

Kirpal Singh Kasel

The real test of 80 years old Kirpal Singh Kasel was in 1964 when he lost his eyesight. But in the futile process of saving it, he acquired another power to become one of the frontline littérateur of Punjabi . His contribution is phenomenal ; surely worthy of Sarv Sresht Sahitkaar Award of Rs 1,00,000, to be conferred upon him by Panjabi Sahitya Akademy, Ludhiana.

His latest book spread over 1125 pages '*Atma Dee Kavita*'(Poetry of the Soul) is translated poetry of Professor Puran Singh, the legendary Punjabi romantic and mystic poet whose body of English verse is bigger than the one he penned in Punjabi. The exquisiteness of this translation is that Kasel and Puran Singh have become inextinguishable. Kasel writes, "The awakened history of his subtle natural 'self' and composed realization of 'selflessness' have been embodied in his poetry." Such poetry can't be internalized and rendered in another language in absence of translator's potential to identify with the psyche of the original author before he can capture minute details of his larger frame of mind. Kasel translates one of Puran Singh piece as: "Saawan Maah De Surmayee/ Sandli Baddal Langhde/ Mere Andar/ Aapneean Madhur Taral Dhunaan Cherhde/ Bijli Chamkadi Te Garaj Uthhdee/Mere Andar/ Gulaabaan Da Meehn Varda." Attar Singh compared even the prose written by Kasel with that of Puran Singh.

The answer to how Kasel could discover the restless poet like Puran Singh lies in the translator's personal life in which he could successfully replace his sight with insights. Author and translator of 66 books, initially he was mainly engaged in criticism and history of literature. His *Sahit De Roop* and *Punajbi Sahit Di Utpati Te Vikas* have been instrumental in giving reliable introduction to the poetics of different literary forms and their brief history in Punjabi literature. But his creativity found wings only when he was confined to a bed in Christian Medical College Ludhiana and it manifested in form of poetry, creative essays and novels.

First novel 'Ward No 10' is about the environment of hospital, and it narrates that, despite great efforts and encouragement given by Doctors like Simon Franken, Kasel lost his paradise. In spite of its best efforts, the hospital could not save his vision, and yet gave him a 'vision'. Kasel was also inspired by the Russian novel '*How the Steel Was Tempered*' and the published letters written by its author..

His second novel '*Pushap Ban*' is auto-biographical and is about the paradise regained. In his own words: "Ward No 10 is the psychological narrative of the period of my losing sight and '*Pushap Ban*' is the story of my rehabilitation." Dr Franken also says that Kasel used his ward, the place of his suffering and pain, to achieve a new spiritual victory." The second novel is largely centered on Dr. Johnson who helped him to negotiate with the new realities that enabled him to write poetry like this:

I look like a blind.

Probe me to find my radiance

I don't know

If people know this.

An ardent admirer of Puran Singh, a proud student of Sant Singh Sekhon, ever grateful to Christian missionaries, devotee of Namdhari Guru Jagjit Singh who helped him immensely in his post hospital period, friendly Guru of Playwright Satinder Nanda who supports him physically and emotionally, Kasel is true and sincere to all at the same time, because ideologically he is committed to humanism.