



Jatinder Kaur

My Punjabi poems I have translated into English are from my books, titled, *Bracket de Baharwaar* (1994) and *Angad* (2008). [*Bracket de Baharwaar* is the winner of a prestigious award in India]. Both books are available at Apnaorg.com, electronically, hard copies at Amazon.

As you can see, my first poetry book has a word 'bracket' in its title, that makes some people imagine me as a mathematician. Well, the title poem of that book (not included in these pages) does talk of mathematics; a socio-cultural one though.

After all those years of the publication of my book, I am once again tempted to try using some mathematics, when I sum up my experience with translation of my poems as below:

Loss in translation=	Nothing.
Gain in translation=	Tremendous; I have got the passcode to re-enter the realm of poetry, after decades- to find my lost self and its cultural context.
Added up to the gain=	The [re] publication of my poems in a foreign land; in their original script

The sum total of gain in translation= 'home coming' (**in total equivalence**)

My gratitude to you NEKE, for your dual-language publishing policy &  
My blessings to you, Dr. Marco Sonzogni, for this opportunity to appear on NEKE pages!  
Dr., Fahim Afarinasadi, your patience with the revisions on my draft of this publication has been amazing. We all know the power of 'word'. Don't we? Considering that the only actions you perform consciously, count towards *karmic* account, you have saved me by giving me opportunities to revise my draft, as long as you could.  
I appreciate you for this, with good wishes.

Here, I would take the 'Exit' a writer should take when the reader is about to enter the sanctum to experience poetry. [I will meet you again with notes on some of the poems published here].

May I suggest you to take a look at the excerpt below, from my poem on self-translation (in progress), on your way ?

### **On translating yourself**

**Translating yourself,  
is like getting pregnant with the same child,  
again (and again)**

**The pain of labour brings pleasure, beyond measure. Hey!  
it's not a child's play, getting pregnant again; with the same child, in a different way**

**It's worth the wait; looking for an altered state, and living at once the fate;  
of a *Sadhu*, a shaman, and a labouring woman,  
it means a world to me; living and loving the best of both worlds; of all worlds.  
Is not it great?**



1.

**The benevolence**

The benevolence of your soul  
has turned me into a sacred verse

**ਇਨਾਇਤ**

ਤੇਰੀ ਰੂਹ ਦੀ ਇਨਾਇਤ  
ਮੈਨੂੰ ਕਰ ਗਈ ਕੋਈ ਆਇਤ

2.

**Angad**

These are not mere historical events or sheer twists of fate, a chance

The soul connection we share, for instance, O dear!

My soul absorbs the pain of yours', in total silence  
And gets its share, in equivalence.

There is no need to name this bond as 'Love', or,  
as a 'sacred affair from the above'

Why give it a name?  
And, which name?

I know love does not look for a title or a name

If you must add a title to the relation, co-relation, to the bond like this  
Can you suggest a name for robin's love for Jesus?

[When picking a thorn from Jesus' head, they tell, the bird bled].

This love has no name,  
Love has been love; be love it will

Name it, or don't name it  
Love will be love, still



You may choose to trust this prophecy, or,  
You may call it a legacy of souls  
because it will be like this again, and yet, again.  
A soul soaked up in a soul, will find and pick pain

It must be a divine grace!  
That elevates a *Lehna* to an *Angad*, in *Nanak*'s embrace.

It is history, not a mere history though.  
A happy chance, but not just a chance

It is also true of this, or any other *yug*; the state of time:

Whenever a pain will bind the souls again  
A robin will touch the crown (of Jesus), to lessen a thorn.  
In the embrace of a *Nanak*, an *Angad* will be born.

The pain divine, in this time, in all times,  
will keep binding the souls, as it has, yours and mine.

### ਅੰਗਦ

ਮਹਿਜ਼ ਕੋਈ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਰਿਸਤੇ ਦਾ ਇਤਫ਼ਾਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਰੂਹ ਦੀ ਚੁੱਪ ਵੇਦਨ ਦਾ  
ਇੰਝ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੀਨੇ 'ਚੋਂ ਲੰਘਣਾ  
ਤੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਇਸ ਚੁੱਪ ਵੇਦਨ ਨੂੰ  
ਇੰਝ ਆਪਣੇ ਸੀਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਜਰਨਾ

ਇਹ ਲਾਜ਼ਿਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਰੂਹ ਲਈ  
ਰੂਹ ਦੀ ਕਲੀ-ਕਾਰੀ ਜੂਹ ਲਈ  
ਰਿਸਤੇ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਨਗਰ ਉਸਰਨਾ  
ਤੇ ਇਸ ਚੁੱਪ ਵੇਦਨ ਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੇ  
ਰੂਹ ਦੀ ਪੀੜਾ ਜਰਦੀ ਰੂਹ ਤੇ  
ਰਿਸਤੇ ਦਾ ਹਸਤਾਖਰ ਕਰਨਾ



ਇਹ ਵੀ ਤਾਂ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੈ  
ਇਹ ਕੋਈ ਇਤਫ਼ਾਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਰੋਬਿਨ ਪੰਛੀ ਦੇ ਪੈਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ  
ਈਸਾ ਦੀ ਸੂਲੀ ਦਾ ਪੁੜਨਾ  
ਤੇ ਈਸਾ ਨੂੰ ਚੁੱਭਦੇ ਕਿਲ ਨੂੰ  
ਇੰਝ ਰੋਬਿਨ ਪੰਛੀ ਦਾ ਚੁਣਨਾ

ਇਹ ਵੀ ਤਾਂ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਾ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੈ  
ਇਹ ਕੋਈ ਇਤਫ਼ਾਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਨਾਨਕ ਦੀ ਰੂਹ ਦੇ ਸਾਗਰ ਚੋਂ  
ਲਹਿਣੇ ਦਾ ਸਚ ਦਾ ਘੁੱਟ ਭਰਨਾ  
ਤੇ ਫਿਰ ਲਹਿਣੇ ਦਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇ  
ਸੀਨੇ ਲਗ ਕੇ ਅੰਗਦ ਬਣਨਾ

ਮਹਿਜ਼ ਕੋਈ ਇਤਫ਼ਾਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਇਸ ਯੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਤਾਂ ਮੁਮਕਿਨ ਹੈ  
ਰੋਬਿਨ ਪੰਛੀ ਦੇ ਪੈਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ  
ਈਸਾ ਦੀ ਸੂਲੀ ਦਾ ਪੁੜਨਾ  
ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇ ਸੀਨੇ ਨਾਲ ਲਗ ਕੇ  
ਫਿਰ ਲਹਿਣੇ ਦਾ ਅੰਗਦ ਬਣਨਾ

ਮਹਿਜ਼ ਕੋਈ ਇਤਫ਼ਾਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਰੂਹ ਦੀ ਚੁਪ ਵੇਦਨ ਦਾ  
ਇੰਝ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੀਨੇ 'ਚੋਂ ਲੰਘਣਾ  
ਤੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਇਸ ਚੁੱਪ ਵੇਦਨ ਨੂੰ  
ਇੰਝ ਆਪਣੇ ਸੀਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਜਰਨਾ

3.

### **Bureaucracy**

The question is: what is a bureaucracy?

Well, when a table and a chair  
embed a pair of human legs between theirs'

The sum of those legs; ten, and other units like them,  
run the system and its affairs!

Can these legs; the units of ten go anywhere, alone?  
Well, they can't.



Like crutches, they cannot move on their own

Thus, they just stay  
Night and day

These slouchy units of ten,  
form a cult with those like them

They push, they pull and they play fouls.  
They win the matches; friendly, like ghouls

They are often seen as a familiar groove.  
the system's crutches, and make it move

Or may I tell you, my views on them?  
These good-looking figures of ten, sound to me  
to be, the vanity kit of the escort; named 'system'

### ਅਫਸਰਸ਼ਾਹੀ

ਅਫਸਰਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਕੀ ਹੈ?  
ਜਿਵੇਂ ਲੱਕੜੀ ਦੀ ਮੇਜ਼  
ਤੇ ਲੱਕੜੀ ਦੀ ਕੁਰਸੀ ਦੇ  
ਦਰਮਿਆਨ  
ਦੇ ਲੱਤਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਜੋੜ ਦਿਤੀਆਂ ਜਾਣ  
ਇਹ ਦਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਦਸ ਲੱਤਾਂ  
ਤੁਰਦੀਆਂ ਨਹੀਂ  
ਪਹੁੰਚਦੀਆਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਿਧਰੇ

ਇਹ ਲੱਤਾਂ  
ਸਿਰਫ ਹਿੰਦਸੇ ਪੂਰਦੀਆਂ  
ਦੁਲਤੀਆਂ ਮਾਰਦੀਆਂ  
ਅਤੇ ਅਗੇ ਪਿਛੇ  
ਸਜੇ ਖਬੇ  
ਉਤੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ  
ਦਿਸਦੇ ਅਣਦਿਸਦੇ  
ਦਸ ਦਸ ਦੇ ਹਿੰਦਸਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ  
ਲੱਤਾਂ ਅੜਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਦੌੜਾਂ ਬਣਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਜਾਂ ਆਉਟ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ



ਜਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਜਿੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਰਮ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ  
ਫਾਉਲ ਖੇਡਦੀਆਂ

ਮੇਜ਼ ਤੇ ਕੁਰਸੀ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਜੜੀਆਂ  
ਇੰਨਾ ਦੇ ਲਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਅਹਿਮੀਅਤ  
ਬੈਸਾਖੀਆਂ ਜਿੰਨੀ ਹੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਏ  
ਜੇ ਆਪ ਕਿਸੇ ਰਾਹ ਤੇ  
ਤੁਰ ਕੇ ਜਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ

ਇਹ ਦਸ ਦਸ ਦੇ ਹਿੰਦਸੇ  
ਸ਼ਿੰਗਾਰਦਾਨ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਨੇ  
ਹਕੂਮਤ ਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਤਵਾਇਫ ਦੇ

4.

#### **A prayer**

Empower my despair  
With articulation; profound

Upraise my scribbles; scattered here and there,  
to the verses of prayer  
that end,  
with gratitude for the God-sent.

My joined hands, embed my head-  
to offer it in your abode,

Bless me!  
Light my way to *Harmandar*, O lord!



ਦੁਆ

ਰੱਬਾ

ਵੇ ਸਚਿਆ

ਮੇਰੇ ਦਰਦ ਨੂੰ ਹਰਫ਼ ਦੇ

ਹਰਫ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਰੂਹ ਜਗਾ ਦੇ

ਪਿਘਲਾ ਕੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਕੁਲ ਦਰਦ

ਹਰਫ਼ੇ ਦੁਆ ਬਣਾ ਦੇ

ਸਿਰ ਕਰਜ਼ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਅਪਣੀ ਸਿਫਤ ਸਲਾਹ ਦੇ

ਦੇ ਅਸੀਸ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੀਸ ਨੂੰ

ਰਾਹ ਹਰਮੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਪਾ ਦੇ

5.

### **The Spring**

Imagine! How lonely someone can be!

It's my loneliness, and me!

Oh! Come home.

Bring with you, the spring for my step

Bring me back, 'my home'!

Come with your majestic command to the gloom; to leave my room.

To the sunlight to go bright,

to the flowers, to bloom.

Come home, and bring with you, my spring, to see me thrive

How else would I know I am alive!



ਬਸੰਤ

ਛਾਈ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਰੂਹ ਤੇ  
ਤੂੰ ਆ ਜਾ ਏਸ ਰੁਤੇ  
ਆ ਜਾ ਕਿ ਨਿਸਰਨ ਕਲੀਆਂ  
ਤੂੰ ਆ ਕਿ ਉਗੇ ਸੂਰਜ  
ਪੱਤਝੜ ਹੈ ਮਨ ਦਾ ਮੌਸਮ  
ਤੂੰ ਆ ਕਿ ਬਦਲੇ ਮੌਸਮ

6.

### **The passage of the letter**

Reading the letter you have sent  
is like a pilgrimage, a holy trip

My immersion in the message in your passage: a pilgrim's dip

A truth I'm dreaming,

Or,  
has a dream come true?

Oh! Someone, look at the horizon and its hue!  
The pearls that adorn, the steps to heaven and down,

and millions of glow worms, lighting my town!

That velvety touch of your text! And its cooling shade!  
This blessed night! Just heaven-made!  
*Kismet?* Destiny? Tell me what is it? My soulmate!

And entwine tight, your soul and mine  
to let them shine!  
While I spin around your soul  
the gold of mine.





## ਖਤ ਦੀ ਇਬਾਰਤ

ਇਹ ਖਤ ਦੀ ਇਬਾਰਤ ਹੈ  
ਕਿ ਰਬ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿਅਰਤ ਹੈ  
ਕੋਈ ਖ਼ਾਬ ਹੈ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਜਿਹਾ  
ਖ਼ਾਬਾਂ ਜਹੀ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਹੈ

ਅਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਫਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਤਕ ਨੇ  
ਕਈ ਸੁਚੇ ਮੇਤੀ ਬਿਖਰੇ  
ਰੂਹ ਦੇ ਨਗਰ 'ਚ ਆ ਕੇ  
ਕਈ ਲੱਖਾਂ ਜੁਗਨੂੰ ਚਮਕੇ

ਇਸ ਮਖ਼ਮਲੀ ਇਬਾਰਤ ਨੇ  
ਇੰਝ ਰੂਹ ਤੇ ਛਾਂ ਕੀਤੀ  
ਇਹ ਰਾਤ ਸਾਡੇ ਸਿਰ ਤੇ  
ਅਸੀਸ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਬੀਤੀ

ਰੂਹ ਵਰਗੇ ਸੋਹਣੇ ਸਜਣਾ  
ਆਜਾ ਤੈਨੂੰ ਪਿਆਰਾਂ  
ਰੂਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਦਾ ਸੋਨਾ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਰੂਹ ਦੇ ਸਿਰ ਤੋਂ ਵਾਰਾਂ

7.

## Snake and ladder

There are possibilities you cannot ignore.

Things happen to those, who stop here and there, in despair.  
Indulging in things unjust or fair

And then they find a few gems or a gem  
that now belongs to them

One fine day.  
While telling their stories of leaps, to those in dismay,  
they tell they are sure, that they deserved all they have found,  
and much more.

In your silence, you wish to speak of their claims  
as ladders that took them to the peak,  
in the snakes and ladders game



Oh! look at us, and many like us:  
Nobody hears, the stories we write  
with our blood, sweat and tears

Success for us, and for those like us  
is not a tale to be told.  
For us, rainbows hold no gold

Is it a jinx?  
Or the fate of a phoenix

Is it mere a story-  
of dying, to be reborn with glory?

We wax and we wane, to wax again  
We live without fame, or even a name.

[Is it what it takes?  
if you don't choose to play games; of ladders and snakes?]

If at all our lives ever take leaps,  
no ladder had taken us to the peaks.

Why, then the snakes hiss and jump, to bite us,  
to see us slumped  
[can a mongoose kill a snake,  
or, is it a myth, that the mongoose always wins in the quarrel of a mongoose and a snake?]

Snakes are here and there, they are everywhere!

I beg you to shield yourselves, and yours,  
and the bones of your homes,  
and the milk on your hearths, from snakes  
save all that belongs to you,  
with whatever it takes

Come on mate!  
Let not a snake dim, the shine of your lifeline-

KILL THE SNAKE

Killing a snake is a virtue, not a sin, it helps it liberate

To get over, distribute *sirni*, and celebrate!



## ਸਪ ਤੇ ਪੋੜੀ

ਇਹ ਲਾਜ਼ਿਮ ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ  
ਕਿ ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਾਮਯਾਬੀ ਦੀ ਪੋੜੀ ਤੇ  
ਜਾਇਜ਼ ਜਾਂ ਨਜਾਇਜ਼ ਜੋਰ ਨਾਲ  
ਇਕ ਪੈਰ ਰਖ ਲਓ  
ਤਾਂ ਸੰਜੋਗਾਂ ਜਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਸ਼ਕਤੀ  
ਗੁਰੂਤਾ ਦੇ ਉਲਟ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ  
ਉਤਲੀ ਪੋੜੀ ਤੇ  
ਯਕਲਖਤ ਪੁਚਾ ਹੀ ਦੇਵੇ

ਹਰ ਸ਼ਖਸ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਿੱਚ  
ਸੰਜੋਗਾਂ ਦੇ ਮੋਢੇ ਚੜ੍ਹ ਕੇ  
ਅਕਾਸ਼ ਛੂਹਣੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਲਿਖੇ ਹੁੰਦੇ  
ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਲਈ  
ਤਿਲ ਤਿਲ ਮਰਨ  
ਅਤੇ ਮੁੜ ਟੁਕੜਾ ਟੁਕੜਾ ਜੁੜ ਕੇ  
ਜਿਉਣ ਦਾ ਨਾਂਅ ਏ

ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਲਈ  
ਸਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਤਲੀ ਤੇ ਟਿਕਾ ਕੇ  
ਲੜੀ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲੀ  
ਲੜਾਈ ਏ ਸੂਰਮਗਤੀ ਦੀ

ਸਪ ਤੇ ਪੋੜੀ ਦੀ ਖੇਡ  
ਜਦ ਸਾਡੀਆਂ ਰੂਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਮਾਫ਼ਕ ਨਹੀਂ  
ਫੇਰ ਕਿਓਂ  
ਉਪਰਲੇ ਮਕਾਮ ਤੇ ਖੜ੍ਹੇ  
ਜਹਿਰੀਲੇ ਨਾਗ  
ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਕੋ ਫੁੰਕਾਰੇ ਨਾਲ  
ਹੇਠਲੀ ਪੋੜੀ ਤੇ ਸੁੱਟਣ ਲਈ  
ਬਜ਼ਿਦ ਨੇ



ਸਪ ਨਿਉਲੇ ਦੀ ਬਾਤ ਤਾਂ  
ਬੀਤੇ ਵਕਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਾਤ ਏ  
ਅੱਜ-ਕੱਲ੍ਹ ਤਾਂ ਵਕਤ  
ਤਰਾਂ ਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ  
ਸਪਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਕਾਸ਼ਤ ਕਰਦੈ

ਸਪ ਜ਼ਹਿਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਨੇ  
ਪਰ ਫੇਰ ਕੀ ਹੋਇਆ  
ਮਹਿਫੂਜ਼ ਕਰੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ  
ਇੰਝ ਨਾ ਹੋਏ ਕਿ ਸਪ  
ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਕੰਧਾਂ ਕੋਲਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ  
ਚੱਟਦਾ ਫਿਰੇ  
ਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਚੁੱਲ੍ਹੇ ਤੇ ਪਏ  
ਦੁਧ ਨੂੰ  
ਫੁੰਕਾਰੇ ਮਾਰੇ

ਜਦ ਤੱਕ ਚਿੰਤਨ ਕਰ ਰਿਹੈ  
ਸਾਡੇ ਮਥਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਸੂਰਜ  
ਚਲੇ ਸਪ ਮਾਰਕੇ  
ਸੀਰਨੀ ਵੰਡ ਦੇਈਏ  
ਸਪ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਰਨ ਦੀ  
ਮਜ਼ਬੂਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓ  
ਬਸ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਹੱਥ ਉਸਨੂੰ  
ਜੂਨੀ- ਮੁਕਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਣ  
ਸੀਰਨੀ ਮੁਕਤ ਕਰ ਦੇਵੇਗੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ  
ਪਾਪ ਬੋਧ ਤੋਂ

8.

### **The gift-wrapping paper**

In endurance, she believes

a woman plasters her hearth and her face  
she hems her dresses; adorns them, with beads and lace.

She lives in fears, thus, sews and knits and crochets the covers, of each thing she endears.  
She keeps covering up, the wrongs of her darling dears!



What's the matter with you, dear?  
What is the worst fear that you fear?  
Why all these mends and amends-  
that bring closer all the ends.

She tells me,  
that she is strong,  
and that, she can go far any long, (CAN right any wrongs)  
because she treasures her gift; her home.  
Her very 'own', home, sweet home.

So, next time when you see a shrine- like dome  
Stop there, it's her home,  
Stand somewhere in a corner bright  
to look for a woman, on each side  
Oh, here she is, all bound to her home!

like a wrapping paper, tied tight  
around her precious gift inside

Or, if you see a woman still stand  
with a bow and a wrapping paper in hand...  
you know, don't you?

Understand; the myth of a bull that carries the earth  
is about that woman by her hearth  
that keeps the home fires burning, in her ways perfect,  
just to keep 'that home, intact'

Her life story and those of her friends'  
are good stories with a moral, in the end,  
A recipe for life in endless motion-  
A heavenly home and its promotion:

'Mind your wings, stay on earth,  
Love your home, adorn its hearth;  
with the lovely beads of your sweat and tears,  
your flesh and bone's your home, dears!

What if one day a stone or a slate  
that resembles your home's- sign plate-  
chooses to tell of your dream profound  
Which you had  
buried under the ground.  
Of the house? Home! It better sounds!

Beware here! Take care, let not your dead dreams be found  
let not a hound follow their perfume; and dig the ground



Just wipe your tears,  
and bind your feet to your share of ground,

Treasure your gift; the rare found.

now, when you have found it, wrap yourself around it,

And don't get slow  
Until you have adorned it, with a bow.

Now, walk swift  
Keep wearing your facade  
Move to those gathered at the backyard  
go, meet them, and smile too.  
Share with them a tale or two,  
of your home,  
your lovely, sweet home.....

My apologies, dear,  
I'm not staying, I'll be praying,  
For you, dear!

Do you hear, what I did not say?  
Yes, I envy you, I swear!

It's ok, it's fine, girl,  
it's not the right time to swirl,  
to tell the tale, to make a show.

Just keep up with what you call, 'ho ho ho'

Look at you!  
A perfect gift- wrap with a lovely bow!'

[Or, at least a blank cheque, duly signed  
Which they may cash, any time]

Does she hear that awkward pause?  
Between the handclaps; the rounds of applause?

Is she smart, or a being; crap?  
Not knowing she is a gift, not a gift-wrap?

I don't know, and I have my fears,  
Someone, kindly, tell me, dear!  
Spill out, I'm all ears



Is the ocean of her shed tears enough ink,  
to write a story of this link?  
Between herself being a gift divine, and  
becoming a wrapping paper, fine.

May we ask her  
not to colon  
your story and also mine-  
the story of all times?

Think over it, yes, I will think too.  
And I will meet you again in a day or two  
over that party? oh yes.....

of course, in my new dress!

### ਗੁੱਡੀ ਕਾਗਜ਼

ਔਰਤਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਮੁੱਢੋਂ ਸੁਢੇਂ  
ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਹੰਢਣਸਾਰਤਾ ਲੋਚਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ  
ਤਾਹੀਓਂ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ  
ਨਿਤ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ  
ਪਾਏਦਾਨਾਂ ਤੇ ਕਿਨਾਰੀ ਲਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਚਟਾਈਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਕੰਨੀਆਂ ਸੀਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਦੁਪੱਟਿਆਂ ਤੇ  
ਤਾਰਕਸ਼ੀ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ  
ਚੁਲੇ ਲਿੰਬਦੀਆਂ  
ਚਮੜੀ ਰੰਗਦੀਆਂ  
ਨਿੱਕੀਆਂ ਮੋਟੀਆਂ ਵਸਤਾਂ ਦੇ  
ਕਜਣ ਸੀਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਉਣਦੀਆਂ

ਔਰਤਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਅਸਲੋਂ  
ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਹੰਢਣਸਾਰਤਾ ਲੋੜਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ  
ਤਾਹੀਓਂ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ  
ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਦੇ  
ਉਧੜੇ ਤੇਪੇ ਸੀਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਟਾਕੀਆਂ ਲਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਟੁੱਟੀਆਂ ਗੰਢਦੀਆਂ  
ਵਕਤ ਨੂੰ ਟਾਕੀਆਂ ਲਾ ਲਾ  
ਮਘਾਉਂਦੀਆਂ



ਔਰਤਾਂ ਆਪ ਵੀ ਤਾਂ ਕਜਣ ਬਣਦੀਆਂ  
ਕੂਲੇ ਕੋੜੇ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ  
ਆਪਣੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਤਕ  
ਸਹੇਜ ਲੈਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਤੇ ਆਪ  
ਉਹਨਾਂ ਮੋਸਮੀ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਤੇ  
ਲਿਫ਼ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਗੁੱਡੀ ਕਾਗਜ਼ ਵਾਂਗ  
ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ  
ਬਲੈਕ ਚੈੱਕ

ਮਰਦਾਂ ਨੇ ਜਦ ਕਦੇ  
ਇਸ ਚੈੱਕ ਨੂੰ ਕੈਸ਼ ਕਰਵਾਉਣਾ ਹੁੰਦੇ  
ਮਨ ਚਾਹੀਆਂ ਰਕਮਾਂ ਭਰ ਦੇਂਦੇ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਵਿਚ  
ਔਰਤ ਪੂਰੀ ਖ਼ੁਬਸੂਰਤੀ ਨਾਲ  
ਗੁੱਡੀ ਕਾਗਜ਼ ਤੇ ਬੰਨ੍ਹੀ  
ਰੇਸ਼ਮੀ ਡੇਰੀ ਨੂੰ  
ਮਰਦ ਦੇ ਹਵਾਲੇ ਕਰ ਦੇਂਦੀ

ਇੰਨਾ ਰਿਸ਼ਤਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਵਧ ਹੰਢਣਸਾਰ  
ਹੋਰ ਕੁਝ ਹੈ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ  
ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ

ਔਰਤ ਦੀ ਅਖ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਹੰਝੂ  
ਉਸਦੀ ਇਸ ਗੁੱਡੀ ਕਾਗਜ਼ ਵਾਲੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ  
ਕਿਹੜੇ ਯੁਗ ਵਿਚ ਖੋਰਨਗੇ  
ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ

9.

### **To the sun**

Add up my eyesight  
To your light

Up light for him  
The way back home

Tell him  
I unsay that I said before.





for that claim was a sheer sin  
That I have the endurance of earth.  
That I can live without him

Count for him the sighs that I sigh,  
Tell him I am sad and alone  
and ask him  
to come back home

bring him home, or

I'll be killed by the chill,  
And my dreams will be, too  
That I  
and all the dreams  
I have seen with him, for him

Tell my sun to bring its apricity divine  
To the home, to this home; his home, and mine

### ਸੂਰਜ ਨੂੰ

ਜਾ ਵੇ ਸੂਰਜਾ  
ਲੈ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਅੱਖੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਲੋਅ ਵੀ  
ਜਾ ਉਹਨੂੰ ਮੇੜ ਲਿਆ

ਉਹਨੂੰ ਘਰ ਦਾ ਦਸੀਂ ਰਾਹ  
ਤੇ ਦੇਈਂ ਸੰਦੇਸ਼ ਮੇਰਾ  
ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਛੂਠ ਕਿਹਾ ਸੀ ਮੇਰਾ  
ਨਹੀਂ ਜੇਰਾ ਧਰਤ ਜਿਹਾ  
ਜੇ ਸਚ ਹੁੰਦਾ  
ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਨਾ ਹਉਕੇ  
ਅੱਜ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਸਾਹ

ਉਹਨੂੰ ਆਖੀਂ ਧਰਤ ਤੇਰੀ ਤੇ  
ਕਿਤੇ ਲੋਅ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਿਨ ਤੇਰੇ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਧੁੱਪ ਬਿਨਾਂ  
ਖਿੜਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਖਾਬ ਮੇਰੇ  
ਉਹਨੂੰ ਆਖੀਂ ਸੂਰਜ ਬਣ ਕੇ ਤੇ  
ਮੇਰਾ ਘਰ ਮਹਿਕਾ ਜਾਵੇ  
ਉਸ ਸੂਰਜ ਜਹੇ ਨੂੰ ਆਖੀਂ ਵੇ  
ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰ ਮੁੜ ਆਵੇ



10.

**Iceberg**

Look at me, a river  
Loving you, an iceberg

submerge in you, I can  
Though river I am

And I will always be that river  
like the river I am

'I am the way I am', you claim  
'Unyielding, estranged, untamed'

Whenever you soak up, however,  
(And you often do),  
I overflow my shores  
To give you even more

Worry not, my love  
We both are Water  
At the core

What if I am always a river  
What if you are an iceberg  
-as you claim.  
An ocean, a river, an iceberg,  
They know water by various names

**ਆਈਸਬਰਗ**

ਨਦੀ ਮੈਂ ਸਿਮਟ ਜਾਂਵਾਂ ਤੇਰੀ ਬੁਕ ਵਿਚ  
ਮੇਰਾ ਪਿਆਰ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ  
ਮੇਰੇ ਪਾਣੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਡੁਬ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਤੂੰ  
ਕੁੱਝ ਅਣਡੁਬਿਆ ਰਹਿ ਜਾਂਦਾ  
ਮੈਂ ਬਾਲਾਂ ਜਹੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਨੂੰ  
ਤਕਦੀ ਹਾਂ ਮੰਨਦੀ ਹਾਂ

ਮੈਂ ਨਦੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਡੁੱਬਦੀ ਹਾਂ



ਨਹੀਂ ਡੁਬ ਸਕਦਾ ਬਸ ਇਹੋ ਜਿਹਾ  
ਅਣਭਿਜ ਜਿਹਾ ਤੂੰ ਕਹਿੰਦਾ  
ਮੈਂ ਹਸ ਪੈਂਦੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਬਉਰਾ ਮਨ  
ਤੇਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਡੁੱਬਿਆ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ  
ਪਰ ਕਦੇ ਕਦੇ

ਤਰਦਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਾਣੀਆਂ ਤੇ  
ਤੂੰ ਪਿਘਲ ਪਿਘਲ ਜਾਂਦਾ  
ਮੇਰੇ ਤਕ ਲੰਘ ਆਉਂਦਾ

ਮੇਰਾ ਅੱਥਰੂ ਬੱਦਲ ਬਣ ਬਣਕੇ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਛੱਤ ਤੇ ਵਸ ਜਾਂਦਾ  
ਮੇਰਾ ਹਉਕਾ ਬਣ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਜਿਵੇਂ  
ਰਬ ਦਾ ਦਰ ਛੂਹ ਆਉਂਦਾ

ਮੈਂ ਨਦੀ ਜੇ ਅੱਥਰੂ ਵੀ ਬਣਦੀ  
ਬਸ ਤੇਰੀ ਹੀ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ  
ਪਾਣੀ ਆਂ ਮੈਂ, ਤੂੰ ਵੀ

## Notes

### *Angad*

*Angad* is the title poem of my second poetry book (2008)].

The poem *Angad* has two symbols in it, one comes from popular Christianity, the other: from popular Sikhism.

- a. The symbol of robin (from popular Christianity):

There are stories about robin, a bird, relating Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was being crucified, robin is believed to have picked a thorn from Jesus' crown, to ease Jesus's pain, thus got redbreast.

It was blood, that gave robin a redbreast. But whose blood was it? Jesus's? Robin's? Both Jesus's and robin's? Different stories answer this question in different ways, which certainly does not make much difference. They all agree on one point: robin HAD come forward to ease Jesus's pain. This one point is the point makes all the difference that makes a small story of robin grand. That is enough to make you feel gratitude towards souls that feel other souls' pain and try mitigating it.

The world needs more of aroha.

The symbol of robin in my poem resonates with my prayer: **May our deeds of goodness; big or small, keep adding up, for the good prevail over evil.**

- b. The name *Angad*\* as a symbol of the bond between bodies and souls (from popular Sikhism).

This one is about the name of the second Guru of the Sikhs\*\*; Guru Angad Dev.

Thus, the nomenclature of the second Guru of the Sikhs as *Angad Dev* was not just a random act; it was the elevation of a disciple [of *Guru Nanak Dev*] named *bhai Lehna* to the status of Guru; the torch bearer of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism.



The story goes like this:

‘As the two spirits, one of *Guru Nanak Dev* and the other, of *Bhai Lehna* got aligned, it was *Guru Nanak*’s embrace that transformed *Bhai Lehna* to *Angad*; *Angad Dev/Guru Angad Dev*’ [words mine].

The metaphor *Angad*, to me, has a connotation beyond a spiritual bond; a body connection which established itself, as *Guru Nanak* embraced *Bhai Lehna*; only to uplift him to and as *Angad*. The story does not say what followed what; did the spiritual bond follow the physical embrace, or was it the other way round?

There are no stories concerning rest of the eight Gurus (in human body<sup>\*\*\*</sup>) which may tell the establishment of the bond as *Guru Nanak* established with *Angad Dev*, thus, it should not be taken as a pattern.

\*The Punjabi word *Angad* means ‘the one who has(d) been touched’ in body, and/or in soul.

*Angad* comes from Hindi *Ang*. Among some other meanings, as limb, organ, part, component, etc., *ang* means ‘part and parcel’, ‘body and its parts’ [*Shabdkosh*; online].

*Ang lagna/ang lagaana*= body touching a body/a body making (the other) body touch it.

*Aaj sajan mohe ang laga lo/ janam safal ho jaaey/ Hridaye kee peera, deh ki agni/sab sheetal ho jaaye*; the verses of the Hindi song written by Sahir Ludhianvi [ singer: Gita Dutt; movie *Pyasa*, 1957] are translated as below:

‘Today, beloved, hold me in your arms/my life will be fulfilled/the ache in my heart, the fire in my body/all may cool down’ [Translation inspiration: internet].

\*\**Sikh* means ‘learner’. *Sikhi*: the way of life of a *Sikh* is a journey of an eternal learner].

\*\*\*Sikhs have ten Gurus (in body); the period they have lived stretches from 1469 to 1708 A. D. *Guru Granth Sahib*: a compilation of the verses of the Sikh Gurus, (though not limited to them as this scripture of 1430 pages also includes in it the spiritual poetry of non-Sikhs) is the ‘eternal living Guru of the Sikhs’ as of the present day.

### **Bureaucracy**

This poem comes from my experience and observation of red tape; a cripple system that is guided (or misguided) by the ruling lot in several Asian countries and elsewhere.

However, the understanding of bureaucracy the way I have depicted it in my poem may or may not be same or similar for individuals of other cultures, sometimes depending on their experience of it.

Also, considering that most poetry is culture specific, I take this opportunity to introduce my poem ‘Bureaucracy’ to the Literary translation studies, in that capacity.

I confess I have selected this poem for NEKE, on purpose.

### **A Prayer**

#*Shaheed* and ##*Sati* are two powerful symbols in folk religion of Punjab, with cultural connotation.

Both *shaheed* and *sati* are martyrs. *Shaheed* is the one who dies (or has died) for a cause; mainly religious. One’s entitlement to be known as a *shaheed*, however, may come from one’s altruistic service provided in one’s community. A trade union leader in a factory who died during his hunger strike as a protest against exploitation of workers may come to be known as a *shaheed*, for example, provided he was a man of character as well.

*Zinda Shaheed* or a ‘living martyr’ is the title for a person, living or have lived a benevolent life.

Whereas *Shaheed* is mainly a gender-neutral word, *Sati* is feminine. *Sati* is a woman who self-immolates at the pyre of her dead husband; the practice which have long been legally banned in India.

*Sati* can also be a title for a virtuous woman, living or have lived a life in the service of others.

In Punjab, for example, a young widow who chooses not to remarry for the sake of her children and raises them despite the adverse circumstances, is considered a *Sati*, and so is a woman who has sacrificed her own pleasure of getting married and having children, over her service towards orphans.

The range of entitlement of a woman being considered a *Sati* is wide; wider than you would imagine. An example from my own life would be both interesting and informative here.



The data collection phase of my Ph. D. research (Research topic: Concepts of disease and cure among the Jat Sikhs in rural Punjab) was utterly challenging for me, especially in the beginning. People in the village were not comfortable with my visiting them and asking them questions on 'bizarre' topics. No justification I gave them on my need to gather knowledge from them to write a book on their concepts of disease and cure was working. Why would 'I' need to know about 'their' gods? Did I even 'belong' to their village and its culture? Why would I bother to have knowledge on the 'founding father' of a village which was not even 'my village'. I was making myself vulnerable; by trying to enter a realm of cultural knowledge and practices which was applicable only to 'the family women' of 'that village' (I was not from their village and I was not married either; both were my weak points, and both were denying me access to it). I should step back, they kept suggesting me out of concern, or be ready to face the wrath of their ancestors instead, who, would be differently fierce to me as they would be for them, their legitimate heirs.

Charno, a woman in the village was one of those people, with a difference, though. She valued me and my devotion to the work I had undertaken. However, Charno, and others like her were concerned about my safety. In saying so, they did not mean bad people in or around the village who could potentially harm me in some way. Their concerns were the ones I have mentioned above.

I was with the villagers till the point that my pursuit was 'unauthorised access' to the knowledge I was not entitled for.

As a strategy, thus, I ingested their comments and changed my sails, accordingly. That too, in a peaceful manner. I did keep visiting people in the village persistently, for listening to their episodes of lived experiences of disease and also the practices they did for cure. That was the 'the other road taken'. By me; drawing their concepts of disease and cure from their case histories. Soon, the failures of the past turned into an effortless research work, thanks to my resilience. People in the village eventually changed their views on my pursuit and rather, some of them went out of way to help me with my data collection.

My persistence and hard work touched many in the village. They, called me *Sati* in their conversations, who had come to the village in all weathers and had been firm in her quest for knowledge. Charno, a shaman herself, even asked for my protection from her *Pir*.

Coming back to the poem and the concept of a martyr's offering his head in reverence. In metaphor, offering one's head may mean a surrender of one's worldly wisdom to the Law of *Dharma*, (popularly portrayed as the will of God), and living a life full of gratitude. Punjabi folklore, however, has stories of people literally continuing their fight (with their headless bodies), when the enemy had already chopped their heads and separated them from their bodies.

One such story relates to *Shaheed Baba Deep Singh*, a Sikh martyr, who is believed to have approached *Harmander Sahib* (the most famous Sikh shrine in India, also known as *Golden Temple*), with his chopped head held on his palm, with the intention of offering it there.

Martyrdom is certainly a blend of faith and strength, though the aspect of faith as strength resonates well with popular religion in Punjab and elsewhere.

#The word *shaheed* comes from the Urdu word *shahdi*, which broadly means 'witnessing' ('witnessing truth' in religious parlance, or otherwise, for example appearing as a witness in a court).

##*Sati* comes from *sat*, meaning truth.

Both words *Shaheed* and *Sati*, though not directly been used in the poem are relevant in the culture they are rooted in, hence the above description.

## Snake and ladder

^*sirni* is sweetmeat which the family (or the person) performing a ritual distributes among the attendees. In Punjab, the term *sirni* is closely associated with the killing of a snake.

In almost all parts of India, snakes are worshipped; the related cult popularly named *Gugga* has a huge following in Punjab.

Here is a paradox, though. Snakes show often, more often during the monsoon in India. A snake, when noticed must be killed right before it kills you. To deal with the guilt- of killing a deity, the culture itself provides a remedy: the distribution of *sirni*.

I have used the concepts of 'snakes' and 'ladders' from the popular game named 'snakes and ladders' as a symbol of leaps and downs of life. Manipulated leaps, and the resulting downfalls possibly come as a package and should be understood that way, in most people's lives.

What happens when the players of the above game indulge in 'playing games' with those who are not even the 'players of their game', however? The answer as suggestion is: 'Kill the snake and distribute *sirni*'. The



inspiration for the suggested act has a support from the culture itself, in which even the situation when a devotee needs to kill his deity, has remedies.

Following this, guilt is sometimes a side effect of the right act and can be dealt with, no matter.

^ coming from Persian/Urdu words for sweet, the word *sirni* is commonly used in Punjab villages. *Jabaan sheeri te mulk geeri* is a Punjabi idiom which means one can win the world with the skill of a tongue that speaks sweetly.

### **The gift-wrapping paper**

The bull in this poem signifies the mythical bull that carries the load of earth on one of its shoulders, at a given time. In folk religion of Punjab, the bull is nothing but the law of dharma, that ensures righteousness. This is the first part of the myth, and I have used the myth in my poem, this far only.

However, the second part of the myth is about the bull shifting its load from its one shoulder to the other, upon intervals. That state brings major changes in the Universe, including, but not limited to changes in the social order.

The state that signifies disorder lies 'betwixt and between' the two states of order: one, when the order is violated and two, when it is restored. That liminal state is also one of the major themes in Van Gennep's book, **The rites of passage**.

Any amount of social disorder can be chaotic to any extent, in a given time; a milder one may be counted towards 'social change'.

**A special note:** 'The gift-wrapping paper' is the translation of the poem *Guddi kagaz*, from my book *Bracket de Baharwaar*; parts thereof may be read more as a 'soul-to-soul' translation than as a 'word-to-word' one.

**Jatinder Kaur** comes from a family (and she is married into one) that migrated from Pakistan to India during 1947. She was born and raised in India and stayed there until she came to New Zealand along with her husband, a civil Engineer, in 1996. In the same year, she gave birth to her son, named Newzea, after this land. She journeyed back to India in 1998, a trip that turned out to be a long one for various reasons. Gazal, her daughter was born in India.

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Te Tumu Whakawhiti Tuhiinga o Aotearoa