

## **[Review Article on *Inder Jal*]**

### **Imaging the sprouting trap:**

## **Regional crises and Global misery**

Gurpal s. sandhu\*

The contemporary Punjabi writing is now reshaping its mode of perception, creative imagination, and issues of nation, nationality and Punjabi identity. By the emergence of Diasporic Punjabi narrative the notion of region and its representation has been twisted from home to the global. Consequently, the regional issues, contexts and concerns have extended their boundaries, institutions and operational systems up to the global spaces. Two writings of the Canadian Punjabi fiction writers; ***Inder Jal*** (a novel) of Nadeem Parmar and ***Towers*** (a collection of short-fiction) of Jarnail Singh, are a notable example of this tendency. Although, both of the texts deals with the description of the major events of terroristic activities fabricated on the land of North America, but, the *Inder Jal* has exclusively narrated the detailed account of the militant movement of Punjab, its impact on existential and social destruction, particularly, on the image of Punjabi community on the global level.

The novel is of the biographical kind and narrated the story of three generations of the protagonist Madhav Singh alias Madho. The grandfather of Madho was a Gadri Baba and devoted his life to the freedom movement of India. His father and his family also became victim during the partition of India and now, Madho Singh and his wife Kirnee are facing the psychological and existential dismay of the rape of Kirnee by the activists of the Khalistan movement. In this way the novel *Inder Jal* has portrayed the multifaceted web of the crisis emerged on the different levels; i.e. individual, family, society and history of Punjab.

The narrative expression of *Inder Jal* is centered on the tension of Madho and Kirnee indicating the scene of their present crisis. Kirnee is lying on the bed in her bedroom, covering her face with cloth and hesitating to meet the family members. Question arises here that what is the reason behind the tension and astonishing behavior of Kirnee. Now, the story of the novel has oscillated again and again to the past and

narrated a series of the events related with the childhood and adolescence of Madho and Kirnee. These events are not appeared in isolation; rather, a stream of previous and contemporary history is charging them with the sense of crises and essence of epochal sensibility, developed around the family of Madho in long time span of twentieth century.

The astonishing behavior of Kirnee is a product of the different historical conditions and dispersion of her family in which they had to move from Punjab to Delhi and later on to Canada. In the present situation her brother and father was killed by the mob in anti-Sikh riots occurred in Delhi in the month of November, 1984. Responding to the state sponsored oppression against Sikhs, she developed her association with the activists of Khalistan movement, working for the so called cause of the freedom of a Sikh state. She also got baptized and changed her identity as a Harkiran Kaur Khalsa. She further adopted an orthodox life style, took home Sri Guru Granth Sahib and joined the same type of the group of people. Moreover, she started to disassociate herself from the routine family matter, particularly, from the emotional and instinctual movements of her husband, which changed the entire scenario of her family life. On the other hand, she started to take part in managing the terroristic activities of Canada and also to fund the organizations working in Punjab.

But all of the things are not like that as she thought. Her own so called religious minded people started to exploit them and ultimately she was raped by her leaders along with her other friends. Her dreams and beliefs were shattered. Her own people has subjugated her and behaved similar with the other oppressor communities' act toward them in different times and contexts. This situation had made her unable to face her own family members. Unfortunately, her own group played a key role in planting a bomb in Knishka, an airplane of Air India fling from Vancouver to Delhi. The airplane got air blast on the Irish Sea and hundreds of the innocent travelers going to her own land, belongs to her own community were killed. This incident had broken her heart and trust on her own religious minded community. Consequently, when she got slightly normal, first of all she called her friend to take away the Holy Granth Sahib to Gurudwara, then she came to her husband (who had ignored the happened) and loved him and started a live a new life with her family.

In this way, the novel Inder Jal narrated an impressive account of the fictive presentation of social reality, charged with the under

currents of the ironies of history and multifaceted fragmentation of the self. The narrative expression has made an identical relationship of two characters, e.g. Madhav Singh alias Madho and Harikiran alias Kirnee with the entire story of the novel. Interestingly, these two characters had become the narrative agents for the representation of close relationship of the play of individual, society and history of Punjabi community during the twentieth century. Three major incidents; freedom struggle, partition of India and movement of Khalistan/ Sikh state, which had changed the beliefs, perceptions, reality and life style of Punjabi community were became part of main story of these two characters. The novel proves itself as an important text meshed with the individuality, historicity, society and fiction, particularly, locating the family of Madhav Singh in the chronology of historical events of twentieth century. It further explores the effects of these events on personal life and activities of the individuals and families across the national boundaries.

The narrative expression of the novel has also provided the space for further progress or enlargement of the story. The novel ends successfully by raising two fundamental questions; first, how will Kirnee behave in future and respond to her dismay. Second, what would be the aftermath of the event of the air-blast and its victims? It would be wonderful, if the author will make an arrangement to relocate Madho and Kirnee in new context and try to write down a new novel on the further expansion of the same story. I hope that it would be an important writing and will impressively explore the emerging theme of our time i.e. tracing the sprouting trap of regional crisis and global misery.

It does not mean that the novel *Inder Jal* is incomplete or shortened in present form. Hence, it has successfully narrated the present situation of the Canadian Punjabi society along with the detailed account of events of the past. Nadeem Parmar has impressively exercised the generic potentiality of novel and portrayed an important account of the interconnectivity of individuality, society and history of the communities in the contemporary global world. Being a part of the Diasporic Punjabi novel, it is neither centered on western cosmopolitanism nor on racism and fragmentation of cultural identities. Rather it has disassociated itself from the stereotyped kind of thematic and rhetorical conventions and made itself accountable for the novel of the depiction of the reality of contemporary global world.

\*Reader & Head, Deptt. Of Punjabi (Evening), Panjab University, Chandigarh.