



Knocking Vistas
AND
Other Poems



Ram Krishna Singh

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Acknowledgments

The poems in the volume are in continuation of the experiences and spirit one may notice in my books *Against the Waves: Selected Poems* (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2021) and *Poems and Micropoems* (Sierra Vista: Southern Arizona Press, 2023). While there is concern for something or other in the depressing contemporary human condition and chaos, there is also an exploration of who we are and what we are, with search for sense in senselessness. The snippets of our complicated existence find images rooted in nature and physicality with whispers of the soul.

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Ram Krishna Singh

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1. ONE MORE POEM

I don't long for the past that swings and rings
I don't care for the future I colour
with empty wishes prayers and meditation

dream's dark inspiration carves the present
I suffer more at night than in the day
breathe hell seeking freedom in the body

through friends in spirit turn sanguine despite
the tricky degeneration in shared life
one more day passes one more poem born



2. MYSTERY

I'm still on nodding terms with days I hardly relish
except for memories of sex and poetry books
that's me in stuckness in bits and pieces
howsoever dwarfed or doomed today

I grope the mystery that couldn't be living:

autumn with songs of unbloomed spring
restive stillness mocking on the curtains
naked beings lying with blinder on the eyes
the lost moon in curse of tears never shed

the short grace period is no breather
to manoeuvre the words shelled in the skin
or turn oracular to light the vale



3. LOVE BY DEFAULT

When you deny love lies in fucking you cheat
millions of starving lovers smelling sex
in each encounter or dating a woman
whose hunger is different each time she meets man

to say the unsaid or live the fleeing joy
or weep longingly recall the days gone by
or rue only if it were as it once was

lying on his back like whales he lets the ships pass
and clasps a drowning one as he gasps for air
and she yields her body to love by default



4. CRY OF A MOTHER

Why do they ignore the clitoris when half the world has
it?

the lovers don't care the doctors don't talk

it's no leaf that falls on the wave's crest
and rots on the shore before they prescribe
a chocolate remedy or testosterone cream
to revive in dapple light:

denial is the way of life
be it desire emotion or frailty
for conformity unity and control

the redness of the setting or rising sun
is too much to the drab colours of the priests
who accuse of heresy witchcraft or immorality
to shut the so called hotbeds of sedition

when all they seek is stoppage
of the show of teeth blood and skull
in the spinning wheel
condemned to nursing home



5. NEW SLAVERY

From the 15th floor window I watch
dreams racing on the muddied road
the ugly beauty of tomorrow

the romance of the miserable
the egotist the cunning the heart-broken
the idealist the maniacs the enlightened cheats

the crafty and the unlucky too
who conceal cavity in their shoes
in the gallery of great tech game

fabricating newer lies and hypocrisies
of saffron politics secular faith and people's power
spilling blood to heal history of wrongs

create new cultural fantasy
new racism new slavery
homegrown narcissistic lords and ladies



6. CONSECRATION

Stomach full
roof over the head
and clothes to wear

they can afford
to shout full-throat
Modi hai to mumkin hai

I wish they had good heart too
and wished good for others
with thanks they're breathing

God cares for them
despite smashing the dome
and consecration on the ruins



7. HERE AND NOW

I don't deify poets or politicians
nor trade in faith for bread

I don't sell gods and goddesses
spirit is not my profession

nor do I give moral discourse
for life in the next world

I am a man like millions
who dream struggle and die

and nobody mourns
my drifty silence

hidden in darkness
flecks of light

enough to weigh down
here and now



8. CHEERS!

There they tuck into turkey dinners
here we talk about free light and water

politics of thanksgiving for
more polarization more separation

more violence more religion more freedom
in the new temple make more pockmarks

to start afresh fiction of wonder
crowning wolves as gods and goddesses



9. WAR IN GAZA

Unchanged human nature
eternity passed with each prophet
spirit's realms in rumbles...
how to search peace in depths of tunnels
through misery and degradation?

wounded humanity
hears denials of fire without reason
enemies of ages
without water light gas medicines
crying dying neonates aged mothers

cursed Gaza awaits
a miracle to rise a new phoenix
to exist with Israel
despite the devil's designs
for perpetual desolation



10. POLITICS OF DECEPTION

Roaring guns and flying bombs
pronounce total death on earth

the world withers away with
the suns of science challenging

the universe and time with
cancerous creations

viral revolution
racial elimination

structures of deception
media and power traps

in the name of faith and past
bullying the masses seek

fresh promises renewed
enthusiasm wrapped in

a dream scroll mythologized
to spotlight a Trump Modi

Putin Xi Netanyahu
tap national consciousness

for divine descent to make
life happen once again



11. DUBIOUS GOSPELS

Power politics
in the name of faith and god –
racist invectives

ranting the other
through media violence
shaping consciousness

all day from within
rear an impolite system--
pose neutrality

and foment hatreds
in official settings
shun each resistance

pave long-term darkness
singing anthems of progress –
dubious gospels



12. LOSS

The chimneys around my home
print black spots on the walls
darken the air I breathe and
the water I drink or bathe in

the owners know how to shut
the mouths of inspectors
and the mafia know how
to make money this season

politics of lack of rain
repair and management
scraunch smoke from wildfires away
to country's gas emissions

they have their priorities
mission to rewrite histories
erase the past and erect
new walls of divisions

climate change is no excuse
to mould the minds of Gen-Z
in face of imminent doom:
stay quiet at morass of loss



13. ETERNAL TERROR

The right wing radicals a threat
to peace and morality:

IDF Chief Rabbi says Torah
allows soldiers to rape Arab women

to boost morale and success in war
Americans support like Iran

backs Hamas or Hezbollah blamed for
rape and murder of Jews in their land

racist violence and ethnic cleansing
the new norms to salvage nation's past

in the name of God they ruin future
rallying support for eternal terror



14. NOISES

I can't hear my self
their noises erase my world
choices are denied--
questions of being wound me
courage and strength fade away

noises mute my voice
distract us from the truth
crowns change with the wind
and they play chess with our lives

they feed us dust and potions
in their new temples
arouse their magic deities
make us yell loud
and hang us upside down



15. DEVIL

Await
my departure
old gods new gods
naked pagans dancing
around sacred bonfire

before they pant
and howl at the moon
I leave my offering
for the devil
and rush back home



16. LET THEM LIVE

There's no room for politicians' sordid game
in the dark or light of kitchen or bedroom
what happens there stays there – lovers' spreadsheet

fucking sounds is music too to arouse
the soul in pleasure sucking bodies
in sweet perfume of sweat and spices
go well with memories of ecstasy

let them live their dreams without fear of what
others might think when they embrace all their parts
in curves figures equations and text
and raise their own temples and mosques



17. SMILE

Shadows fly from my fingers
with the moving wrist –
the hand disappears

I can't touch her heart
under the tan skin:
they waver behind the glass

hissing through clenched teeth
as I sip my drink
she gives me a frozen smile



18. ROILING IN BED

She has closed the doors
I can't explore feelings

can't sense the darkness of womb
that's home to spirit

live in sougning caress
stirring God's whisper

she has shunned my touch
that makes the river wave in her

taste together ourselves
celebrate a song of life

shrinking in age she fears
roiling in bed is no music



19. ITCHY GROPEs

A rat with dead eyes wrecked in pit
they shed fake tears in condolence

she cooks sick fish with booze for friends
and finds a scab to start afresh

journey to survive itchy gropes
in being catlike under the thatch



20. SOILED WIND

Before the evening melts into business
hungry men with stinking mouth gather
to grope flesh of menopausal youth
in pigeon-hole suck the creampie
and purge the passion in soiled wind



21. LEAK

Cobwebs in the mind
breed smelly thoughts
years couldn't erase:

life leaks hanging on
the condom tit
between two bangers



22. GLIMPSES OF TRUTH

Dehydrating sun at noon
half-brown yellow leaves on still trees
and few mute faces on the road
won't help me survive the race
to give life a meaning in
diversions of now and then
and missing cool glimpses of truth
kids discover at seashore
playing games like finding shells
free from patterns that bind us



23. LOVE

I don't think abstractly
I don't worship the ancient lies
gods goddesses and tales

that divide and dominate
the simple people
faking concern for their woes:

I love Sharon Olds' spark
her vision of Pope's member
erect in sleep for his God



24. REMISSION

I've forgotten all my sins
how come God remembers each
for each one of his creation
on earth and beyond?
I'm too small to count
His apostles morning-walk
from temple to temple
godmen (and women) barter
remission for self-forgetful
souls on auto-pilot mode



25. SHADOW - I

Hangs a shadow
over my head
on the pillow

that sustains night's
owlish hold like sins
I can't wrestle

to unwind and resolve
for restful sleep
till the morning gleams



26. SHADOW - II

How long shall I chase
my shadow? My presence makes
uncomfortable
even those who like truth
as much as my legs numbness

in limited space
fear dominates deepening
my own mind that moves
through broken strains of
elegy and serenade



27. MANOUVRING

With right hand between the thighs
and left leg on the pillow
alone on bed he contorts
his body to manouvre
restlessness in the legs

sleeplessly suffers the chill
for the third night in a row
no medicines helped
no prayers answered
and moon gives way to sun



28. LENGTH'S NO DEPTH

So much sex:
not a single poem
on women's
sexual fantasies
in imagination

men may swim
but lack gills to feel
the female
from heaven's door to
dreams in head

length's no depth
to measure fulfilled
or unfulfilled flesh
that reincarnates
shadows in soul



29. FEAR OF DEATH

Not haiku –
loneliness ranks
much higher

hiding beneath
thoughts and feelings
fear of death

extinction
no hell heaven
liberation

brooding wasteful
me love ego
gods angels

rotting is real
and unforgetting
more real till death



30. COLD FEET

I killed a dog in dream
the blood still dripping
no epiphany –
two days later
piles bleeding

the surgeon examines
my disgraced anus
prescribes 'banding'
and a dozen of tests
I choose home remedy



31. FOR MY SISTERS

Unable to gauge
what's scaring about his pyre
they lit without me
his first son not dead yet
they performed my last rites too

throwing my ashes
in the gutter red with stench
they erased all signs
now what's wrong if I forsake
all that tied me to their place?



32. ON HIS SUGGESTION TO WRITE A MEMOIR

Reflections:
how much should I strip
in public
poems already say
too much to digest

and now a memoir?
all overt dirtiness
parables of prophets
daily infidelity
and miserable hunts?

what have I lived
wasting dreams in human zoo
no bestseller
no fortune no lightning
no myths for posterity

no use writing more
to reveal my meanings:
brief is beautiful
to make an eternity
of the lived single moments



33. FEEL WHOLE

Life ends
exploring the box
I've been in

aping the sounds
and manners
to be myself

not knowing
when I melded
into a borrowed

me and me+
making all
feel whole



34. TOO FAR THE SUN'S SKY

Perfumeless my *bustan*
I couldn't be a letter of the masters

passed years in the soul's waste
to be what I could never be

the few bonuses now burden
like the body's sickness stick dust

the wrinkled skin the holes in vests
herald sorrows of Venus

too far the sun's sky to borrow
warmth to keep the rose smelling



35. MELTING ELEMENTS

(An Experimental Long Poem)

Looking for image
of divine on the wall
to pray or chant
a mantra or hymn in mind
she leans on him to kiss

her soul touch
vibrating in depth
in darkness

reclining Buddha
unmindful of drinking
he and she
discussing taste
aged in India

half asleep
one with poppy –
Buddha's bar

in the park
seeing the green in her eyes
joy wells up
she feels the silver blue
the leaves breathe her touch

smoked fish
in the elevated hut –
honeymoon

butterfly cushions
flutter the skirt
flame flickers
ground to whiteness
for her feast

verandah –
touching her naked skin
morning breeze

one more night
hairy darkness of womb
yellow moon
inside parts slop for love
haptic wind sucks the wetness

adventure
between the thighs –
tailored deal

so cold
with three days rain
our bed
she abstains for
fear of my touch

seeing her body
in the lingerie drying
on clothesline

her lips
crimson with *paan*
stings my heart:
smell of saffron and cardamom
melts in my haiku

sweet perfume
untainted flower
evening lust

softness dies
in his pressure
much pleasure
melting elements
feed the soul in flesh

glows on her
magenta bracelet:
year's colour

seashore:
she lies on her back
eyes closed
feels foam on the waves
butterflies too

on the beach
a reclining nude:
kiss of the wave

her beauty
smells the soil that sings
grace in look:
I whisper my heart and chase
the glow her shadow spreads

her sharp nail draws
love sign on the stone's back
green patina

lying in sun
on a straw mattress
a nude couple
whisper dreamed-up nest
when their ship comes in

drowsy eyes
sun behind the clouds
dreams wrapped up

the musky sillage
confirms her presence nearby
in cold sun I wait
for beer with her one last time
get drowned in her wild kisses

her décolleté blouse
and see-through saree –
curve's vanity

at the swimming pool
he asks if he could borrow
her underpants just
to feel her from inside
with fidgeting currents

she wrings her hair
rising from the lake:
rural Venus

shining in sun
water spots
on dry skin
she smiles to see
night's memory

part of me
enters her body
blooms puffball

share memories
in the dark of night
race for life-
brave scents from the brink
mate kisses with grace

red with shame
the sky at sunrise
one more kiss

sitting in armchair
she tells her maid how not to
share the secret rose
wet with dew or red with fire
at the heavenly entrance

seated woman –
sleepy gestures
dim delight

a walking woman
pregnant from the back raising
hand for her man's hand
a little away holding
the cell phone to his ear

she wanted to sing
dream-songs she couldn't:
spring hand-cuffed

an old lady
calling heart-centred men
to awaken
in three sessions their full
potential in bed and beyond

he sleep-babbles
let's become earth and sky:
four-decade love

Kali Puja
ruddy garland round the neck
kneel to quench the thirst
with rum and goat meat invoke
the goddess for midnight sex

half of my mind on God
and the other half on sex:
eternal hunger

between her coming
to bed and sleep
a burial of longing:
her indifference widens
even touch is a no

awake cross-legged
till witching hour –
no means no

dining table
resting place for the dust
my mind emits
before her third eye opens
I switch on the AC

flour dough
between the fingers
despair sticks

she draws a church
on the back of a leaflet
to resurrect Mary
in whose name she cried for years
and none counted her tears

walking in fire
with wildness of passion
bewitching nude

undissolved in light
chasing rainbow desire
no grand affair
no experiment to live
the essence no end to dust

beyond the body
shimmering her soul –
naked among clothed

dream-incited
I awake with a start
to her promise
sleeping together once
more before we depart

new moon
rocking her world –
twin flames

each syllable
allergic pollen and dust
her autumn tongue
one more song to prick with
new variant new wound

lonely hours
restlessness of night
breathe satyr

no temple
this body degenerates
memory fades
stinking remains
can't forget all

looking for light
hidden in darkness:
drifty silence



36. LOVE HIDES

(A Haiku Sequence)

sex excels:
a host of sins
love hides

she says she's single
and ready to mingle –
just moments away

thrice she clicks
her heels together:
secret code

her hair up
transparent front and back:
birthday cake

midnight moon
senses aroused –
lift the veil

silence –
her eyes word
a wine song

love in folds of sleep
forgotten memories:
washed up melody

her disheveled hair
delight in disorder –
bittersweet flings

taking selfie
with her new mobile:
breast-feeding

past lover
time to clean up house:
cold moon

a curled snake
with fangs ready to poison
love's narrow passage

stars celebrate
the body's wet music
sublime sensation

sunflowers ring:
teenagers ChatGPT
Sapphic know-how

how innocent
the children of night –
sleep and death

clad in white
peaks behind peaks –
Everest within



37. KNOCKING VISTAS

(Five-Liners)

wintered sadness
different dimensions –
nature's cycle
unable to cope
Zen meditation

thoughtless mind
weeds and refuse buried
empty heart
illusion of self thrown out
yet the guest doesn't visit

climb to deity
hands folded in obeisance
crowd behind unaware
of awakening silence
of depth in inner self

myriad lines
in the hollow of my palms
joined in prayer
prepossessing humour
cynically exchanged

from Shiva's temple
high decibel puja noise
wrath of the goddess
she prays for long power cut
for her short meditation

with soda and mint
apple-flavoured vodka
and khichdi in lunch
follows Mahakaal darshan
maze through devotees' long queue

every home
Shiva's monastery:
cannabis
no secrets or lies
relish special tea

alliance of lies
pre- and post-twenty fourteen
fresh phoenixes rise
devotees greet in temple
new histories on wallpaper

tainted with greed
my curse an addition –
theft politics
whores gang up in red light
make water flow uphill

no firsts in hunger:
they all push one another
for a pail of rice
to cook without fire roof and
utensils lost in landslide

can't tackle big beasts
and the sheeple that snigger
candle procession:
read silent tears on the cheeks
of the mother of the lynched

wailing over
adversaries that seek good
and do evil
he asks how long the dead
be denied condemnation

known a man of word
before exiting the windowless hall
scrawls his bearded sinisterity
none could read: he proves a rhino
turning the temple into funeral home

anti-national
every dissenting voice –
lotus regime
bullying the generation
with changing narratives

too complex
the calculus of grief:
forgotten fractals
cold and heavy inside
each loss rips through dusted stash

hide dubious dreams
behind sweet tongue and praise
cunning colleagues
free from humility
now I taste my silence

await setting of
burning sun and arrival
of night to go out
for a beer with chips
to soothe her hurt spirit

sleepy yet awake
recreating grief and pain
a flightless duck
sits over the soul's scars
no mourning tends or mends

sitting by the road
she plays the harlot for bread
men sin she suffers
from police raid to VD
they gift with morbid morals

questions the living
honoured for deeds concealed:
slave market
every second buyer
a civilized rapist

naked in debris
a baby girl crying
he bends to pick up:
eyes wander to locate
her mother too nearby

Manikarnika:
he collects warm ashes
searching gold to live
by country liquor or bread
for starving wife and children

young and widowed
her body a burden
can't help herself
reduced to a donkey
suffering morality

a one-eyed woman
the window curtain shakes
nightly stillness
veronal dread in hell
breeches itch in half-sleep

a sleeping soul
under medication
mumbles love tanka
he can't recall
on awakening

lanterns in hand
villagers climb up the hill
hunt for mushrooms
before the sun rises
rush to weekly market

foggy morning
choke humans and animals
icy darkness
around fire on the roadside
they smoke *bidi* with *chai*

giving in to grow
intimacy:
wants no trouble
realizing dream life
on daily basis

a sleeping man
under the tree
awaits a grave
villains in village keep
gaslighting all day

puff by puff
smoke away their tension
trainee programmers
on the roadside mixed smell
of sweat and talcum powder

winter arrives with
wheezing sneezing and backache
whole night without sleep
I try pills to get better
lamenting ageing and pray

the nagging pain
in the index finger joints
kills all poetry
of body and mind at night
I yell sighs in half-sleep

morning walk:
two boys going to school
pick plump *jamuns*
rolling on the roadside
for tiffin at recess

grey morning
shivering body
walk back home
to the drizzling din
of a muddied street

unpredictable
monsoon clouds in Bangalore
confusion all time:
wet again my walking shoes
mud splashes by running car

peeping eyes
view in the skull
weird videos
deep breathing on the rock
dazed shapes in moving frames

a solo show
at the lounge corner:
stoic visitors
sipping insentience
moving ahead

a nude back
of reclining man--
more female
yet less inciting
on Lesser's canvas

his son views letters
on the billboard a sparrow
awaits green light
for the road to be free
to peck at the fallen grains

with dumbbells in hand
he logs in YouTube to build
arm muscles and says
he's off social media
to make new relationships

in the bright sun
my dark shadow
parts company
under the banyan
one more burial

sudden sound and smoke
Diwali pollution
in road number one
midnight asthmatic breathing
and no neighbor cares to stop

kitchen sink:
hot water running
over the cup
between the fingers
rises winter sun

an old woman
steals hibiscus from our gate
grinning *nav-ratri*
puja at home and hurries
back before my wife confronts

the tree is me
leafy green bent straight full rich
rooted in nature
loving sun moon and star
sheltering one and all

lighting –
roaring colours in the sky
red white dark
merge into one
fire water earth

in the sky's map
distorts in no time
my funny face
no physics could force
the cloud's short-hand

I have been
not what I am –
my old version haunts
she says I blabber in sleep
fuckers that block my success

half moon
cool enough
to move ahead
leave behind
forgotten memories

what poem can brew
on faces hidden behind
veils misty eyes say
all I can't image in
haiku with season word



38. KNOCKING VISTAS

(Three-Liners)

rioting flames
witches dance in a cave –
strawberry moon

pecking
behind the mask
magic-seekers

walking on fire
with wildness of passion
bewitching nudes

without silver wings
she hugs angels in the blue
becomes a star

wondering
the sex of seashell –
nude portrait

astral energies
shifting trajectories –
no promises

intangible
psychic insights:
moments of muck

wash the sheet clean
nags my father in dream –
winter morning

absent spirit
planetary transits:
halcyon years

fail to follow
divine timing or sign:
soul's dimming flame

splash the eyes
for clearer vision:
faith in tension

Taliban march
no Covid could stop –
unanswered call

a year of war
let's go fly a kite
sunny day

high minaret
recorded call for *namaaz*
soul's melody

post-cyclone
stagnant water in field –
fishing drought

wearing wishes
for money miracles –
green adamite

season's first rain –
still await yellowing of
mangoes on tree

missing the gut
to pick and choose numbers:
hang out in vain

sky's canvas –
disfigures in no time
my funny face

post-retirement
a nobodaddy –
missing courtesies

memory full:
fail to store name and number
autumn evening

she dislikes my face
oily with wrinkled hair –
stinky armpit

warblers fly back
seeing the soft-stepping cats
in the grassy yard

creepy shadows
along the muddy road –
big bright moon

closed Lion Gate
no Sirius shines
August 8*

[*On August 8, spiritual gateway opens: Sirius aligns with Orion's Belt, the Pyramids of Giza, and the Sun in Leo; hence the Lion's Gate. The numerologists suggest that it's time to align with the highest Divine Self.]

chaos in sky
dark with colour and light
rising waves on stone

in the wild
inner echoes –
dragonfly

garden edge –
morning mist
in the eyes

tarot prophet:
taking last order for
heart cleanser

full moon
a frozen dot –
deaf beyond

nearer God
the Cross on bedroom wall –
midnight tears

unending discourse
for one-minute prayer –
pineal testing

giant wind –
sail through the cavity
in the tide

night's silence –
what's this raw whisper
beyond the breeze

the wind blows my way
the year of metal-Ox ends –
Water-Tiger roars

can't erase
the DNA of touch –
dragon's head

Vishnu in stone
weight of the universe –
sitting tortoise

at the entrance
five-headed Hanuman:
chanting mantra

violence of voice
shrinking rationality –
turbulent light

eagle's shadow –
the still boat on the bank
blank page of tomb

climate crisis:
light-bulb in the head goes off
where's green future?

melts under the feet
grey sadness of sand on shore –
blue waves in stone

seashore –
waves rush to squeeze
feet in sand

the wet dawn
pre-empts chilly sun –
early spring

cloudy night –
they say it's depression
I can't breathe

one with granite tub
a beetle in the bathroom –
silence of dampness

each winter
different from the gone one:
virus variant

so old my crud
they turn into remedy:
placebo effect

physical ageing
can't keep the mind whole:
unfriendly moon

growing grasses
corners of the rusted gate
food for stray cows

mid-June morning –
gardener's muddy fingers
scratch the itching scalp

sudden screaming
from the kitchen:
a centipede

searching the seed
in layers of cabbage:
wok on red flame

threatening rain
dark clouds hang over still trees:
smelly clothesline

Chhat volunteers
pushing the pond's green algae--
smelly roadside

down the lake
with tucked in beak
a drowsy duck

drippy night –
she shuts the window
saves her books

her smile –
a pair of empty gums
in wrinkled light

a new-born
bridging the distance
between two houses

stopped at toy store
a little girl still crying
for unicorn

taking selfie
with her new mobile:
breast feeding

smoke of cow dung cake
and roasting in shanty –
watery tongue

smelling
turkey leftovers –
thanksgiving

love touch
spirit's spring time:
new day

spicy meatball
morning anal bleeding –
All Hallows Day

still new
last year's mask:
Halloween

a sweaty couple
sip iced coffee in beer mugs –
highway *dhaba*

loud floor show shatters
light and night break through the glass:
end of a haiku

chill in morning
inciting to love-warmth:
linger in bed

ageing youth
without smoke flame of fire:
blended scotch

nude statues
pursuit of pleasure –
sex tourism

party till dawn –
calling out sleepy hubby
her water breaks

a fleeting shadow
on the kitchen wall –
last breakfast

hands sweaty
heart pounding:
secret message

they watch from the street
our embrace at the window
sneak into liquor

birds back to the tree
the sim flame beneath my tea
hearing chill whispers

Covid-struck
she stares at her nails:
fading face

anal bleeding
frightening beginning –
Year of Dragon

on the terrace
shadow of black pigeons:
second full moon

shadow of coffin
togetherness one last time
before burial

breathless
search for airy room
underground

old diary –
finding phone numbers
of friends still alive

dark fears –
loping in the street
mantra on lips

healing vibrations
21/21* –
winter solstice

[*Astrologically, this day – winter solstice on 21st of the year ‘21 – comes once in a
30-year cycle.]

wintry morning
thick smog
seroflo puff

fragile bloom
tending the winter –
self-salving

miles away
stars cease to twinkle:
no new moon

on his epitaph:
he died protesting land tax
on his grave

last tribute
a gowpen of dust –
rise again

people trust
what utopia looks like:
lighted banks of Saryu

a nibbling mouse
enters the snake's mouth:
guiltless secret

Christmas lunch
she scooches over –
love's lightness

in my flower pot
white magnolia fading –
end of the season



Afterword:

The Narrow Road: R. K. Singh's Haiku, Tanka and Beyond

– Kevin Marshall Chopson

“Alas for mortality!
Underneath the helmet
A grasshopper.”

– Matsuo Bashō
(Translation by Donald Keene)

Poetry is the highest art, so say some in citing the ancient Greeks and others. There is no use in denying such a claim. Poetry is foundational to all the other arts – the etymology of “poem” itself, as we may recall, lends itself to, quite literally, “something made,” which makes the claim self-evident. Poetry is concise. It must do more with less. Each word must be packed. Each phrase must be packed. Packed rich with “sound and sense” as the famed New England bard would instruct us. A poem is a failed poem that does not do this.

To be an effective poet, a concise poet, a good or great poet, one must be able to also see beyond the proverbial veil. Each line must take the creator and the reader on a journey to the barely speakable, seeable, and translatable world of ideas. The melding of the literal and metaphorical into a space that is beyond language that grounds us in the now but is simultaneously transcendent is quite the trick. Ram Krishna Singh is able to do this in this poetry, particularly in his own

species of haiku. In this regard, Singh has become a master magician, an alchemist – taking base metals and turning them into gold.

Singh is among my personal, top-five, living poets (writing in English or any other language).

I will not list the others here. Among poets of all time, I rank him among a longer list of my personal favorites, which includes Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Coleridge, Dickinson, Rilke, Pound, Plath, Mary Oliver, and, of course, Bashō. These poets, at their best, created concise, somewhat Bacchus-inspired, transcendent work. All of these, too, were alchemists.

When Pound writes “The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals on a wet, black bough” under the title ‘In a Station of the Metro,’ he is essentially playing with haiku form in a powerful way. The title is the first line, the description follows in the second, and then the *kireji* – the turn to evocation. I know this has been noticed before but it bears repeating in this context. Even though the syllable count may differ in this example in Pound, and in Singh’s fondness of the 3 / 5 / 3 syllable counts per line (among others) as printed here, both Pound and Singh honor Bashō’s approach.

drowsy eyes
sun behind the clouds
dreams wrapped up

And another by Singh:

a night wolf
chomps the leftovers –
teeth in moon

There is a truth Singh chases, a truth that is not predetermined. It arrives in the moment of “the turn” in real, written-in-the-mind time. It arrives in a flash, I suspect, when the poet is often in nature or in a “natural” personal or societal setting, prepped by the poet’s willingness to observe and his keen eye for description – the very sacraments of art itself. The process takes into account a philosophical approach as well, perhaps. Emerson’s words here are better than mine: “Standing on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.”

Singh, I believe, through his work, seems to be an adherent of Transcendentalism. He appears to be a realist, if not a cynic, at times, particularly when he speaks of sex, or romance, or love; but, he also seems to desire, as indicated by his artifacts of composed words, a connection to the spiritual world, like a true amped-up Romantic, which he seems to acknowledge at every turn of phrase and watchful eye and curve of pen, no matter the form or syllable count.

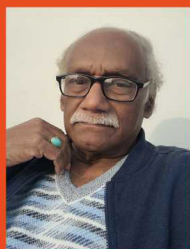
In 1952, R. H. Blyth, a prominent scholar of Japanese culture at the time, noted of Bashō in *Haiku: Volume Four*: “He is awake in the world that for almost all men exists as a world of dreams.” I believe the same is true of Ram Krishna Singh as it is of Bashō. Singh is *awake*.

His work is very worthy of a deep dive, all of it, in all forms – in haiku, tanka, and beyond. Basho’s *The Narrow Road to Oku* delivers large truths through moments of enlightenment achieved by walking a long

distance on a seemingly narrow path. Singh's journey is, perhaps, a bit longer, a bit wider, and a bit more "modern." However, the universal truths both poets sought, seek, and captured in the written word are guided by an attitude of spirit that is equally revelatory and sublime.

– **Kevin Marshall Chopson, M.F.A.**

*Four-time Pushcart Prize Nominated Poet, Award-winning
Experimental Filmmaker, Conceptual Artist / Performance
Artist, Poet Laureate of Gallatin, Tennessee*



Ram Krishna Singh, born on 31 December 1950 in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh, India), has been writing poetry in English for about four decades. He has authored over 160 academic articles, 175 book reviews, and 56 books. His collections of poems include *I Am No Jesus And Other Selected Poems, Tanka and Haiku* (English/Crimean Tatar, Romania, 2014), *You Can't Scent Me and Other Selected Poems* (New Delhi, 2016), *God Too Awaits Light* (California, 2017), *Growing Within - Desavarsire launtrica: haiku, tanka and other poems* (English/Romanian; Constanta, Romania, 2018), *There's No Paradise and Other Selected Poems Tanka & Haiku* (French Edition, Riga, Latvia, 2019), *Tainted with Prayers: Contaminado con Oraciones* (English/Spanish; Colombia, 2020), *Silencio: Blanca Desconfianza/Silence: White Distrust* (Spanish Edition, Edición Kindle, Colombia, 2021), *Covid-19 And Surge of Silence/Kovid-19 Hem Sessizlik Tolkieni* (English/Tatar; Romania, 2021), *Against the Waves: Selected Poems* (2021), *白濁: SILENCE: A WHITE DISTRUST* (English/Japanese, 2021), and *Poems and Micropoems* (Arizona, 2023).

Widely published and anthologized, and appreciated for his tanka and haiku, R.K. Singh's poems have been translated into several languages, including Japanese, Greek, Italian, German, French, Irish, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Romanian, Crimean Tatar, Bulgarian, Russian, Slovene, Bosnian, Hungarian, Croatian, Albanian, Farsi, Arabic, Serbian, Esperanto, Hindi, Punjabi, Kannada, Tamil, and Bangla.

His awards and honors include Ritsumeikan University Peace Museum Award, Kyoto, 1999, Certificate of Honor and Nyuusen Prize, Kumamoto, 2000 and 2008, Life time Achievement Award of the International Poets Academy, Chennai, 2009, Prize of Corea Literature, South Korea, 2013, Naji Naaman's Literary Prize, Lebanon, 2015, and nomination for Pushcart Prize, 2013, 2014.

Well known as an Indian English poet, haikuist and ELT/EST practitioner, Dr Singh retired on 31 December 2015 as Professor (HAG) at Indian Institute of Technology--Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad (India).

More at: <https://profrksingh.wordpress.com> <https://rksingh.blogspot.com>

<https://rksinghpoet.blogspot.com>

<https://profrksinghlistofpublications.blogspot.com/> and

https://pennyspoetry.wikia.com/wiki/R.K._Singh.

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Other Poetry Books of R.K.Singh published by Authors Press:

1. New and Selected Poems Tanka and Haiku, 2012
2. You Can't Scent Me and Other Selected Poems, 2016
3. Against the Waves: Selected Poems, 2021



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