighter".*

(Clean and Bright World)

His quest for a 'new man' is for a person whom:
jealousy does not sizzle, for he,

"...accepts others without frown and scoff";

(The Person I Am Looking For, line 14)

flattery does not mislead, for

"Praise makes not his head toss and spin";

(ibid. line 8)

backbiting does not prejudice, for he,

*".....does not succumb to gossips and lies
But dismisses them calmly saying 'Who bothers';*
(ibid. lines 3 & 4)

pride does not derange, because,

"Conceit isolates, malice makes him unkind";
(New Year Wishes and Greetings, line 2, II)

hatred does not singe, as he forgives and forgets, because,

*"Cursing is a consuming vice and sin
Robs worldly joys and the bliss of heaven"*
(Forgiving and Forgetting)

and the nudity does not deprave, for,

*"Even a preacher in his ceremonial robes
May not be as forthcoming as a naked sage".*
(Nudity)

His seasoned inference, based on life-long observations,
holds :

*"If you do not get lowered in your own eyes
While you raise yourself in those of others
.....
You may be the person, I have been looking for".*
(The Person I Am Looking For, Stanza I)

The person, he has found out, continues to progress :

*"Released from the grip of myths
Man is evolving his new entity
His mind is getting broadened
Under benign effects of liberty".*
(Poetry)

The man, released from the grip of myths, proclaims :

*"I am man, master of his fate, captain of his will
Not to reach heaven, but to make one, is his goal.
Where real worth, not mere birth, gets its reward
Where the mind is broad ; the head cool and clear".*
(I Am Man, lines 3-6, III)

He is equally clear about his goal :

*"I am man for whom colonial rules are a crime
That offends against human dignity and equality.
I'll brook no more the pinch of race or colour
Through fairness for all will work for excellence".*

(ibid. 3-6, V)

Hazara Singh, in spite of his being in seventies, neither has any fear of approaching death nor regrets his having been ignored for any literary recognition. He believes in action without any expectation of reciprocal reward. He is emphatic :

*"If you have the will to live and courage to die
You are a beacon-light for people far and wide".*

(The Person I am Looking For. lines 17-18)

He treats death as :

*"A festival in company with friends
A theme for sublime verse for a poet
'Mere physical end' for a realist".*

(Death)

'Epitaph to a Scholar' refers to the casual attitude of literary organisations towards creative writers who do not believe in manipulating the awards :

*"Strange are the ways of literary world
A living is ignored but a dead adored
While alive he braves slight and scorn
After death is with compliments mourned".*

Yearnings with its refined language, lofty themes and enlightening presentation offers a rewarding fare to readers of all domains. Even the topics reflecting a tinge of sadness such as 'Death', 'Fire: Hot and Cold', 'On Erring', 'Lonesomeness', 'Bed of Thorns' and 'Tears' convey an elating message. The permanent worth of *Yearnings* is sustained by the urge which a reader feels for going through it periodically to be recreated and transformed. □

Metverse Muse, Vol. I, No. I, January 1996, Visakhapatnam.

Poetcrit, Vol. IX, No.1, January 1996, Maranda.

Readers' View

(Paramjit K. Saini)

I was touched by Dr B. K. Dubey's excellent write-up 'Hazara Singh as a Poet'. Dr Dubey carefully selected profound and meaningful quotes from his poems which provide great insight into all dimensions of life. Prof. Hazara Singh's poetry represents a world of light and love glittering with hope and empowerment to buoy us through dark moments of life.

He approaches the maladies of life as a humanist and strives to solve them with the panacea of values. Whether it is 'Ingratitude' that :

"..... bites deep"

or it is 'Hatred' that :

"Causes untold suffering to nature and man",

he believes still that :

"To forgive and forget is a godly act".

The spectrum of human feelings, from sublime glory to bestial degradation, has been aptly described as :

"Humanism emanates from prayers

Goodwill spreads through smiles

Discord follows curses".

He is a great teacher; the names of those who preached such precepts ring like a hall of fame for humanity. We hear in him enlightening sermons of the Buddha, great wisdom of Confucious, inspiring address of Abraham Lincoln and spiritual message of Moses and Jesus. Whenever we want to make a point, inspire a friend or teach a child, we will find just the right verse in the

heartwarming treasury of *Yearnings*. Here is a poet who has opened many minds and rekindled many souls with his vision and integrity. He is a philosopher, a teacher, a guide, a motivator.... he is also my father.

The petitionary prayer which he offers every morning epitomizes the ideas which he has expressed through his various poems.

Prayer

The Almighty ! Creator of this universe, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Beneficent, I beseech :

‘Bless the human beings inhabiting all parts of the globe whether they invoke You as God, Allah, Parmatama, Akal Purakh or with any such reverential name;

that rising above the segregation and the discrimination, based on religious faith, racial or ethnic hierarchies, language, race, caste, gender and the affinity emanating from place of birth;

they look upon the entire mankind as a universal fraternity, entitled to equality, dignity and economic justice; and grant that resources, knowledge, skill and efforts of the world be devoted

to eradicate warped social perceptions, ignorance and superstitious beliefs; .

to overcome avarice, ego and ill temper which corrupt human mind and social values polluting the natural environments as well;

may one and all, thus, get rid of ethnocentrism and fanaticism;

may children be brought up with love, persuasion and practice befitting precept;

may women command respect in society but strive all the while for maintaining a reciprocal balance between their rights and obligations;

may the aged, the handicapped and the forlorn get extended spontaneous care as well as consideration, setting in, thus, an era of love, understanding and empathy; and

may the Divine Grace with which You infused man at the time of his birth keep radiating through the entire human race, leading, thereby, to truth, justice, love and harmony'.

Amen.

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How I Became a Poet

I recall the incidents, episodes and motives which influenced my creative expression in verse.

Rupert Brooke, Poet Laureate of U.K. composed a few sonnets after the First World War for expressing pride of his nation in the young who had laid down their lives to save their country from the onslaught of Axis Powers. Ever since I read them in the college textbooks, I had been feeling an urge to describe the valorous acts of our martyrs of the freedom struggle in the same vein. I was arrested in October 1945 for leading the Save-I.N.A. campaign and was lodged in the Central Jail, Lahore. I was allowed to move freely in its precincts with the courtesy of R.B.Beni Chand Katoch, Jail Superintendent. Just as Byron was moved on visiting the dungeons of Chillon, I got stirred likewise on seeing the cell where Kartar Singh Sarabha had been tortured. I uttered spontaneously:

"Sarabha! you came as a meteor to show us light".

On observing the scaffold where Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been hanged, I exclaimed :

"Bhagat Singh! you kissed the gallows in your prime".

Such expressions kept buzzing in my mind.

The partition of India in 1947 with its concomitant carnage, plunder, dislocation and indignities left an indelible mark on my memories of that holocaust. My feelings erupted like a volcano when the Pakistani Military Junta perpetrated wide-spread massacre, mass rapes and callous destruction of

property in the then East Pakistan. 'The Wail of a Bangla Girl' was my first poem. The victim protests thus to the marauders and the U.N. Forums :

*"Why was I raped? A daughter of same religion,
Why was I ravished? A chaste promising citizen.
Was I an aided armour to be installed in trenches?
Tortured and tormented, gripped in lustful wrenches
Torn of kith and kin, shorn of womanly treasure,
The child I do carry, is neither my sin nor pleasure.
I invoke the U.N. Forums which backed the crusaders
Thousands wail like me, victims of wicked raiders".*

Thus I gatecrashed into the domain of poetry.

I considered it an obligation to share the thrills and aspirations of freedom struggle with the post-independence generations so that they continued to relish those lofty ideals for deriving inspiration from them. I wrote on men and events that had become legends in history through their crusades against imperialism, fanaticism and racialism. The sonnet 'Subhas Chander Bose : Liberator of the East' reads :

*"Subhas! you retrieved lost honour by reviving our valour
When stupor of slavery had made us a worthless number
Your clarion call awakened us from an age-old slumber
Our heads rose high and faces shedded their pallor
You spurned the I.C.S. in spite of its pomp and glamour
Deeming it not a laurel but sheer dead weight and lumber
Because the march to freedom it did intriguingly cumber
You believed in action and not in protests and clamour".*

The sonnet 'Mahatma Gandhi' concludes as :

*"You treated the untouchables as children of God
You raised woman high in every walk of life
You gave us the Tricolour to symbolize our aims
Your spinning wheel shook off the Crown and Rod
You laid down your life for ending communal strife
Gandhi 'The Father of Nation' every Indian claims".*

The tribute to Abraham Lincoln eulogizes him :

*"The great Abraham Lincoln, torch-bearer of equality
Apostle of global goodwill, path-finder for humanity
Rough diamond in appearance, noble in his feelings
Upright in his thinking and humane in all dealings,
Laid down his life to establish for all the right
To live with heads high, free of scare and fright
Colour or religion which often depends on birth
Should not deny anyone the reward of real worth".*

For impressing on our neighbours that wars do not solve any problem and it is in mutual interest to live in peace, the poem 'To Our Pakistani Brethren' begins as :

*"How long will you writhe under fear and hate?
How long will you threaten of fire and sword?
How long will clouds of war hang on our fate?
How long will arms consume our toil and gold?
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood",*

and it concludes as :

*"Poverty is the worst enemy of our lands
Wars, hot and cold, make us further poor,
To help each other let us join our hands
No other counsel than this shall be truer.
Oh! pause and ponder, our own flesh and blood".*

Likewise the poem 'China and India' pleads :

*"China and India whom nature made as neighbours
In mere ill will should not waste their labours
Both have age-old ties, cultural and religious
Cradles of civilizations, noble and prodigious
Lands that gave birth to the Buddha and Confucious
Who showed a way of life, inspiring and illustrious
Should follow themselves teachings of those sages
For creating goodwill where rancour wildly rages".*

I do not subscribe to the pleasure principle in poetry but stand for literature of reality and confrontation. The poem 'I Am Man' is a protest against myths and superstitions. It reads:

*"I am man, not the supreme among His creation
But evolved through ages from monkeys and apes.
I am man, who will himself make a heaven
Of this earth which is not the centre of universe
But a speck on the brim of astronomical disc
To live on which is not exile but quite a thrill".*

The scientific outlook and progressive ideas, based on equality and dignity of individual, have led to the improvement of status of woman in a marvellous manner. She has developed confidence to claim :

*"I am woman, not that who led to the banishment
Of Adam from heaven and his fall below on earth.
They misjudge me and wrong themselves who think
That I am man's misfortune for I entice him oft
They lead empty lives with minds quite depraved.
I neither caused the loss of paradise nor tempt
Those who meditate aloof to communicate with God.
I symbolize heaven itself if they care to perceive.*

*I am not full of guile, jealousy is not my instinct
Frailty is not my name nor I am the cause of wars
These are the ravings of minds, petty and perverse
For they take me as a doll without any will or soul".*

I am often asked what do I write for. The opening lines of my poem 'The Human Spirit' provide an appropriate reply as :

*"I am the striving spirit of man
Which seeks social justice and equality
Dignity of individual for one and all
To bring about an era of love and peace".*

Through enlightened efforts and introspection I am in search
of a man who strives for all-round excellence :

*"I am man, who adores not poverty as a divine bliss
But treats it as a loot through unfair distribution.
I am man, for whom colonial rules are a crime
That offends against human dignity and equality
I 'll brook no more the pinch of race or colour
Through fairness for all will work for excellence".*

I hold firmly that poetry is an art with a purpose. It should
recreate as well as elevate. That is why I prefer it as a mode of
communication with others and my own self.

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All India Radio, Jalandhar. March 31, 1996.
Metverse Muse, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1996, Visakhapatnam.
Advance, October- December 1996, Chandigarh.

Interview With Prof. Hazara Singh

*(Through a questionnaire by Dr Atma Ram, Formerly Director of
Education, Himachal Pradesh)*

- Q.1. *When and why did you start your creative career ?*
Q.2. *Was there any incident/episode/motivation behind it ?*

Rupert Brooke, the Poet Laureate of U.K. during the twenties of this century, composed a few sonnets to express pride of his nation in the young, who laid down their lives in the First World War to save their country from the onslaught of Axis Powers. Eversince I read them in the college textbooks, I had been feeling an urge to describe the valorous acts of our martyrs of the freedom struggle in a similar vein.

I was arrested for leading the Save-INA campaign and lodged in the Central Jail, Lahore. With the courtesy of R.B. Beni Chand Katoch, Jail Superintendent, I was allowed to move freely in its precincts. Just as Byron was moved on visiting the dungeons of Chillon, I got stirred likewise on seeing the cell where Kartar Singh Sarabha had been tortured. I uttered spontaneously :

"Sarabha! you came as a meteor to show us light".

On observing the scaffold where Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been hanged, I exclaimed :

"Bhagat Singh! you kissed the gallows in your prime".

Such expressions kept buzzing in my mind. Partition of India in 1947 with its concomitant carnage, plunder, dislocation and indignities left an indelible mark on my memories of the holocaust. My feelings erupted like a volcano when the Pakistani military junta perpetrated wide-spread massacre, mass rapes and callous destruction of property in East Pakistan.

'The Wail of Bangla Girl' was my first poem. The victim protests thus to marauders and the U.N. Forums :

*"Why was I raped? A daughter of same religion
Why was I ravished? A chaste promising citizen
Was I an aided armour to be installed in trenches?
Tortured and tormented, gripped in lustful wrenches
Torn of kith and kin, shorn of womanly treasure
The child, I do carry, is neither my sin nor pleasure.
I invoke the U. N. Forums, which backed the crusaders
Thousands wail like me, victims of wicked raiders".*
(Aspirations, p.5)

Thus I gatecrashed into the domain of poetry.

Q. 3. *What are your hobbies?*

Gardening; story telling to children, self-amusement through musing :

*"Watching from a corner the children play
Strolling in the blooming parks and groves
Listening to the symphony of chirping birds
Observing the beauty of setting sun".*

(‘Lonesomeness’ Yearings, p. 49)

Q. 4. *The kind of readers/audience you write for?*

During the seventies I considered it an obligation to share the thrills and aspirations of freedom struggle with the post-independence generations so that they continued to relish those lofty ideals and derive inspiration from them. Hence I wrote mostly on men and events that became legends in history. As one advances in age the verity of eternal values begins to impress the heart and the head correspondingly.

The poems of my post-retirement period are mostly addressed to the global fraternity for strengthening the bonds emanating from rationalism and humanism.

Q. 5. *To what extent is your writing autobiographical/symbolic?*

My short stories are mostly autobiographical.

My scientific temper, influenced by legal approach to themes, renders my essays expository.

The poems are generally symbolic of my belief in the motto 'World brotherhood and understanding through poetry'. Attention is drawn to my article 'Poetry as a Vision for Humanity'. (*Kavita India*, Vol. V, Nos. 1-4, April 92-March 1993).

Q.6. *The writers who influenced you the most? Your favourite authors?*

I could not pursue a planned educational career as I had to earn to learn. History had been my favourite subject. Law was my ambition, Mathematics was my guardian for it offered a wide field for tuition work for enabling me to be a self-supporting student, but English happened to be the only subject notwithstanding my other electives in B.A., in which I could get Master's degree without regular class attendance. My participation in freedom struggle extracted greater part of my attention to non-academic pursuits. It is a confession that I did not read any of the prescribed text books or the suggested reference sources. The proficiency in English, which I had been developing ever since my school days in spite of my rural background had been an asset. Just as Charles Dickens claimed himself to be the graduate of London streets, likewise adversity had been my varsity and an optimistic outlook my tool of learning from the ups and downs of life. Dr. V. K. Gokak, after going through my published work described, thus, the influences on me :

'... All these reveal an innate sensibility which is lighted up by experience and intensified by a highly sensitive temperament. All this has its roots in the solid bed soil in experience'.

During my teaching career Rabindra Nath Tagore fascinated me. I contributed the article 'Tagore and Shakespeare' during his birth centenary celebrations. I admired Bertrand Russell for his objective exposition. My science writing reflects his influence on my style.

Q.7. *Is writing spontaneous for you?*

Dr Amarjit Singh who wrote foreword for my book *Yearnings* described me as poet of the 'head' rather than of 'heart'. My writings are mostly deliberate.

Q.8. *Why do you write at all?*

The opening stanza of my poem 'The Human Spirit' provides an appropriate reply as :

*"I am the striving spirit of man
Which seeks social justice and equality,
Dignity of individual for one and all
To bring about an era of love and peace".*

Q.9. *How would you describe the process of creativity in your case?*

The scientific bent of mind keeps me inquisitive and makes my writing both precise and concise. The legal approach lends it orderliness and consistency. The facility with which I can express myself imparts it freshness through diction. The exhortation by Robert Browning :

'The best of life is yet to be'
keeps me young in mind and spirit. Thus, while appreciating as well as creating

"I keep striving for all-round excellence".

(The Human Spirit)

Q.10. *How often do you revise your writing?*

My writing being a deliberate expression, revision thereof, is not often required.

Q.11. *How do you define a (i) Poem (ii) Short story (iii) Novel?*

Stanzas (i) and (iii) from my poem 'Poetry' exclaim :

*"Poetry is not a romantic thrill
Sent by beauty, youth or wine
Nor it is a mode of invocation
To be inspired by powers divine.*

*Poetry is not a choice of words
For creating rhythm and rhyme
It is a spontaneous expression
Of feelings noble and sublime".*

(Yearnings, p. 54)

Short Story : Any touching incident/ observation from day to day life, described correctly, turns out to be an interesting short story. (Refer to 'Three Questions' and 'Wedding Rings')

Novel is not my domain.

Q.12. *What is your philosophy of life?*

God has blessed every creature with a distinctive quality which should be discovered and developed to make this world richer in thought and nobler in effect than the one in which one was born.

My poem 'The Art of Life' describes health, patience, intelligence and sympathetic heart as requirements for a happy and fruitful life :

"Heaven on earth he finds for he leads life as an art".

(Yearnings, p.25)

Q.13. *What according to you are the distinctive features of (a) Indian Poetry in English, (b) Indian fiction in English and (c) Indian shorter fiction in English?*

Q.14. *Do you think Indian writing in English needs Indian aesthetics to evaluate it properly? Your views on Indian English?*

The phrase 'Indian English' is as much a misnomer as Malayalam or Tamil Hindi could be. The Constitution of India has accepted English as one of the official languages of the Union. The interim arrangement seems to have acquired permanence. The Sahitya Akademi awards prizes to writers in English, *not in Indian English*. 'Angrezi Hatao' agitations branding English as the language of our one time rulers fizzled out gradually. Our growing contact with English speaking people in countries other than U.K. also lends a new dimension to our

approach to English. We are members of an international cultural fraternity destined to play a historic role.

The Indian writers in English, most of them being bilingual, with their cultural background have not only enriched our literature in regional languages, but have played an important role also in making English a language of universal communication. My article 'Importance of Baisakhi' was translated into Assamese. Another text 'Guru Nanak as a Poet' was translated into Malayalam and published in three magazines during November, 1993. Such renderings help in developing emotional integration.

Indian Aesthetics

Appreciation of beauty, elegance and grace does not require any label of religion, region, class or position. As such Indian aesthetics is as much a misnomer as Indian English.

Q.15. *What is your attitude towards critics?*

Constructive criticism is appreciated and the vicious one is ignored :

*"A writer soars in higher domains
He is seldom led by worldly gains
He ignores what his slighsters say
For fools fail to hold a wise at bay!"*

('Bright and Clean World', Yearnings, p. 60)

Q.16. *What does Indian poetry in English lack?*

Many poets do not take note of the improved status of woman in society and the position acquired by man in universe in the context of advances made by science. They keep alluding to mythological beliefs and characters, thus restricting and disappointing their readers.

Q.17. *What are the major problems/difficulties of Indian writers in English?*

One problem of writers, whether in English or in any regional language, is common i.e. lack of responsive publishers.

Due to mass illiteracy, the number of readers is shockingly low. Even among them, the majority is of those who seek complimentary copies but instead of reading, merely, glance through them.

The State Governments, do not extend any recognition to writers in English, considering it an official language of the Union. Hence many a writer remains unheard and unsung :

*"During a greater span of a scholar's life
A few heed him though he yearns for humanity
While he delves in books and weilds his pen
He is often dubbed as a plodding dabbler*

*But after his formal condolence meet
Where verbose tributes are paid to him
He starts reliving with a discovered entity
Commended in reviews and quoted in texts".*

(‘Epitaph to a Scholar’, *Yearnings*, p.35)

But the picture is not so dismal for those who have perserverance and merit. English is an official language in 44 countries of the world. Institutions like, International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, U.K. strive a lot in projecting the writers in English through periodical Who's Who. Organisations like Famous Poets Society, USA, seek to publish the best poems in English from all over. My poem 'The Sunset' in *East-West Voices*, Mangalore, 1988, attracted the attention of Virginia Rhodas as far away as Argentina in South America. She translated it into Spanish and published that in *Carta Internacional Poesia*, 1993 (International Poetry Letter). She processed my poem 'A Tree to Man' likewise in the Spring 1996 issue.

Q.18. *Anything else you wish to say as a writer?*

I do not contribute to the pleasure principle in poetry, but stand for literature of reality and confrontation. 'I Am Man' is a protest against myths and superstitions. 'The Person I am Looking For' is not a mere yearning but a resolve for

improvement through self-evaluation. Poetry is an art with a purpose. The adage 'A picture is worth one thousand words' is equally applicable to poetry. A piece of verse, in spite of its brevity, is more suggestive than a lengthy exposition in prose.

Escapism is the resort of a forlorn mind. Poetry should have a close relation to life, so that the latter is led as an art and not bemoaned as a tale of helplessness.

Poetry may recreate but it should elevate the readers. Personal longings and woes of infatuation often lead to fascinating romantic expressions but their appeal may not be universal. Sturdy values conveyed through elegant phrases constitute inspiring verse thereby upholding the axiom that a poet is next to a prophet in his mode of communication.

The universal fraternity of writers in English with their faith in rationalism and humanism has a tryst with destiny to wage a crusade against totalitarianism, theocracy, racial segregation and other tyrannous systems for ushering in an era, where the dignity of an individual and collective glory of human race get enhanced.

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Name : Hazara Singh

Qualifications : M.A., LL.B.

Teaching Career : Started as Lecturer in English at Khalsa College, Amritsar on October 3, 1950.

Retired as Head, Department of Journalism, Languages & Culture, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.

Educational Achievements : Was awarded Rattigan Gold Medal by Khalsa College, Amritsar for standing first in B.A. (1945).

The scholarship won by him on the result of Intermediate Examination (1943) was confiscated by the then Punjab Government for his having taken part in the Quit India Movement.

Participation in Freedom Struggle : Was sent behind the bars thrice during 1942-45 for his active participation in the freedom struggle.

President, Punjab Students Congress (1945)

Membership of Educational/Professional Bodies :

Fellow, Punjab University, Chandigarh, (1956-62).

Bar Council of Haryana & Punjab High Court, Chandigarh (December 1, 1985....)

Published Work : Writes in English, Urdu and Punjabi.

Has contributed more than 200 papers, short stories, etc. to various magazines/journals.

Books

- i) *Sikhism and Its Impact on Indian Society* (S.G.P.C., 1971, Amritsar)
- ii) *On the Use of Library* (P.A.U., 1973, Ludhiana)
- iii) *Style in Writing Technical Papers and Theses* (P.A.U., 1976)
- iv) *Aspirations* (Poems in English, 1980)
- v) *Yearnings* (Poems in English, 1987)

Bulletins

- i) *Guru Nanak Dev* (S.G.P.C., 1969; G.N.D.U., Amritsar, 1987)
- ii) *National Service by the Youth in a Welfare State* (P.A.U., 1973)
- iii) *Children's Day* (P.A.U., 1973)
- iv) *Autonomy of Universities* (P.A.U., 1979)
- v) *Reassessing the Role of Mass Media* (P.A.U., 1981)
- vi) *Teaching of English at P.A.U.* (1981)

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