

# Shadows of the Past

selected poems of Gurumel Sidhu



*translated by Surjeet Kalsey*



“Gurumel Sidhu is a man of intellect. The first half of this book comprises poems of thought and is full of profound philosophical insight. He is also a man of feeling. The second half of the book is made up of poems of passion. The book thus covers the whole realm of human experience.

Surjeet Kalsey has achieved the virtually impossible task of translating poetry into a language that is not her mother tongue, a true tour de force.”

**Michael Bullock**

“Gurumel Sidhu’s *Shadows of the Past* is a poetic meditation that dances between the shadows of time as it relates to thought, emotion, and vision. One immediately recognizes that this work pays homage to T.S. Elliot’s *Four Quartets* while at the same time uncovers fresh facets drawn from a parallel perspective born of another culture. The reader is taken on a journey so familiar and yet still unknown. Paradoxes arise, shine, and then suddenly fade into the darkness of the author’s ruminations. In the end one cannot help but feel awakened, sacrificed, and then set free to wander.”

**Lori-ann Latremouille**

“I am delighted to take this opportunity to present Dr. Gurumel Sidhu’s selected poetry in English translation *Shadows Of The Past* after such a long time. It is better late than never. ”

**Surjeet Kalsey**



**Rainbird Press**

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2007

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## Other Works of Gurumel Sidhu

### Poetry:

- **Dubidha** (Dilemma). Sahit Sangam, Chandigarh, 1968.
- **Bechain Sadi** (Restless Century). Drishti Parkashan, Jullundhur, 1975.
- **Aperiayn Watan** (Endless Journey). Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, 1977.
- **Siphar Saffar** (Zero Journey). Navjug Publishers, Delhi, 1984.
- **Surkhiyan** (Headlines). Paragon Publishers, Ludhiana, 1995.
- **Kohraam** (Chaos). Punjabi Bhasha and Sabhiachar Vibhag, Lahore, 2001.
- **Sabdan Da Saffar** (Journey of Words). Chetna Parkashan, Ludhiana, 2004.

### Editor:

- **Sabdan Da Shagun** (Omen of Words). Collection of North American Poetry, Opinion Makers Publication, Ludhiana, 1999.
- **Natakkar Ravinder Ravi** (Playwright) National Book Shop, Delhi, 2003.
- **Kathakkar Ravinder Ravi** (Fiction Writer). National Book Shop, Delhi. 2005.

### Literary Criticism:

- **Khulli Kavita Da Sidhantak Pichokar** (Theory and Principles of Blank Verse in Punjabi Poetry). Chetna Publication, Ludhiana, 2006.

### Science:

- **AIDS: A Horrible Disease**. Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 2003.
- **Life and Human Cloning**. Chetna Parkashan, Ludhiana, 2004.
- **Genetics of Plant Pathogenic Fungi**. Academic Press, London, NY, 1988.

**Religion:**

- Scientific Aspects of Religion & Other Essays (Manuscript)

**Awards:**

- Award of Distiction.1986. Indo - Canadian Times, Vancouver.
- Gurmukh Singh Musafar Poetry Award. 1995. Language Department, Patiala,
- Best Punjabi Writer of the Year Award.1996. California Punjabi Literary Association, Bay Area, San Francisco.
- Shiromani Kavi (Eminent Poet) 1996. Language Department, Patiala,
- Kirpa Sagar Poetry Award. 1999. Punjabi University, Patiala,
- Maharaja Ranjit Singh Second Century Coronation Award. 2001. PU, Patiala.
- Punjabi Poetry Award. 2002. Institute Of Punjabi Languages, Lahore, Pakistan
- Sikh Philosophy Promotion Award. 2002. Institute of Sikh Studies, California.

**English Translations of his works appeared in the following:**

- **Contemporary Literature in Translation**, Editor, Andreas Schroeder, Punjabi Issue, with Guest Editor, Surjeet Kalsey. Spring 1977.
- **Green Snow**, Editor Stephan Gill, Toronto. 1978.
- **Glimpses of Twentieth Century Punjabi Poetry – An Anthology In English Translation**, Ed./translation by Surjeet Kalsey, 1992 Ajanta Press, New Delih.

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Surjeet Kalsey has achieved the virtually impossible task of translating poetry into a language that is not her mother tongue, a *true tour de force*.

Michael Bullock.

*Shadows of the Past* - is a poetic meditation that dances between the shadows of time as it relates to thought, emotion, and vision. One immediately recognizes that this work pays homage to T.S. Elliot's Four Quartets while at the same time uncovers fresh facets drawn from a parallel perspective born of another culture. The reader is taken on a journey so familiar and yet still unknown. Paradoxes arise, shine, and then suddenly fade into the darkness of the author's ruminations. In the end one cannot help but feel awakened, sacrificed, and then set free to wander.

Lori-ann Latremouille



## Shadows of the Past

These poems have been selected from Dr. Gurumel Sidhu's latest complete works of poetry, *Shabdan Da Saffar (A Journey Of Words)*. These poems reflect his poetic journey during the last 40 years moving from India to Canada and to the United States, where he settled with his family in Fresno California. He has been teaching as a professor of genetics for the last 25 years at the State University California. He obtained his PhD. Degree in Genetics from the University Of British Columbia in 1974 and started teaching at SFU before he migrated to USA in 1980.

In 1974, I was a student of Creative Writing at the University Of British Columbia Vancouver and was working on translations of Punjabi authors. This was in connection with introducing Punjabi literature to the mainstream authors and students. English translations of Punjabi poetry, short stories and drama were presented in many bi-lingual poetry readings at the university during 1974-1980. Dr. Gurumel Sidhu was one of the poets whose works were translated into English and were recited in English and Punjabi in bi-lingual poetry readings during the seventies in Vancouver. Later his poetry appeared in magazines such as *Contemporary Literature In Translation*, and the *Toronto South Asian Review*; and *An Anthology Glimpses of Twentieth Century Punjabi Poetry* (1992, Ajanta Press) which included 55 Punjabi poets residing in Canada, India, England, Sweden and Kenya.

I am delighted to take this opportunity to present Dr. Gurumel Sidhu's selected poetry in English translation "Shadows Of The Past" after such a long time. It is better late than never. In the process of this task I kept the translation close to the content, form and spirit of the original. I tried to conform with the guiding principles of translation, which include faithfulness to the message, image and style as presented by the author in the original text. I hope the foreign and ethnic readers will enjoy the freshness of these poems.

Surjeet Kalsey  
March 2006



## One Scorching Afternoon

Oh my God!  
Sheer naked thoughts!

My words were clad in  
the garments of my feelings  
when I begged for alms.  
I entered  
the temple of my heart  
bowed my head  
closed my eyes  
and prayed for a benediction  
a state of blessedness  
pleading for alms of love.

In a second moment  
I gently opened my eyes  
my calm mindfulness  
was interrupted by what I saw.  
My words  
were stripped naked  
wounded, stabbed with hatred.  
They had sipped a cup of poison  
were speechless  
lying face down  
scattered on the ground.

## The Miserable

In such a hustle and bustle  
entangled my lonely mind  
climbing the wheel of time  
ponders about redemption  
or it goes deep  
into the chasm of logic  
and talks about Nirvana  
                    only to get consumed.

Friends!

Yesterday my mind was free from time  
but today the time has strung it up  
by the nose.  
And has presented such an illusion  
a colorful Mandala, alluring us  
                    to play this game of life.

It is known  
"Time is the Most Powerful".  
I have just realized  
the truth of this saying.  
Wondering  
who has not been restrained  
by time.

Where is  
that brave warrior of Lanka<sup>1</sup>?  
Whatever years of life  
I have enjoyed

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<sup>1</sup>Lanka, Cylon. The reference is of the King Ravana of Lanka, who was the strongest and known for imprisoning "time".

due to the friendship of my friends.  
Whenever I wanted to sacrifice  
my mind and body to that life  
after stealing a part  
of that great moment  
my sinful mind  
right at that moment  
pops up with an illusion of money.  
Saying, O You Fool!  
You think  
you can spend your whole life  
on that tiny part of a moment.  
Why do you worship the past?  
The tiny part of that moment  
is more invaluable  
than all the years of my age.

Friends, I am like a lament.  
I am very helpless.  
You divide  
my time immemorial friendship  
over the years of my age  
and just leave me alone.  
Do this  
one more  
favor  
once more.

## Revolt

I am a conspiracy  
of circumstances  
an irritation  
in the eye of time.  
Or a bitter and sour incident  
stuck on the tip  
of the tongue of the pen.  
Or the spirit of Moosa, a prophet  
wandering aimlessly  
on the path of humanity.

O the rulers  
of this ailing century  
keep it chained  
keep it under heavy guards  
so that  
the conspiracy of circumstances  
may not lose its direction.  
It may not become a revolt.

The conspiracy of circumstances  
putting her head on her palm  
and her feet on the nails  
walks with pride.  
She is nobody's friend.

The conspiracy of circumstances  
whenever  
it has marched as a revolt  
it has a potential  
to gather around itself  
a crowd of several martyrs  
Einstein, Eliot, Socrates, Rousseau  
all of them were the characters  
of a conspiracy of the circumstances.

## Darkness And Light

In the history of life  
night is a miraculous achievement.  
How could I say that?  
I have not seen the darkness.

In front of the street light  
while entering the new house  
with life born in darkness  
and spent in darkness  
I felt like a sinner, tormented  
with the agony of this thought.

I am the child of  
the pregnancy of darkness  
a sin of the defilement of darkness.  
I am also the jewel of  
the womb of darkness  
a raindrop of  
the lust of darkness.  
How could I say that  
I have not seen the darkness.

My friends, darkness  
after all is an emblem of light  
the antithesis of light.

## The Present Time

(1)

Whatever moment  
passes through my feelings  
loses its footprints  
shrinks  
and registers in my mind.  
The journey is non-stop  
like continuous thoughts.  
And the silent processions  
of moments  
keep on coming and coming  
the entire present time may not  
come to me and absorb my mind.

(2)

Carrying their own corpses  
on their own shoulders  
all the logistics of the present time  
keep on walking  
on the non-stop journey.

Tell the present time  
to walk with serenity  
and wipe out its footprints after  
because the misty shadows  
of the philosophers  
are wandering  
on the paths out there.

(3)

I have surpassed  
the moments  
and have come a long way  
from far away.  
It was difficult  
to detach myself  
from the worldly attachments  
but I have crucified myself  
on the cross of the present time.

It is stated that  
these days the present time  
carrying my corpse  
has been searching for  
my foot-prints.

Friends!  
Tell the present time  
to wear my ego on itself  
and pass through me,  
I myself will come back  
and before my corpse rots  
bowing my head  
I will come back to its court.

(4)

Every day  
when counting the ticking seconds  
I live through the present time  
avoiding the existence of moments.

Pulling out the non-self  
from myself and hanging it  
on the cross of knowledge  
then all the secrets get revealed.  
The condition of my head  
becomes so heavy and unbearable  
after counting  
the ticking of the moments  
that it keeps on  
burning the flames.  
Someone, today  
someone must tell the present time  
to quench its thirst from  
the blazing wildfire in my head.

## Yearning for Emancipation

Friends  
there is a pitch darkness  
everywhere.  
A desolate journey  
devious valley, a wasteland.  
A deception of time destiny.  
I have a great yearning for  
emancipation.  
But locating the bottom of  
this mirage in my mind  
is like flying in the air  
rather than to just sit there  
inert by squeezing your throat.

Where can I go?  
Where can I please my heart?  
The restlessness  
of my mind, my friends  
is an instant product of this era.  
Spreading out its hands  
and diving down  
into the ocean of darkness  
it brings up some precious stones  
pearls and jewels of peacefulness  
which may put my mind to rest  
or may feed restlessness.

## Form Without Form

I am only a shadow  
of the reality of the flesh and bone  
of the personality of the human race.

Don't try to sweep me away.

Friends

shadows are not capable  
of being swept away.

As the sunshine is a mere  
glimpse of the sun  
as a ray is just a merging  
of colors in miniature  
man is just a manifestation  
of matter.

Don't desire

to wash away a glimpse  
of manifestation.

Friends

shadows are  
not to be washed away.

To try to sweep me away  
is to attempt the impossible.

I am only a shadow  
not dust

which can be swept away.

Shadow is also a meaningful  
form of personality.

For ages the word 'man'  
has masked my real being.

Friends, I am without a form.

I am the embodiment of reality.

Shadow is the reflection  
of this illusion of this Universe.  
Without form  
I live the reality of this illusion.  
I pass through the ages, formless.  
I am in the skies, in the oceans  
in the mountains and in this earth.  
My form without form is invincible.

## Home, I and Restlessness

Inside my cave  
there is a ray of the sun  
my mind  
and coming out of it  
a shard of glass.

From the other side  
of the mountain  
when the last ray of the sun  
suddenly splits and scatters  
against the glass shard  
my mind, terrified and awe-struck  
crumbles like raindrops  
in amazement.  
In this state of restlessness  
I sweep myself out  
and shake it off  
on the galloping roads.

Affection for home  
and the restlessness of my mind  
both blaming each other  
give away my dust as alms  
to the impetuous wind.

Worries to return home  
trouble me again.  
From the awe  
from the impetuous wind  
I gather again myself  
the bits of my existence.  
At night

when my home and I  
face each other  
the restlessness  
ignites me again.  
My home and I  
each deprived of the self  
lonely, fall asleep like ashes.

## Shadows Of The Past

After telling  
your side of the story  
unloading your inner self  
you just vanished like a dream.

The web of the problems  
spread out to the horizon  
in front of my eyes  
a tangled spider-web has  
caught my mind in the middle.

Tell me at least this much  
where should I go?  
If I move forward  
all the paths get blurred  
and if I go backward  
there stand all those demons  
the shadows of the past.

Beginning and ending have  
become illusions of mirages  
The innocent life has been pouring  
out through the slits of moments.

The hollow shadow of my body  
is melting down like snow.  
For God's sake just tell me  
which magic should I try  
to stop the process of aging  
and recover the human body  
from the loss of matter.  
Closing my eyes

I meditate to ignite my light  
of wisdom in my forehead that  
humbles me to think positively.  
My humble thoughts draw closer  
all three times  
past, present, and future.  
Replacing the stale moments  
with new thoughts  
and putting them  
in the context of reality  
my mind creates a unique 'time.'  
Right then a doubt arises  
and it pulls out  
any shadow from the past  
that saps down all my valour  
leaving me lifeless.

Every moment  
I swallow my pride.  
Every moment  
passes away in denial.  
My wanton mind is torn  
between  
'to be or not to be' in this moment.  
If I move forward  
then the religious code of ethics  
lash at me.  
If I live in the past  
then I refute  
the existence of my body.  
Hovering like vultures  
over my head  
are the shadows of the past.

## The Crown

The crown  
that does not suit me  
don't put it on my head.  
Go and put that crown  
on some crownless head.  
Wearing an unsuitable crown  
does not impart glory  
to the head that wears it.

You tell me  
how my head can wear both  
my head and the crown  
at the same time?  
If that happens  
my head, the crown of my body  
will fall down unconscious.

Let my head be the crown  
decorating my body.  
The crown that I wore  
the first time when  
I entered this Universe.  
I don't have any objection  
to my existence yet.  
My individuality is blessed  
with the benediction of my pride.  
My conscious mind  
is still aware of  
the origin of my roots.

Anyhow,  
those heads which  
are meant to be sacrificed  
and are being carried on  
the palms of the hands  
do not depend on any crown.  
And no crown is yet made  
to match the valiance  
of their martyrdom.

## Injured Snake

Who cares to look into one's inner-self.  
Whenever someone had little leisure  
they came and occupied my heart  
and left after sucking my blood.

My body is like a cracked skeleton  
and in it my mind trembles like  
a corpse of a scared bird  
and my logic in my conscious mind  
is like an injured snake  
that is agitated and spits venom.

Standing around me is  
the conspiracy of time  
watching me like a spectacle.  
The rage is gushing out of my eyes.

Yesterday, when my being  
melting into words  
was dripping down  
from the tongue of my pen  
you loathing my words as ink blobs  
sucked them and left.

But do you know  
my words are red like blood  
crimson red, hot and piquant  
before they left for journey?  
They were clad themselves  
in a coffin shroud.  
Nonetheless, these words of mine  
will never be written under

a heading of 'Death'.

Clinging to my consciousness  
my angry words, after eating  
your body like termites  
might not plunge into a revolt.

Injured snakes  
and the angry words of the pen  
are never friends to anyone.

## Directionless

My footprints  
are stuck to my soles.  
I have become like  
a disoriented mind  
standing at the crossroads  
having forgotten all the directions  
thinking  
what direction should I go?

Self is scattered bit by bit  
around myself, as if I am  
surrounded by debris  
searching for my own self.  
All the directions have shrunk  
into a dot in front of my eyes.

The people of the city  
wearing the roads  
wander around me.  
But they, the fools  
do not understand  
their destiny  
that at the end  
they are going to be  
shrunk like me into a dot.  
Thereafter  
they will lose their existence  
on this earth and everywhere  
and their bodies  
like lifeless statues  
will fly away too.

There is a difference  
of a few moments  
between me and  
the people of the city.  
Otherwise  
I too have traveled a lot  
those black-brown roads  
of "thoughts"  
which are spread out  
in my consciousness.

## **Zero Journey**

A journey is the truth  
as big as the journey itself  
a precedent  
that has not been compared  
to anything before or after.

The Universe  
will be created  
many times and  
will be destroyed many times.  
Living in solitude  
this world sometimes lives  
sometimes it dies  
but the journey from  
the womb to the grave  
goes on and on  
but it remained limited to zero.

“I” am  
because “I am.”  
Philosophers kept on  
making us understand this.  
But they kept on  
wandering aimlessly  
on the paths of the journey  
from the “yes” to the “yes”.  
The holiness  
from zero to zero  
sometimes shrank into  
the bartering of commodities  
or sometimes into races  
and the human generations  
kept on evolving  
unit by unit.

From minor to major  
and from major to endless  
every unit remained limited  
to the survival of the fittest.

What kind of Universe is this?  
It walks  
but it does not leave footprints.  
It touches  
but it does not show its hands.  
It looks  
but there is no pupil in the eye-socket.  
It speaks  
but can't find the meaning of words.

What kind of Universe is this?  
It is going down even before  
the creation of a moment  
carrying the journey  
from zero to zero in its forehead.

From the beginning to the end  
from existence to non-existence  
from the known to the unknown  
from the zero to the non-zero  
it is all a maze of reality  
and an embezzlement  
of the incarnations  
simply an illusion of the truth.

It is hard to understand  
man's thinking which  
travels from consciousness  
to consciousness.  
It has neither any footprints  
nor has it any sound of footsteps.

It walks long journeys with aching feet.  
It melts down in the struggle of  
catching the zero.

Truth has neither a form  
nor has it color  
No appearance, no garb.  
No feet no organs.  
It is neither a slave to the light  
nor is it bound by the darkness.  
It is neither a path  
nor a journey.  
It is neither a journey  
nor a distance.  
It is the continuation of  
the journey from zero to zero.

Leave me alone  
buried in an inert position.

The face of consciousness  
is very dreadful.  
Inertness is zero  
and consciousness  
is a zero journey.  
Its dreadful paths spring  
from the matted locks of Brahma<sup>2</sup>.

Having neither destination  
nor direction.  
Myself is falling down  
like particles of sand  
and is becoming the dust of the path.  
After traveling around the world  
I disintegrate myself into zero again.

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<sup>2</sup> Brahma, the creator god, one of the triad of Hindu pantheon.

## The Silence In the House

No one is home  
except you and I  
and silence  
    hanging in desolation.

Even together  
how empty we are.  
Emptiness is  
like a thought  
of a destitute woman,  
like an unholy word.

The silence hovers  
around the house  
like a gathering of witches.  
And afraid of the darkness  
of the inside  
it does not enter the house.

Once in a while we throw  
at each other  
a word or a half word  
like a stone.  
The words strike against  
the thoughts and shatter  
in shards.  
The meanings of the words,  
like newly born infant birds  
that have not even opened their eyes  
die after striking their foreheads  
against the wall.  
Some meanings

suffocate themselves  
by sticking inside the palate.  
Some are dying of the venom  
inside the forehead.  
Let us kill each other  
before the words have died out  
so that the house  
may not blame us  
that we have not broken  
the silence of the house.

## Desperation

When I saw  
the rose color of  
the setting sun on your face  
I assumed  
that a sentence of  
some wise words would  
come out of your mouth  
and that sentence  
would speak into my ears  
saying  
“Whatever assumptions about you  
I handed over to the winds  
those were not my own.  
Whatever bitter curses  
came out of my mouth  
like a procession,  
the bruised impact  
of those words still  
lingers in my mind.”

But in your answer  
your deadly silence  
and desperation oozing  
from every inch of your body  
were obvious enough.

## **Bitter Words**

You forgot and left  
a 'sentence'  
hanging in my room.  
Come, and take it back.  
Otherwise  
this 'sentence'  
will suffocate inside me.  
The ears of the walls  
of my room are loyal  
and have the stamina  
to absorb the insult  
inflicted by your words.

My room does not keep  
someone's miserable legacy.  
So come back and take  
your 'sentence' with you.  
Or else  
your 'sentence'  
will be insulted  
or I may end up uttering  
some insulting words to you.  
The honor of intellectuals  
is not disgraced like this.

## **An Abrasion**

Do not hang me  
on the Cross  
over and over  
I am not a Christ.

The Love of Life  
is not any playful habit.  
This is my worship.  
This is my tradition.  
Don't tarnish my tradition.

Every day after hanging  
my body on the Cross  
why do you scorch me  
with the heat of sins?  
The blisters on my body  
after oozing constantly  
have already become calluses.

Anyhow,  
if only I could know my sin.  
The Love of Life?  
I don't have any selfishness,  
or any egotism.

If your eagerness  
to hang me on the Cross  
has not subsided yet  
then hang me head down.  
Otherwise this will bruise  
the soul of my Messiah.

Today's Messiahs  
die instantly in this way  
because of the increased  
pressure of blood in their brains.

## **Frozen Limbs**

Living with the snow  
I have become snow.  
Before I become frozen  
like a stone  
ignite my body with  
any warm limb.  
Warm up my feelings  
so that I can feel and  
say that you are still  
warm and pulsating.

An unsympathetic hand  
and a severed arm  
are not suitable to my  
essence.  
Bring any warm hand  
from anywhere  
perhaps my yearning  
may become a boon  
to my freezing body.

Although I know  
that the oozing limbs  
don't hold any warmth  
within themselves.

## Unborn Words

With what assurance  
would I live through tomorrow  
If I keep on turning  
the pages of my life  
from the years in the past?

When I visualize  
youth's passion unbound  
absorbed in deep thinking  
holding my forehead with  
little hands.

My innocent aspirations  
like virgins lying dead  
on the floor with both  
their hands  
folded on their chests.

And when I visualize  
the desperate words  
frozen on my tongue.  
And when I visualize  
the unspoken sentences  
devoid of meaning  
like hungry children.

Then the tortured senses  
of my mind will get tired  
when they will search  
the ledgers full of unborn words  
lying in my consciousness.

All those incidents from the past  
and all those untold tales of vows  
which were left behind  
in the ruins  
would haunt and scream in my future.

## **Worshipping The Ego**

Worshipping  
by circling  
around your ego  
the feet of my worship  
have been severely scraped.

For how long  
shall my patience be tested?  
For how long  
shall my throbbing feet  
have to continue pacing  
with bleeding wounds?  
O you sanctified being  
wearing masked ego  
unveil yourself now.  
Otherwise  
I bury your ego  
into your forehead  
and I shall desert you  
and I shall go far away  
far far away  
where the judgment  
about ego and humility  
gets banished.

## The Fire Of The Flame

How long does  
one keep on burning?  
Only the oil  
of my earthen-lamp will tell.  
For the time being  
I am put on  
the pillars of the house  
without being lit  
without a wick  
and without oil.

I long for Deewali<sup>3</sup>  
the festival of lighting lamps.  
Where I will be the only one  
who will be lit.  
Not sitting on the pillars  
nor on the doors or windows  
and not on the lamp-posts.  
I will be lit  
in front of all those  
demon dark faces.  
I will not speak  
I will not utter a word.  
Only my lit flame  
the fire will speak.

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<sup>3</sup> Deewali or Deepawali is the festival of lights and it is celebrated through out India in the month of October to commemorate the day when Shri Ram Chandar, a Hindu King/god, and his wife Sita came back to their Capital Ayodhiya after 14 years exile.

## Creation

What would you gain after  
setting feathers on fire?  
I have already flown  
far far ahead  
from these moments.

Whatever you see here  
sitting in his iris staring at you  
that is only a figure of clay.  
Time  
minutes, seconds, moments  
turning into dates  
is inscribed on his body.

The creation of the body  
is the slave of the wheel of time  
a maid of times.

Whatever words it speaks  
that glide down onto the floor  
and become folk-tales of everyday.  
These tales speak of the evidence  
of an authentic creation of the body.

Instead of cherishing creation  
we chew and twist each others' words  
and pass judgment on one another.  
We throw either appreciation  
or criticism at each other  
and spread insulting words  
everywhere.

We talk about logic and intellect  
and put words in front of words.  
We assassinate each other's words  
instead of each others' appearances  
to justify our existence on this earth.

## The Life of My Words

In the pastures  
of my consciousness  
any one sentence  
keeps on wailing  
like an non-liberated soul.

I give it bowls full of blood  
but neither does it eat  
nor does it drink anything.  
Like a fearful baby bird  
it keeps on pecking the walls  
of the room where  
there is neither a window  
nor a door.  
Runs around aimlessly  
from left to right, the sentence  
and oozing foam out of its mouth.  
Who knows what it swallows  
and what it chews.  
But sometimes it clenches its teeth  
and clutches its fists.  
But it seems that the life of a sentence  
cannot be escaped without meanings.  
Sometimes it flutters  
its legs and arms in the air

in such a manner  
that it resembles  
the condition of a body  
that spasms, tosses and turns in pain  
before dying.

## Blessings

You have not grown old yet.  
You are blessed with  
the intensity of youth  
and have the patronage  
of the shade over your head  
from the sunny afternoon.

Those who walk  
with stitching shadows  
under their feet  
do not grow old fast.

This is a youthful season  
of sprouting vegetation-  
full of colors and the fragrance  
of youthful spring.  
No one is cursed  
to slash the budding flowers yet.

Time does not die, it kills.

But your setting before time  
will be unfair.  
But if you insist on diving down  
then I will bury the West behind the East  
and holding you by your tuft of hair  
I will put you behind the East.  
You are not the sun  
that is cursed  
to go through the cycle  
of rising and setting.

## Absent Presence

Have those paths  
washed with bright light  
from which  
you were supposed to come.  
So that you may not forget  
to recognize those paths.  
Igniting the lamp of wisdom  
in my forehead I put it  
on the kiosk of my mind.

You came.  
As if you did not come.  
So much preparations  
to welcome you  
have all been in vain.  
I called myself and  
spread my body out  
on your pathways.

Previously  
whenever you came  
you did not leave any footprint  
nor any sound of the footsteps.  
You came naked and transparent  
without any restraint or shame  
like the innocent body of a child.  
You entered my consciousness  
with a tranquil, innocent, aloof  
essence.  
I used to put myself  
in the context of the self  
and humbly think of you  
over and over.

I kept on  
humbly appreciating you.

But today you came  
with such sad gloomy eyes  
wide open empty eyes  
as if struck with  
the awareness of  
a distressed mind.  
This clever awareness  
was pecking the walls  
of your consciousness.  
Today you came  
looking like an unwed mother  
who has aborted her fetus.

If you were to come like this  
you should have at least  
wiped out all the footprints  
from under your feet  
so that no one  
would dare to say  
my body that was spread out  
on your path while waiting for you  
was thrashed and trampled over  
by someone  
who trespassed on your path.

Why did you come  
in the disguise  
of your physical form?  
Go back  
and return only  
after detaching yourself  
from your physical self

and after freeing yourself  
from your creation.  
Come with your real self.  
Otherwise, in this disguise  
the essence of our relationship  
will be contaminated.

## The Tradition Of My House

Before silently crossing  
the oily doors of my house  
be aware of yourself.  
Ignorant people  
may be suffocated  
in this house.

After crossing the threshold  
wipe out the sound of the knocking.  
The sound  
of the knocking at my door  
has already become stale  
and is hanging there  
upside down on the door.

Make sure as you leave  
not even a fingertip  
should touch the doors.  
The doors of my house  
have become too sensitive  
to tolerate  
even the soft touch of the wind.

Not even the end of a scarf  
should touch the doors  
nor should anybody  
pass through  
close by on the street  
making a sound of coughing.

If you would like  
to face this house  
then come wearing  
a brand new head  
on your body.  
The new head  
might have at least  
some knowledge  
of the tradition of my house.

## The Journey Of Light

The morning star  
and I  
get up together  
every day  
early in the morning.  
We radiate on and off  
on the pinnacles of  
minutes and seconds  
we walk on difficult paths.

When the dawn takes  
handfuls of rays  
from the bowl of the rising sun  
and spreads out light everywhere  
we say:  
Adieu to each other and depart.

All day long containing  
our light within ourselves  
we keep on searching for  
darkness.  
In the dusk  
when the sun starts  
diving down, we  
fastening our journey

to our feet  
come back again  
just to sit on the cross  
of minutes and seconds  
waiting for another dawn.

## Reproduction

(1)

I overflowed  
while walking  
and spilled myself  
spilled so much  
that there emerged an ocean.  
Now my relatives ask me  
Why did the fish give birth  
to Hanuman,<sup>4</sup> the strongest warrior.  
I gently smile.  
A drop of semen that fell  
into the eye of the fish  
was enough  
to impregnate it.

(2)

I have just  
finished the process  
of creating myself  
and I still have some  
sensation left in my body.  
There is pouring rain  
inside and outside?  
Is there anyone lucky out there  
who can be like Ahallia?<sup>5</sup>  
Who would take care  
of the spilled pearls of life?  
I am under the spell of  
the full moon

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<sup>4</sup> Hanuman, a mythological character in the Ramayana, the Hindu epic, was the strongest warrior who helped Ram Chandra, the Hindu god, in a war to bring back his wife Sita, abducted by Ravana, the King of Lanka (Ceylon).

<sup>5</sup> Ahallia, a mythical character was cursed to become statue of stone and will be revived only with a touch of Rama in the Age of Truth (Satyug).

otherwise  
I don't have time  
to overflow every night.

(3)  
I have just fulfilled the promise  
to honor my forefathers.  
Whatever I got in inheritance  
I have left that in my legacy.  
Now it is my turn to set  
and get redemption from  
the cycle of birth and death.  
I have no intention to come back.

## The Fire Of My House

These days  
my house  
is cross with me.  
When I enter it  
quietly  
it stares at me  
with its wide open eyes.

On the right hand side  
against the earthen wall  
there is a lamp, desperate  
hiding in itself the fire  
sitting quietly on the stand.  
On the left hand wall  
there hangs a shining  
double-edged sword  
without its sheath.

There is darkness  
all around me in the house.  
The silence is stuck like  
nails in the walls.  
The four walls of the house  
are closing down onto me.  
I want to scream  
and wake up the house  
and put a burning spark  
in the eye of the lamp  
and light it up.  
And after swallowing  
the rest of the fire  
I would like to rush out of the door  
and stand outside to hand over

the flames to the people  
running away in fear  
from the house  
so that I can light up  
the lamp on the stand!

But I have heard that  
it is not good  
for the fire of the house  
to wander on the streets naked  
and start spreading  
flames and sparks.

But how can I make the fire  
understand?  
Maybe I can sit beside her  
and give her some words of wisdom.  
And make her understand that  
this fire cannot be extinguished  
by pleasing the gods  
or by saying prayers.  
Neither can it be  
extinguished with water.  
How can I extinguish it?  
The fire that burns inside  
the four walls of the house  
is the same fire that burns  
inside my forehead.  
It does not burn in flames  
nor does it burn in sparks.

Taking a flame  
from inside of my forehead  
I should go to the door  
and put a spark on the threshold  
of the house and bow my head.  
I should put my forehead  
on the threshold.  
And I should take  
a spark from the door  
and put it on the cross-roads  
blowing it into flames  
and should distribute it to  
each and every house  
to make fearful people aware of  
the fire of my house.

## Bad Omen

Yesterday, when  
you came back home  
I  
like everyday  
opened my arms  
to embrace you  
and pour out  
all my affection at your feet.  
I decorated the entrance doors  
with garlands of mango tree leaves.

But  
I failed to understand  
Why you left  
after rejecting my love  
blowing it away  
like a pile of ashes.  
Deceiving my trust  
you stormed out of the doors  
with your fiery rage.

You left hanging from the doors  
a skeleton, brittle like glass bangles  
in place of mango tree leaves.

It doesn't matter  
whether you are childless  
but for me  
you are blessed with  
the births of generations.

I never wanted you to  
abort your fetus.  
I never wanted that  
the mother inside you  
should become childless.  
I never wanted  
your honor to be disgraced.  
Let my tormented soul  
console your shame.  
Or else  
conceive me again in your womb  
and abort me shred by shred.

## **An Abortion**

A virgin's eye  
does not become numb  
even after aborting her fetus.  
She did not cry  
even after putting her  
unborn child through  
the sharp scissors.  
Neither did she feel any grief  
nor any remorse.  
She let herself bleed out  
to expel the strange blood.  
The stigmatized shame  
has to be washed away  
the defenseless fetus.

## **A Tree Without Leaves**

(1)

In the layers of  
my consciousness  
something keeps on  
pulsating, throbbing  
like the germs of restlessness  
always crawling inside.  
In the dreadful time  
of such a crisis  
like a mother I am feeding  
the countless living beings.  
I am suffering from the misery  
and bearing the brunt of  
fulfilling my responsibility.

(2)

The sharp claws of  
my thoughts  
are scratching my consciousness.  
Thinking is an isolated process  
but it is omnipresent.  
I tell my mind to stop and quit.  
Why are you bringing death home?  
What kind of wisdom is this  
to keep on thinking all the time  
and to keep on burning inside?

(3)

There are countless sentences  
that slither like snakes in  
my consciousness.  
They are poisonous and  
spitting venom as if  
someone has crushed their heads.  
There always exists  
a noise in my head  
as if it is not my brain  
but instead is  
a hiding hole for snakes.  
Why would I  
let the snakes reside in my head?  
Why would I make them sip  
the poison of my restlessness?

(4)

I am tied to an uncertainty  
caught up in an enormous crisis.  
My heart agrees but not my mind.  
Who should I agree with?  
Who should I disagree with?  
The situation is terrible.  
One has to be humble  
while facing wisdom.  
As a matter of fact  
a mind devoid of thinking  
is like a barren tree without leaves.

## Slow Poisoning

Whenever any soft sound of  
slow footsteps whispers  
in my ears  
my concentrated mind  
embraces the tremor  
of the soft sound of a knock.  
Before such meeting time  
a suicidal thought  
carrying a corpse  
enters my mind.  
Then the desperate soft sound  
of the footsteps gets lost  
in the loud noise of the crowd.

My consciousness returned  
like a rejected bowl of alms  
came back dejected.

I gathered up my consciousness  
that fell from the soft sound  
of each footstep, and decorated it  
on the pages of my thought-book.  
By doing so I increased the age of  
my restless moments.

## Light And Darkness

Now it is not appropriate  
for me to walk  
on the paths that are  
washed with bright light.

There is darkness inside  
there is darkness outside.  
If today, the darkness  
sprinkles its drops  
on light, it saddens me.  
Someone should ask  
the darkness  
what is this business  
of contaminating  
the coconut colored  
white rays of light?

I am colorless.  
You are multi- colored.  
I am a half-moon crescent.  
You are a full moon.  
O you are a soft ray of light  
(What should I call you  
other than this?)  
O you holy ray of light.  
I desire to dissolve  
myself inside you  
but the darkness  
has no right to do so.

Now it is not appropriate  
for me to walk  
on the paths that are  
washed with bright light.

You are born of light.  
I am born of darkness.  
You weave light.  
I give birth to darkness.

## Flag Station

Time is harsh enough.  
It is slipping through its own cracks  
crushing down its own moments.

Culprit of its own created  
circumstances  
deceiving itself  
it hides behind its own shadow.

It is stated that  
"Time is the Most Powerful of all".  
Ill-fated myself, I embraced  
a deprived life, worn-out  
and perforated.  
I live day to day  
by stitching up  
its every hole.  
My pride peeps through  
the torn self of my middle-aged body.

Life does not have time  
to stay in the body.  
The train of time goes on  
non-stop.  
Age is just a flag station.

## **The Light Is Like Darkness**

Long gone has  
my age of innocence  
unknowingly  
slipped away  
the passion  
of the age of youth.

Where from should I bring back  
those youthful sparks?  
In which mother's womb  
should I be reborn?  
How could I recreate myself?

My forefathers before expiring  
blessed me with long life.  
They drew a line of fate  
on my spotless palm.  
Inscribed my destiny  
on my forehead!  
Gave a sermon about  
beginning and ending of life.  
Placed a bag full of wisdom  
on my shoulder  
led my path  
and put me on the journey.  
I have been walking  
the harsh journey of life  
full of desolation and misery.  
Life is like a pitch dark night.  
What lamp should I light  
from my forehead to enlighten  
this darkness?

I lit a lamp of wisdom  
that opened my third eye.  
I should acquire some  
words of wisdom  
making them into arrows  
and putting them on a bow string  
I should strike them through the darkness  
and tear away  
the moonless dark night.

But you know  
this is a very strange darkness  
that has evolved from  
the deep knowledge  
of the century.  
It does not spare anybody  
not even the bright sun.  
No matter how many  
bright suns circle around the Universe.  
As life goes on  
the darkness becomes  
more and more pitch dark.

I, the ill-fated one  
walk on egg-shells  
in the darkness of the new era.  
There is neither a footprint  
that comes from the journey  
nor is there any sound of a footstep.  
Neither does any journey end  
nor does a destination appear.

There is no path  
no house, no address.  
All the paths go on a zero journey  
and get inscribed inside my forehead.

## **A Collage of Thoughts**

I have passed through  
your realms of knowledge  
after such a long time  
and I have come back  
with a collage of your  
inner human being.

Browsing through the works  
of men of letters is my dedication  
and it is not my helplessness.  
The population of scholars  
gathers like a crowd in my head  
and it becomes tumultuous.  
So I have to pay attention to  
the city dwellers.

While seeking knowledge  
I should keep on  
searching philosophies.  
I don't have anything of my own.  
I am like a kite which  
fied to the strings of thoughts  
goes every direction the wind blows.  
I am at the mercy of the wind.

Thought is not even  
an explosive substance  
that makes any sound  
when it explodes.

Then what fears  
should you and I have?  
We will toil hard to  
keep the body of knowledge intact.

Keep the lamp of knowledge lit  
in your forehead  
let the third eye be open  
in your consciousness.

Man devoid of thoughts  
is like an enucleated egg.

## **Knowledge And Fate**

Whatever word is sown  
has passed through my mind  
the words sprouted  
in the fertile soil of my mind  
and grew into a forest.  
The essence of words  
bloomed in each and every tree  
spreading fragrance everywhere.

The forests of words  
grown behind the forehead  
are blessed with thoughts  
good, calm and soothing.  
Thoughts grind a person's inner self  
like a coarse rope to the wood.

Listen, O you people of wisdom!  
The knowledge says at last  
"Wipe out fate from your forehead  
firmly once and for all".

## Consciousness

Cast a deep glance once more  
at inside the threshold  
of your consciousness.  
You may find some desire  
still lingering there  
you may find  
a guileless word  
becoming meaningless  
you may find  
an unborn yearning  
dying in desperation.

Sometimes  
wanted or unwanted  
desires remain buried  
extinguish themselves  
without fulfillment.  
Even the strongest man  
feels helpless  
on the sharp blade of  
some weak moment.  
Consciousness is a very dreadful thing.

## Mobile Graves

Long have gone  
those olden golden days.  
When we used to hide  
our misery behind our words  
used to share our grief  
while holding each other's hand.

Now there remains  
no warmth in the hands  
or in the words.  
There remains no kith and kin.

Our home has become a foreign land.  
Living at home feels like  
living in a house  
of concrete, wood and glass.

No one shows any compassion.  
No one talks about the pangs of  
meetings and separations of lovers.  
No one cares about the other.  
All those intimate words  
have been lost somewhere  
inside the throats, unspoken.  
The words have become  
lusterless and lifeless.

Myself, an ill-fated one  
how did I end up  
among these robots?  
They do not laugh  
nor do they sing.  
Like graves that are  
walking around  
and keep on coming  
out of the cemetery.

## **In Motion**

I am not an atom  
whose existence  
cannot be affected  
by breaking.

I have been deprived  
from the beginning  
my ending does not  
have any knowledge  
of salvation.

The origin  
of my beginning  
is like a dot.  
Beginning and ending  
form a circle.  
And I am walking  
in circles  
around the circle.

I am not an atom  
that disintegrates from its existence  
and scatters after breaking  
into small bits and pieces  
and changes  
the essence of the Universe.

There is no pride in the process  
of change that  
brings changes in everything  
that is instable.

Because  
it is known for its instability  
it is always in motion.

At last, the atoms are  
nothing but matter.  
I am not an atom  
I am a creator.

## **Black Hole**

It is said  
that the Universe is expanding.  
The black hole is devouring  
each and every constellation.  
I don't know where  
each and every star  
disappears to one by one.

Every atom is breaking down.  
Thoughts are so entangled  
like the desolated ant-bill  
imprisoned in a hollow dome.  
There is a tune but no voice.  
There are wings but no flight.

To cover one's nakedness  
the illusion of body hides  
one's existence.  
What kind of illusion is this  
that one has to  
guard one's own body?

Before my body expires  
give me my outfit.  
Give me those clothes

which I wore at birth.  
Dedicate  
the virgin unruffled body  
to the black hole.  
On the path to illusion  
put me again into the seed  
from which I was born  
and bestow upon me  
the responsibility  
of creating future generations.

## **A Dialogue With A Human Being**

The ocean is on fire.  
The boat sails on the sand.  
The water circulates in the body.  
The glaciers are burning.  
In such a season, who cares  
about who dies and who lives.  
Even death does not have  
time for such a human being.  
Death is already dead.

Descartes said:

"I think, therefore I am"

Sartre said:

"I am, therefore I am."

What can I say about myself?  
I am the product of inventions  
to think, to exist, to live  
are beyond the power of robots.

Bravo!

You, follower of Darwin.  
You dismantled in seconds  
the theory of evolution.  
You destroyed in a moment  
the hard-earned legacy.

What a fool I am?

I am trying to  
set up a dialogue  
with ultra-modernism.  
This century has lost  
the essence of being 'human'.

## Retirement

I have this urge  
to retire one day.  
The debts of my children  
desperation of home  
that do not allow me  
to retire yet!

Life's flow flowing  
leaf by leaf.  
The yellow leaves of years  
are becoming my shroud.

Under the sheet of leaves  
my body is lying listless  
tossing and turning in pain.  
And the restlessness  
peeking through my needs  
overpowering me  
like a high fever.

My children won't let me  
reach retirement yet!  
Perhaps I will find relief myself  
only after saying good-bye to life.

## **Masks**

Man created headlines for man.  
He himself created accidents  
and himself became headlines.

To increase the intensity and  
the meanings of the headlines  
he corrected them and put  
them on the pages of History.

When the earth became hunchbacked  
with the burden of the weight of headlines  
then man patched them together  
and put the headlines on the sky.

Today, man's job has become  
so much easier that  
he does not have to do anything.  
He takes ready-made headlines  
and pastes them in newspapers.

How shamelessly the pens  
shoulder the lies of headlines?  
How do the words manage to wear  
the headlines on their bodies?

## Inner Self

Feelings are  
scorched in the kiln  
of inner self.  
Consciousness is dead.  
The greedy vultures  
are hovering  
over the selfish sky.

The poet is nonchalant  
holding his choked pen.  
After renouncing  
his right of freedom  
now he seeks sovereignty.  
Nothing is his own.  
Not even this body  
nor its shadow.  
My existence walks around  
in the shade of its own shadow.  
My head is not my own.  
My body is not my own.

After sowing  
the seeds of misery  
and planting  
the plants of hatred  
smearing accusations  
on its own chest  
Religion marches on  
putting its saddle  
on the vulnerable  
God fearing human beings.

## Words Hanging From The Cross

If I keep quiet  
I feel anxious  
with inner murmuring.  
If I speak up  
the sentences pour out  
of my mouth  
non stop.  
The wildfire of thoughts  
blazes in my mind.

It struck me! Wondering  
while sprouting bit by bit  
I may not become  
a forest of philosophies.

For how long should  
I keep on hanging  
the sentences on  
the cross of moments?  
For how long should  
I keep on restraining my feelings?  
For how long should  
I keep on avoiding the meanings?  
For how long should  
I keep on imprisoning consciousness?  
For how long should  
I keep on shutting myself down  
in the confinement of myself?  
For how long should  
I keep on hanging  
my words from the cross?

## **A Warrior**

(Dedicated to Dr. Harbhajan Singh<sup>6</sup>)

At the time  
when he passed away  
he did not have  
any frown  
on his forehead.

No regrets.  
His face was in full bloom  
when he was saying  
his last Good-bye.

He lived the essence of words.  
He cherished words with intensity.  
He would not allow any word  
or any sentence to rest without  
their meanings understood.  
He enhanced the tradition  
of the forefathers  
and created some  
small sentences from  
some obsolete words.  
And he put some of those words  
into the mouths of contemporaries  
spread out some in the winds  
and tempered some with passion.  
He used to say  
"I will sacrifice my head  
but will not tolerate  
the disgrace of words."

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Harbhajan Singh, a poet, critic, a linguist scholar of Punjabi, Hindi and Sanskrit, (b.1919 -d. 2002), resided in Delhi, many books to his credit.

Being the wordsmith  
he did not allow any sentence  
to become obsolete, cold or dead.  
Nor did he allow  
any idea that  
came on the tongue  
to commit suicide before  
wearing the gown of words.

At the time of his demise  
slowly and softly saying  
Good-bye  
his face was glowing  
with his gallantry  
to fight for language.

## History Speaks

Words in the history book  
have become sparks.  
The words while glowing  
in the pages of history  
fell down onto the floor.  
The past is peeping through  
the cracks of the charred windows  
watching today's story  
becoming yesterday's history.

Gather up the fallen words  
and bring them together to make  
a sizzling sentence  
and use the black lead pencil  
to boldly inscribe its meanings  
in the eye of the history book.

Enhance it with the knowledge  
of current affairs  
make it wise to be authentic  
before today becomes yesterday.  
Make it understood  
What is happening today.

History speaks only  
the language of the past.  
The language which is buried  
in the pages of the history.  
The words of history  
are dependent on the pages  
in which they are inscribed  
but not on the meanings.

Tell history that  
before the wind of the truth  
touches the meanings  
it should stand by the facts.  
Spoken words that are  
dissolved by the winds  
are not anybody's friends  
they become rumors.

## Lamentation

(1)

Whenever  
a tormenting story  
laments and sobs  
the tears keep on  
falling down non-stop  
drop by drop  
and bit by bit  
life becomes an ocean of agony.  
How can one swim through  
the deep ocean of life?

Even the frightened shadow  
of the body eventually  
walks away from the body.  
Frightened green leaves  
are hiding inside each and every tree.  
Ask Kabir<sup>7</sup>, how should one  
console oneself in such a season?

(2)

The soles of the feet  
are smeared with  
the spilled blood  
of the innocents  
but the dirty roads run  
on and on non-stop.  
People are walking slowly  
as if they are crawling with  
bleeding soles of their feet.

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<sup>7</sup> Kabir: A Sufi poet known as Bhagat Kabir, his holy hymn are included in Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Book of Sikhs.

There is mourning  
in the courtyards.  
The streets are deserted.  
Human bodies have become corpses  
and their limbs are burning in pyres  
in their own homes and  
every house has become a cemetery.  
To who should we ask  
the whereabouts of people  
and their addresses  
if all the houses are empty, deserted.  
To who should I write a letter  
and to whom should it be sent  
and to which address  
of the barren ruins.  
Listen, O Sheik Farid<sup>8</sup>  
Tell us  
what kind of benediction is this?

(3)

In the evening  
mothers and daughter  
used to sit and sing together  
their love for each other  
and sing their sorrows away  
in the songs of lamentation.

Now their songs are buried  
inside their hearts  
only wailings and cries  
can be heard.  
All those gorgeous

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<sup>8</sup> Sheik Farid: A Sufi poet known as the first Punjabi poet, Baba Sheik Farid, his holy hymns are included in Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Book of Sikhs.

wedding garments  
are ruined and destroyed.  
All those singings  
of wedding  
praises and eulogies  
have become voiceless  
and all those melodies  
have become mute and deaf.  
Even asks Buley Shah <sup>9</sup>  
"Who are you and who am I?"

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<sup>9</sup> Buley Shah, a Mystic Sufi poet

## An Omen Of Words

I want to write to you  
every day a fresh poem  
and send it as an omen.  
But you are everywhere  
Spread out in the winds  
in all directions  
North, South, East and West  
Where should I write?

You are a mango tree  
grown in my courtyard.  
You are a lamented melody  
from the flute carved out of  
this mango tree.  
Is this the fifth note or  
the seventh note of the *sargam*<sup>10</sup>  
what should I compose?

You are clad in the shining  
gorgeous attire of words.  
You are wearing  
bangles of rays on your arms  
and silver anklets on your ankles.  
When you walk I hear  
the jingling of bracelets  
and tinkling of anklets  
how should I praise you?

Time has encircled me  
in its vicious conspiracy.

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<sup>10</sup> *sargam*, in Punjabi *sargam* stands for seven musical notes.

And divided my life  
into layers of grief.  
I sigh about it everyday  
I live the misery everyday  
Sighs or grief, what should I write?

This is my yearning  
that I should spread myself out  
in each and every atom and  
bloom in every hair on your body.  
And every letter I send to you  
should contain the blossom  
of spring, which I write.

My mind is engaged aimlessly  
in resolving stubborn thoughts.  
And it is hard to carry  
the burden of their meanings.  
What form should I give to words  
synonyms or antonyms  
about this confusion, what should I write?

The journey of life is long and lonely  
the path is difficult and tiresome.  
There are many confusing directions  
that drive my mind crazy.  
And leave my body in pain and agony.  
I don't know how many types of grief  
keep on generating inside me  
about such agony, what should I write?

I want to write every day  
a fresh poem for you.  
Sending you an omen of words when I write.

**References**

These poems have been taken from the original Punjabi poetry book  
"Shabdan da Safar" (The Journey Of Words)  
by Gurumel Sidhu

One Scorching Afternoon	<i>alaf dupehar, p.60</i>
The Miserable	<i>bebus, p.48</i>
Revolt	<i>vidhroh, p.61</i>
Darkness And Light	<i>nehr te noor, p.79</i>
The Present	<i>Vartman, p.93</i>
Yearning for Emancipation	<i>mukti di locha, p.96</i>
Form Without Form	<i>roop aroop, p.55</i>
Home, I And Restlessness	<i>ghar, main te beychani, p.53</i>
Shadows Of The Past	<i>boot dey parchhawayn, p.136</i>
The Crown	<i>mukat, p.132</i>
Injured Snake	<i>sat khadha sup, p.130</i>
Directionless	<i>dishaheen, p.127</i>
Zero Journey	<i>cipher safar, p.151</i>
The Silence In The House	<i>ghar di chup, p.155</i>
Desperation	<i>beybasi, p.143</i>
Bitter Words	<i>kaur-kausyala fikra, p.144</i>
An Abrasion	<i>jarab, p.159</i>
Frozen Limbs	<i>nucharey hoye ang, p.161</i>
Unborn Words	<i>unjanmey shabad, p.163</i>
Worshipping The Ego	<i>haun di parkarma, p.164</i>
The Fire of The Flame	<i>bati di aug, p.167</i>
Creation	<i>rachana, p.168</i>
The Life Of My Words	<i>mere shabdan di joon, p.170</i>
Blessings	<i>vardan, p.187</i>
Absent Presence	<i>gairhazari hazari, p.173</i>

The Tradition Of My House	<i>mere ghar di maryada, p.178</i>
The Journey Of Light	<i>lo da safar, p.180</i>
Reproduction	<i>sirjana, p.181</i>
The Fire Of My House	<i>ghar di aug, p.198</i>
Bad Omen	<i>ashagun, p.202</i>
An Abortion	<i>garbhpat, p.206</i>
A Tree Without Leaves	<i>nipatra rukh, p.74</i>
Slow Poisoning	<i>dhimi zaher, p.57</i>
Light And Darkness	<i>chanan te kalakh, p.82</i>
Flag Station	<i>flag station (new)</i>
The Light Is Like Darkness	<i>nehar varga chanan, p.204</i>
A Collage Of Thoughts	<i>sochan da kolaz, p.210</i>
Knowledge And Fate	<i>bodh te taqdeer, p.213</i>
Consciousness	<i>zahan, p.218</i>
Mobile Graves	<i>turdiyan firdiyan lashan, p.207</i>
In Motion	<i>gatisheel, p.73</i>
Black Hole	<i>kali khayee (new)</i>
A Dialogue With A Human	<i>manukh naal dialogue (new)</i>
Retirement	<i>sewa mukat (new)</i>
Masks	<i>mukhotay, p.227</i>
Inner Self	<i>antahkaran, p.235</i>
Words Hanging From The Cross	<i>sooli utey tangey shabad, p.267</i>
A Warrior	<i>yodha, p.268</i>
History Speaks	<i>itihis bolda hai, p.296</i>
Lamentation	<i>virlap, p.300</i>
An Omen Of Words	<i>sabdan da shagun (new)</i>

### **About the translator**

Surjeet Kalsey has been translating Punjabi literature into English for the last thirty some years. She took her M.F.A. in creative Writing & Translation degree from the University of British Columbia. Her earlier adventures included bi-lingual English/Punjabi poetry readings in Vancouver in which many Punjabi and English writers participated. She translated and edited as a guest editor for the "Contemporary Literature In Translation" with Editor Andréas Schroeder; translated and edited Glimpses of Twentieth Century Poetry –an Anthology in English Translation which included 55 Punjabi poets from Bhai Veer Singh to modern times living in Canada, India, England and North America etc. In its foreword Micheal Bullock wrote, "*Surjeet Kalsey has performed a service both to the poets, whose work thereby reaches a new and wider audience and to readers, who are thus introduced to a fascinating and rewarding new area of poetic experience.*"

She has been an Associate editor of the Toronto South Asian for ten years.

Surjeet has been teaching a bi-lingual component of the Court Interpreting Certificate Program at Vancouver Community College for the last seven years. As a professional Certified Court Interpreter she works in the various levels of the courts throughout B.C. Surjeet has completed various book length translation projects from English to Punjabi and Punjabi to English including the BC Health Guide. Recently she has completed the multilingual Legal Terminology Web Project of Vancouver Community College as a member of the team of multilingual terminologists.

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