

## **Surjit Patar: Poet of the Personal and the Political**

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This paper examines Surjit Patar's contribution to Punjabi literature. His poems enjoy immense popularity with the general public and have won high acclaim from critics. Weaving local metaphors and motifs while interpreting contemporary reality, Patar has created poetry that enjoys a unique place within Punjabi literary tradition.

After Shiv Kumar Batalvi (d. 1973) and Mohan Singh (d. 1978), Surjit Patar (b. 1945) has cast a charming effect upon the general reading public. His lyrical language seems to hold them in a trance, and literary critics have marveled at the new horizons towards which his poetry continues to aspire. Patar has effectively interacted with contemporary literary trends while successfully maintaining his distinct poetic identity. 'With a rare resolve, Patar has kept his sense of reality and the modes to apprehend it that are free from the creative and ideological constraints of his times. This very freedom bears witness to the authenticity of his perception and experience.'

To attain critical acclaim as well as win the hearts of the reading public is a daunting task. Batalvi was able to accomplish this by employing folk-imagery in his powerful articulation of the agony of the human heart. How did Patar perform this feat? Before seeking an answer to this question, it may be helpful to have a quick look at his life's experience.

Surjit Patar was born in village Patarhan, from which he derives his pen-name. His father, Harbhajan Singh, had migrated to Kenya to earn his living and would return home for a short break every five years. The family he left behind included his wife, Harbhajan Kaur, along with Surjit and his four older sisters. Surjit thus grew up in a household where the father was absent and he being the only male member had to take care of his mother and sisters. Young Surjit dreamed of becoming a musician, perhaps to please his father, who was a deeply religious person and adept in the singing of Gurbanhi himself, and provide solace to the rest of the family. These emotions, however, lie at the foundation of the poetic universe that Surjit was to create for himself later in his life.

After matriculating from a close-by village-school, Patar was admitted as a science-student in a college in Kapurthala. It did not take him long to get disenchanted with science-subjects. The following year, he took up arts. Under the guidance of his teacher, Surjit Singh Sethi, he began taking part in literary activities, which imparted creative resonance to his sensibility. Around this time

he had the opportunity to meet Shiv Kumar Batalvi and Sohan Singh Misha, the well known Punjabi poets. After finishing his BA, he joined Punjabi University, Patiala, for a Masters in Punjabi language and literature. This was time of great intellectual excitement in the Punjab, and Patar had the opportunity to interact with writers and scholars based at Punjabi University who used various models, Marxism, Existentialism and Structuralism, to understand and interpret Punjabi life and literature.

After completing his masters, Patar registered himself for doctoral work on 'The Existential Element in Punjabi Drama.' There was, however, a student-strike in the university. Patar wrote a poem, *Buddhi Jadugarni Akhdi Hai* (Says the Old Sorceress), which made fun of the vice-chancellor of the university. He was forced to leave the doctoral program. He eventually got a teaching position in a rural college near Amritsar. Mohan Singh, the leading poet and a professor in Department of Languages and Culture at Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, invited him to work with him. Patar joined PAU, completed his PhD on 'Folkloric Elements in the Banhi of Guru Nanak Dev,' got a professorship there from which he retired in 2004.

Patar was still a student when his poems began to appear in *Preetlarhi*, a celebrated journal of the time. His poems appeared along with the writings of a fellow-poet and short story writer in a book entitled 'Collage' in 1973. Modern in their orientation, these poems bring to the fore his social, political and ideological concerns. This was followed by *Birch Arz Kare* (Entreats the Tree, 1992), which was comprised of *ghazals* only. Its publication ensured his place among the foremost poets of Punjabi and made the genre of *ghazal* intrinsic to Punjabi poetry. Tejwant Singh Gill comments on this development as follows:

One begins to doubt whether the poetic form of compositions, arising from what goes on in the blood itself, can be of *ghazal*, usually associated with formal perfection rather than poetic creation. In the course of reading these *ghazals*, the experience of oscillating between covert belief and overt disbelief, remains obvious enough. (*Surjit Patar: Jivan te Rachna*, 17)

By bringing *ghazal* to the fore, Patar gave evidence of his creative potential. At the same time, he subjected this traditionally ordained form to new possibilities. In them, the problems existentially faced by the sensitive self are freed from romantic illusion and immersed in the world of reality. His search beyond the split between the personal and impersonal becomes apparent. Now he is after their mutual interaction, their dialectical union. In his later compositions, this exercise of the poet acquires further proportions.

*Hanere vichch Sulagadi Varanhmala* (Script Smoldering in the Dark, 1992) was his next collection of poems and it got him the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award for 1993. Poems in this book focus upon the conflict between desire and convention, nature and civilization. Various dimensions this conflict acquires are unraveled in these poems with much sensitivity and sobriety. Conflict between nature and culture is laid bare, and at the same time, an attempt is made to

understand it anew. Likewise, the past figures here as a brutal entity that, having been passed through, does not loosen its grip on the present. Along with this, the poet brings into focus a way of living resilient enough to provide scope for fulfilling human dreams and desires. In this context, the present appears as a duration causing consciousness to become stale and feelings to become dead. In the absence of any struggle to retrieve consciousness and feelings, poetry lends voice to sadness and a seeming death-wish.

For want of a lasting vision, the poet seems to recall them, signifying not an escape from life but a bitter response to the time in which human feelings and emotions have met with a debacle. Included are also poems that, while depicting the contemporary debacle, draw attention to the dignified and dignifying heritage of the Punjabi people. How the Punjabi people, deprived of historical achievement, are faced with a dead end, becomes evident. Incidents and accidents cannot salvage them is the message disseminated in them. Such is the poetic technique employed that the personal and the impersonal no longer remain isolated entities.

Patar's next collection *Lafzan di Dargah* (Shrine of Words) appeared in 1999. With this comes to the fore the poet's concern with poetry. In this era, when human feelings and emotions seem to have reached a dead end, only poetry holds out hope of their retrieval. Engaged further in dialogue with the self, the poet presents nature as an entity that deals more humanely with human beings than does civilization, which with their own will and effort, humans themselves have raised. Such a predicament arises when the domination that the establishment exercises, gets extremely oppressive and the hope of any retrieval vanishes into thin air.

This collection includes a poem 'Aia Nand Kishore' (Nand Kishore has Come) that opens up the next chapter of Patar's poetic creation. Feeling akin to a migrant laborer come to Punjab from Bihar, he looks at his emergent affinity with Punjab and the Punjabi language with deep regard. He looks askance at the sons of the soil who, in pursuit of prosperity abroad, have turned their back on their mother-tongue. The crisis that the Punjabi language is faced with at the present juncture is best articulated in his recent poem, 'Marr Rahi Hai Meri Bhasha' (My Language is Dying). He plans to expand it into a long poem, along with another poem 'Urvashi.' Of late, he has brought out a collection of all his *ghazals* in a single volume, namely *Patjharh di Panjeb* (Autumn's Bells).

Patar's literary achievement also includes his adaptations in Punjabi of world-famous plays. Most of them have been staged and are available in book-form as well. Neelam Man Singh, the famous stage-director and teacher of stagecraft, has made all this possible. These adaptations include three tragedies of Garcia Lorca, Giradoux's *Mad Woman of Shalot*, Bertolt Brecht's *Exception and the Rule*, Moliere's *George Dandin*, and Girish Karnad's *Nag Mandala*. Patar has imparted so much local color to their diction, characterization and verisimilitude that they seem to have been written in Punjabi. This enables Punjabi audiences to have a taste of the exceptional dramaturgy of the West.

In addition, Patar has made numerous presentations on television, dealing with the life and works of Punjabi writers. He has also written songs and scripts for several Punjabi films. This experience has enriched his creative process considerably.

Several studies of Surjit Patar and his poetry are available. Tejwant Singh Gill's *Surjit Patar: Jivan te Rachna* (1995) is the best. The book examines his poetry in the light of the poet's life-experience, cultural background, ideological affinity and literary tradition. Gill focuses on the dialectics of the poet's popular appeal and literary excellence of his poetry. Gill writes: "Surjit Patar's poetic practice stands for such reconciliation between lyrical feelings and discursive cogitation that it rises above the conflict between communication and expression." Expanding upon the poet's creative practice, he contends, "Surjit Patar's structure of experience is lunar in nature. His poetic concerns, personal and impersonal, domestic and public, social and cultural in orientation, arise from his ability to descend deep into his memory. As a result, to give voice to duality, alienation and estrangement arising from his poetic interlocutor appears varyingly as a youth disconsolate with every thing in life, and a mature person who in imagination defies the whole world but in practice is helpless against the establishment, or a poet whose self is split between his behavioral and functional aspects on the one hand and his poetic and imaginative facets on the other. No wonder then, that his poetic form is very intricate like a film-montage in which near and distant shots, close-ups and profiles play a crucial role. By dissolving the traditional ethos from within, it tends to assume the form of an innovative text." (*Surjit Patar*, 17)

In his *Ikk Kavita da Adhian* (1975), Amarjit Grewal first brought Surjit Patar's poetry under scrutiny. Taking his poem, 'Hunh Gharan nun Partana' (Time to Return Home) as illustration, he conducted a survey about its appeal to the youth and its effect on them. As far as the communicative aspect of the poem, this study was purposeful but it had nothing to reveal about its poetic excellence. Its linear method and restricted scope could not go far enough.

In his subsequent book, *Mohabat di Rajniti* (Politics of Love, 1999), Grewal included a long article in which he posits an absolute contrast between the poet's feelings and discursive cogitation. Rather than become a subject intent on reconciling his conscious with the unconscious, the interlocutor for Grewal is a fragmented object. From all this, the conclusion at which he seems to arrive is that the poet's purpose is to measure up to a poetic theory of postmodernism in particular. It is theory that defines Grewal's point of departure as well as his destination, betwixt which Patar's poetry figure in a negligible way.

Some critics have included chapters on one or another aspect of Surjit Patar's poetry. Jaswinder Singh's book entitled *Navin Kavita de Pachhanh Chinn* deserves special mention in this regard. He believes that the poet is able to achieve an appealing, higher and beautiful union of "progress, love and lyricism" (84). He is distinct from the traditionally known love-poets or poets of revolution in the sense that their categories do not figure in his poetry. Thus Jaswinder Singh succeeds in locating tension in Patar's poetry that from the

thematic level goes to the formal and the stylistic levels. It is marked by a circular pattern that for him begins from a motif which through direct, indirect, overt and covert references completes its circle. Lyricism comes to it naturally enough which in combination with discourse attains its thematic purpose and formal end.

In his books, *Adhunik Punjabi Kavita: Punar Chintan* (Modern Punjabi Poetry: A Critical Look, 1986) and *Adhunik Punjabi Kavita da Itihas* (History of Modern Punjabi Poetry, 2006), Rajinderpal Singh argues that Patar's poems, suffused with images drawn from mythology, folklore and history, comment ironically on the life around him. In his *ghazals*, he achieves this end through lyrical articulation. In this way, "his poetry has not changed its direction, only its condition has undergone a change... At first, his intention was overt, now it has become covert." (70) No doubt, there is an element of truth in what Rajinderpal Singh states but this tends to lose its validity when he talks of the great hold that the poetry has on the reading public. Visualizing the reading public as a multitude of listeners only, he attributes this appeal to Patar's being a fine singer. At the same time by terming him a great poet blessed with felicity to compose a poem, he tries to delve deeper, but without synthesizing the two view-points.

Gurbachan's *Kis Kis Taran de Sikander* (Types of Alexanders, 2001) includes five essays on Patar. For him, the crux of poetry lies in the new idiom that it forges. In his first article, he finds in Patar such potential, particularly in poetry, that "carries more of intellectual coherence and refinement. In this lies the power of his craft, awarding a penetrating irony to his words." (158) While making this observation, Gurbachan gets caught in a deterministic net and overlooks the fact that well-defined literary forms continue to evolve. So much is he conditioned by his static view of literary form that he regards Patar only as a composer of *ghazals*, essentially a singer and no more.

In addition, two edited books on Surjit Patar's poetry are also available. The first one, *Surjit Patar di Kavita da Samvad* (Study of Surjit Patar's Poetry, 1998) is coedited by Satinder Noor and Vaneeta. It has several articles that examine how the poet approaches the folklore, mythology, history and politics to forge his poetic discourse. Of them, the most perceptive is by Tarlok Singh Kanwar who reflects upon Patar's lyricism. He states, "Patar employs lyricism as a mode that combines discourse with recitation. It does not figure just to award intensity. Operating within the ideological system, it awards reflective tone to the writing." (21) The second book, *Patar Kav Chintan* (Study of Patar's Poetry, 2006) is edited by Guriqbal Singh and includes some articles that appear in the earlier book.

In his book, *Utta Adhunikta te Samkali Punjabi Kavita* (Postmodernism and Contemporary Punjabi Poetry, 2002), Atam Randhawa, has devoted a chapter to Patar. In this, Randhawa attempts to prove Patar to be a postmodernist poet, but regrettably Randhawa is neither aware of postmodernist norms of poetic practice, nor is he able to find them operative in the poems chosen for the purpose. Gurcharan Singh Aulakh's *Surjit Patar da Kavik Sansar* (Poetic World of Surjit Patar, 2004) and *Adhunik Punjabi Pragiti Kav da Kav Shastra* (Poetics

of Modern Punjabi Lyrical Poetry, 2006) are the latest additions. These books are rather elementary and do not add much to our understanding.

Patar began writing at the time when the Naxalite movement was on the rise in the Punjab. After an early upsurge, it was brutally suppressed by the Punjab authorities. Rather than find fault with one side and exonerate the other, Patar articulates the dilemma in terms of a harrowing personal experience. In fact, this inner dialogue serves as the foundation for his poetry. Hints to this effect appear in his early poems, but they are fully developed in the subsequent decades:

I keep tracking sadness all the time,  
Each time the track gets close to my mind,  
I go where the blood-drops take me  
And they end up in the same dungeon  
In which prevails the darkness of my mind,  
Many times I get hold of the culprit's hand  
And each time I see it as my own hand.  
(*Hanere vichch Sulagadi Varnhmala*, 120)

Self-critique that thus becomes a poetic strategy for Patar is not aimed solely at his own person. To some extent, the poet's self is involved, but greater involvement is of the polity, the people and other entities that control life. By entering the discourse, he puts himself in a position that provides him full scope to be both personal and impersonal. This is the best strategy that a poet can adopt for becoming the voice of humanity, not rhetorically but actually, without harming his poetic practice. His strategy, so consummately employed by Patar, goes a long way in awarding excellence to his poetry.

His poetic strategy is integrally related to his insight into the tragic core of human life that becomes eloquent when desires and dreams get suppressed. Is it any wonder, then, that his poetry has much to do with dreams and desires that meet with their end by striking against the brute actualities of life. Very many times, this end does not keep up its tragic nobility. It comes down to a pitiable level when its bodily, emotional and intellectual layers operate in separation from the social, political and cultural entanglements. Patar strives to maintain their network so as to uncover it in all its wholeness.

In one of his earliest compositions, he finds polity insensitive to the feelings and emotions of the ordinary people, who in their ordinariness, wish to keep up their integrity. Whether polity is of a country that is under the authoritarian rule or is of a country that has democratic dispensation, the fate of the ordinary people remains relatively the same. So just after India's liberation from the foreign rule, the interlocutor's father has to migrate to a foreign land to provide for his family left behind in the native village. Even as an adolescent boy, how could the interlocutor restrain himself from a feeling of this sort?

Searching for feed, to far-off places birds fly  
For the sake of daughters, went abroad my father,  
How great is my country, only then could I fathom  
When in the breast got stuck, our national flag.

(*Birbh Arz Kare*, 28)

At the same time, he was disposed to see this suppression dispersed in every nook and corner of life. Included in the same collection but composed much later than the earlier ones, is a poem carrying the following plea:

Lend to bare branches, O my Lord,  
A couple of leaves for each to put on,  
What sort of a city is it under your rule,  
Where flowers beg for emitting fragrance?  
(*Birbh Arz Kare*, 58)

In Patar's subsequent poems, the conflict between desire and convention, acquires further elaboration. Desire then represents the human urge to freedom and convention stands for its suppression. Not only pictures of oppression exercised by economic and political forces are there, even those born of social and cultural institutions do not lag behind. When this conflict is viewed through the prism of the self, then the family as an institution becomes quite problematic. Going across restrictions imposed by domestic life, the interlocutor then comes face-to-face with conventions that pose a very enigmatic situation. Then no norm seems to prevail which can win over the poet's approval. Only a tragic situation comes forth, which the poet recreates with a profound sense of irony. Irony then becomes the poet's chief response, as is clear from the following lines:

Religion, morality, law, what besides these,  
Stands for the gap between your raining, and my trees.  
(*Birbh Arz Kare*, 23)

In his next collection, there are varied representations of this conflict wherein the interlocutor experiences acute pain, but he has no opening that may deliver him from this dilemma. Evoking the suppression involved, the poet aspires for a resolution between nature and culture so that a human being is able to fulfill his desires without inviting any censure:

Towards you when I advance,  
Pages of our scriptures  
Get scattered under my feet,  
Get scattered lullabies  
Which my mother would sing,  
Get scattered, sepulchers  
Of our forefathers  
With pucca bricks made,  
Along with their sermons.

If all this lies inert under your feet,  
You proceed towards the future.

But what is all this mourning,

Marching behind you?

What is this laughter after all?  
It is of people turned to the past.  
But what is this sobbing in the air,  
And deep within my mind too?

It is perhaps the mother of my children  
Urging them to face all danger,  
How has she wrapped herself,  
With the Almighty's Name?  
Is it with the hope of my return,  
And the future of her children too?  
No, no, I cannot go beyond this,  
Unless my brethren do it too.

I shall go around this sacred place  
Of mysterious pilgrimage too.  
Within the pull of your charm I shall live,  
With her, you and your children around.  
Beyond this, I shall not go  
Unless my brethren do it too.  
(*Hanere vichch Sulagadi Varnhmala, 73-74*)

Such outer and inner dialogue cannot avoid dealing with death, its incidence, fear and fascination. In Patar's poetry, it emerges as an unavoidable concern. Time and again, the wish to die appears in his poems, but nowhere does it express an escapist attitude. Its meaning becomes quite clear when in closeness with darkness, loneliness, and melancholy, it figures in his poetic discourse. If melancholy awards a somber tone to the conflict that goes on between desire and convention, then death stands for the subdued celebration of what lies hidden in the unconscious. Likewise, darkness is not an utter ignorance; it is the storehouse of unfulfilled desires.

Poems written about the predicament that Punjab faced during the late seventies and the eighties is a testimony of all the interplay between contending forces, feelings, desires and despairs. Rarely does his poetic discourse seek shelter in nostalgia or lamentation. Mostly, it remains couched in ironical recall of the erosion that has not spared any aspect of life, including the poetic practice. At the obvious level, the following poem mourns the brutal assassination of his contemporary poet, Pash, but at a deeper level, it uncovers the deracination that begins to lurk over poetic practice in the dark times. Thus goes this poem:

Flowing water he was,  
On dying, he turned into a stone.  
On hearing of this calamity,  
The second hardened into a stone.



In describing this calamity,  
 The third froze into a stone.  
 Only the poet was left  
 Trembling with emotion,  
 So many stones!  
 Counting them, he too turned into a stone.  
 (*Birkh Arz Kare*, 9)

Not only does Patar draw a sympathetic picture of a person fraught with fear, he also ironically comments upon the vanishing away of human solidarity. The erosion of the poetic practice is to his mind proof enough of the predicament quite lasting, though not everlasting. In this context when he subjects his personal self to ironical scrutiny, then he does not remain an individual. Rather, he figures as the representative of the Punjabi people who, unaware of their historical heritage, no longer bother about their personal integrity. Though he condemns the oppression unleashed by social and political forces, he does not absolve the individual of his/her responsibility.

So far as the predicament of Punjab goes, he puts the blame squarely on the polity that for its sheer survival can resort to any nefarious activity. In his view, the responsibility to identify the villain rests with the people. When he finds them not rising to the occasion, then, in a tone partly of persuasion and partly of recrimination, he exhorts them to do so:

When do I say demanding justice is not right?  
 When do I dissuade you from waging a fight?  
 To identify the foe is so essential,  
 To get mutilated without reason is futile.  
 (*Birkh Arz Kare*, 90)

In his poems, Patar not only portrays problems, conflicts and predicaments, he also draws attention to the world transcending them all. Of course, it is not obvious enough, through tonal effect, it works underneath to erode fears, despairs and disappointments, however hard and brutal they look from outside. To lend voice to this tonal effect, he becomes eloquent, sometimes to great effect, as in the following lines:

Thrones did last, but not forever,  
 People betrayed, but not forever,  
 Drip by drip flows the water,  
 Urge to change is subdued,  
 But inevitable is the change.  
 (*Hanere vichch Sulagadi Varnhmala*, 118 )

After this, the context that dreams and desires have so far provided of remaining alive, changes; instead of history, it is poetry that becomes the mode for deliverance from the privations of life. It does not remain just a mode but becomes a way of understanding; a way to make sense of the ambiguities and mysteries of life. This is understandable enough because during the last decade

or so, almost all cognitive disciplines have lost their validity, and for Patar, to rely on one or the other discipline for ideological affirmation, did not seem authentic. To go to his innermost self has seemed more authentic to him and to raise questions about the validity of poetry has, of late, become second nature to him. Raising questions about its creation, appreciation and effect, he sets it up as the only mode for taking human beings beyond the confines of power and authority. Knowledge-versus-power is his credo, and to convey this, no other mode is more authentic than poetry. As he contends:

Deserted will get the paths of life  
And winter will mark relations,  
Only a line of poetry will go along  
If nothing else is there to keep company.  
(*Birikh Arz Kare*, 50)

For him, poetry provides space for awarding uninhibited expression to the innermost emotions and feelings. Rather than judge their validity by striking them against the crudities of life, it is more meaningful to evaluate life by making poetic space the criterion, a reference-point instead. To the skewed eyes of power, this aspect of poetry is likely to seem most offensive:

A bird is there flapping wings in a cage.  
This is how each poem begins  
Then the bird flies away,  
Breaking asunder the cage.  
This is how each poem should end,  
Though the bird flies only in dream.  
(*Lafzan di Dargah*, 88 )

Finding the bird akin to his innermost self, Patar asserts:

My poem is angry with me on the score  
It is a flight while I am the cage.  
Utter not a word, O poet!  
All resent your utterance.  
Your songs will tell at best  
Light lies hidden in your breast.  
(*Lafzan di Dargah*, 22-23)

Just possibly, the poet may fail to perform his function. Lack of felicity or some vested interest may hinder him from achieving his purpose. In such a situation, what he appears to be, how he goes about, is also portrayed in some satirical poems of Patar. Ridden with fear or greed, he just breathes, but living deserts him to all intents and purposes:

I seek a poem  
Like a weapon at one moment,  
Then as a cup of cool water.  
Sometimes like ointment

Or a candle in the dark,  
 Like a refuge,  
 I seek a poem then.  
 (*Lafzan di Dargah*, 89)

The risk that such a poem poses for the poet, in the dark times, is thus portrayed:  
 Resplendent in the dark  
 Was his poem.  
 For the poet it posed a risk,  
 Such wildness came to fill  
 Is gasping breath:  
 The poet survived,  
 But the poem died.  
 (*Lafzan di Dargah*, 64)

Of late, Patar has made Punjabi language itself the subject of his poetic writing. We are usually accustomed to think about Punjabi in a matter-of-fact way, believing that as it is our mother-tongue, nothing needs be done to learn it. On the other extreme, it is taken as a platform for pursuing political demands. It is apparently not bothersome to anyone that in adapting ourselves to the current way of living, we are turning our back on the learning of this language and thereby on our cultural heritage. In this regard, Patar's poem 'Aia Nand Kishore' is of seminal importance. In the poem two contrasting narratives are presented. One is of Nand Kishore, a migrant from Bihar, who comes to Punjab with the modest expectation to make ends meet, that, from the angle of economic prosperity, is considered front-ranking in the country. He brings his family along with him, and his daughter, Madhuri, is put in a village-school. She becomes very adept in the reading and writing of Punjabi. The grandsons of the village-head, however, join an English-speaking school in the city. Since their parents are intent on settling them abroad, it is not their intention to become adept in the reading and writing of their own language. A great deal of expense is incurred to teach them English.

Further layers of the linguistic problematic are revealed and explored in Patar's poem on the death of Punjabi language. It begins as follows:

My language is on the verge of death  
 Each word, each sentence gasps for breath.

Recalling the factors, which have landed this language into this pitiable state, the poet becomes fatalistically pessimistic about its future:

In such a hopeless situation  
 Only God may save my language!  
 Of my language,  
 How can even God be the savior?  
 Deserted by hungry generations,  
 God, Himself, gasps for breath,

Under His benign protection  
Lies my language, gasping, dying,  
By God!  
On the verge of death lies my language.

Patar brings under scrutiny all the economic, political and cultural factors that have impelled/compelled the Punjabis to turn their back on their language. Without showing an iota of cynicism, he casts a sympathetic look at the impulses and compulsions that have gone into the making of this crisis. Patar, however, is not a prophet of doom but concludes the poem on a characteristic note of hope:

It may happen otherwise,  
Face to face with suicidal situations,  
Reckoning with homicidal challenges,  
More deserving of life,  
More living may fare my language.

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