

*The following article is based on a PDF copy I have read and reviewed of the Book Bharind – The Hornet by Roop Dhillon, due for release on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2011 by Lahore Books, Ludhiana.*

**Review of Bharind Author: Roop Dhillon,  
by Dalbara Singh Kalsi**

The first interesting thing about this book is that it is written by Roop Dhillon (Real name Rupinderpal Singh Dhillon), an Englishman. Roop was born in England, lives in England, but speaks Punjabi as a second language. He taught himself the *Painti* in his mid thirties.

The second interesting fact is that he has mixed poetry and short stories in one volume. This is unusual and new to Punjabi, as much as are many of his subjects and styles. You can see that Roop is not from Punjab. His idiom, usage of language and even at times mixed up syntax indicate a foreign mind at work. The language reflects the *Barli Boli* version of Doabi Punjabi, skewed by English grammar, subconsciously. This is a pidgin form of the language now common in the UK, amongst the small minority of Punjabi's born and raised there, who can still speak Punjabi to some extent with their parents. So this is something we will have to forgive him and tolerate, if we are to read his book with prejudice or irritation. Once this hurdle is crossed, the reader will find many techniques employed, from modern English Literature, currently alien to Punjabi.

His thought process in *Bhrind* is beautiful, each poem showing a passion for Punjabi and each story playing in the mind more like a film. Imagery is *Bharind's* strongest point, followed by a mature understanding of Punjab's social issues disguised in fantastic and Science Fiction style stories, which mix realism with surrealism.

There are 15 short stories, some only half a page long to very long pieces, such as the title *Bharind* and over a score of poems, of varying styles and qualities.

The first story *Lal Lahir's*, opening sentence is incredibly hard hitting, and shows immediately that this is a book which won't go down well with some parts of the Punjabi population, as it constantly laments the loss of the rich aspect of our culture but openly displays the flaws we pretend don't exist, such as incest and child rape in the case of *Lal Lahir*. The first sentence ( *Hath laaya jitha lonaa nahi चाहिदा*) establishes empathy for Women's plight in India, and the dual hypocrisy in our culture. This theme runs through many of the stories, especially references to female infanticide.

The second *Daaj Denh Da Nateja*, carry's on the feminist theme by sticking wholly in the real world, this time without any fantastical twist. Again, one feels great empathy for the female telling the story, as her situation is so true for many Punjabans.

However the third story takes a very different direction. *Kaldaar* is a very clever twist to western science fiction, not only by giving it a Punjabi flavour and as a continuing theme relating it to social ills currently in Punjab, but uses the concept of Robots to

reflect attitudes between castes, where the Robot can be interpreted as Dalits, politically suppressed or otherwise, rising up and aggressively going against the system. The story is told from their perspectives, including the human, which seems to be representative with the upper castes of Punjab, the landlords and Modern Big Business. This is a very humane and intellectual tale disguised as Sci-Fi, which can be interpreted as the reader wishes. There are twists in the plot as well, as well as rich imaginative description. Realism, it is not, but definitely one of the strongest stories in the collection, and possibly Punjabi's first pure Science Fiction.

The Scientific and fantasy theme is carried on in *Vikas*, which is very much reflective of Planet of the Apes, Star Wars and Alien, as well as Kafka's Trial, and a clever dissection of Punjabi Culture and again social ills that are prevalent in our society. It is also one of the most disturbing stories I have ever read. If it has a weakness, it is that too much is going on for the mind to cope with.

These are just some of the several stories, and I hope gives a flavour of what to expect. There are also many poems.

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10-04-2011  
07723353788