

## Paash

Poetry and persona of Paash has already established an iconic value, and the image is neither restricted to boundaries of geographical Punjab nor to the Punjabi speaking folks. Timing of his sacrifice for the cause of humanistic and secular convictions, together with his blazing poetry made him what he is today. His resolute resistance to the forces of despotism both within the state and separatists, created for him the image of post independence Bhagat Singh.

*Paash Taa(n) Sooraj See* (Paash Was the Sun) is a rich collection of about 150 poems written on or about Paash by a little less than 100 poets from all over the world. Paash has become a part of Punjabis' psyche, to the extent that more than three-dozen poets from Europe and North Americas have written poems on him. The book also includes Pakistani writers like Fakhar Zamaan, Tauqeer Chughtai and Raawal Thaath. Apart from some Hindi poems, Punjabi version of a Telgu composition is also included. There might be more creations, justifiably, which could not reach the two editors: US based Sohan Singh Sandhu (Paash's father) and Canada based poet Surinder Dhanjal. Dhanjal and Swarajbir have already published independent poetry books on Paash and they are represented in the present work with few of their poems.

Although pitch of this poetry is largely high, yet there are reflective ideas that don't go unnoticed. Despite a long history of physical elimination of men of letters, no literature could actually be killed. If we quote anybody being forgotten in this manner in modern times, chances are that the person was not a genuine writer. But Paash is a poet to stay forever that compels its critics to recast their yardsticks of evaluation; because his poetry is relevant, like the words of our veteran Harbhajan Hundal:

*Words can't be massacred*

*How many places you shall reach*

*To tear off printed words?*

*Just tell me which fire*

*Shall burn up the images?  
You are sadly mistaken.  
Bullets can't silence the words  
Words can't be massacred  
Instead, they always move forward.*

U.S. based Hindi poet Dr. Ved Prakash Watuk has something significant to offer. His unambiguous sarcasm and agony about creating slogans and not following the real path that Paash shows, is worth noting. In his words 'there is nothing more dangerous than worshipping a statue of a living fighter. There is no bigger weapon, than worship, to murder anybody'. In *Paash Zinda Hai* Watuk could not have been more pertinent:

*Paash shall live in his martyrdom  
We are killing him  
By making his statues  
Offering him Aartis  
Reciting poems, his deeds and the martyrdom.*

A few of migrant Punjabis, with definite progressive postures, don't escape Watuk's courage:

*During congregation in memory of tigers  
Jackals once again delivered lectures  
Lambs have performed Aarti  
In reverence of sheep  
And those who left their homes  
(in fear of fire)  
To reach stony forests of west  
Those fugitives again roared  
Jai Bharat*

While Amarjit Chandan writes a funeral song on death of Paash, Onkarpreet writes elegy to lament the death of his ideology, because Marxists are traveling to US for treatment of their ailments, to seek political asylum and to avail capitalist pensions.

Besides these hard-hitting exchanges, there are also a number of insightful poems in this book. These poems, while befittingly memorializing Paash, also elevate their reader to a higher state of mind and perception. California based Shashi Samundra writes:

*A bird flying in deep skies  
Has suddenly fallen on earth  
The body is still warm  
Eyes are glowing  
It looks that it shall get up  
Wobble its wings  
And shall again ascend to sky*

Vancouver writer Ajmer Rode addresses Paash differently:

*In the wee hours of day  
Standing on the mound of well  
I shall shout for you  
To lend me your new poem  
Because it's your birthday today*

And then Rode would distribute such a poem to millions of fearful beggars, vulnerable women and helpless tribal old men. Rode has silently underlined that Paash, his poetry, and concerns are still breathing.

Sawrajbir weaves a moving poem in the pattern of Paash's *Sabh To(n) Khatarnaak*, in which he enlists the 'most dangerous' issues and elements. He says, "it's not ethnicity or

the world war that is most dangerous; the most dangerous is the upheaval, which seems to be around but never happens; which dies before it reaches people's hearts. The most dangerous is the revolt that passes away mere as an incident and doesn't create history; which tolerates its demise before its own eyes and is survived by nothing except the sand of autumn."

Besides being a befitting tribute to the poet, *Paash Taa(n) Sooraj See* is a significant collection of contemporary poetry, which has strength to generate a genuine deliberation.