

## **Book Review on Parneet Jaggi's 'Show Me How Not to Grow'**

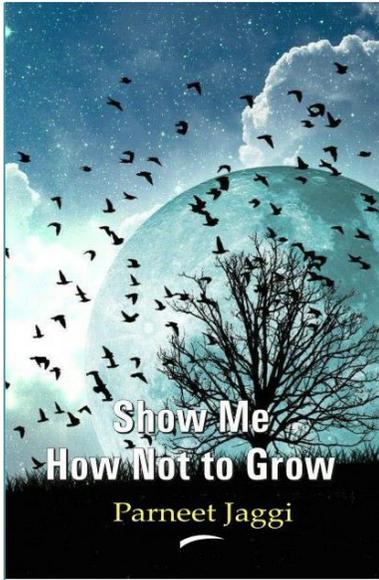
Gopal Lahiri

*Poet and Critic*

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'Show Me How Not to Grow'. the third collection of poems by Parneet Jaggi, finds a more meditative voice here, a kind of vastness during the passage of life without trading on ordinary subjects. There are many thoughts in her poems, which begins to interrogate the difference of purpose and goal and debates the routine objectives in life. In the end the poet has stitched a new constellation in free verse, a contemplative addiction into our mind.

In her introduction, the poet has rightly pointed out 'The poems in the collection trace the journey of a human from compulsive desires of becoming something to finally reaching the joy of being what it really is.' Her way of looking at life are at times imposingly appealing and intensely felt. The germane theme, the lively content, the almost flawless form and technique- all roll into a mosaic that becomes a part of the essence in our existence.



It's the manner, the mood and pitch; it's the way of looking at things that makes the poet unique. Neither the unfamiliar twist, nor the verbiage but the unforced rhythms and illuminating words light up the pages of this collection. Her thoughts offer us this solace that we can rise up and make our own destiny. We read such poets because we want to know how a poetic intelligence inhabits the world.

Emily Dickenson once said 'Tell all the truth but tell it slant'. Parneet works where being is not contempt and there is a strong feeling that the poet is a silent observer, a noticer, an eavesdropper of things unnoticed or unheard.

*Time loses its count  
for the calendar changes altogether  
days no more exist as days  
rather sacks full of stones  
to be carried on backs  
to destinations unknown (Time loses its count)*

Parneet finds her way to nature but she promises nothing extraordinary. The history of landscape painting lies deep

into what face to present. A dry humour also kept breaking in. The poet here strives toward a style that will yield to the particulars of imagination. For this crafty poet, the feeling overflows and there is a frank admission in the beginning and finally emerges in analytical and starker images. Equally compelling is the poem that demonstrates not exactly what it's like but the points beyond death to oblivion.

*A whole bag of lives s  
till needed to learn  
how to live,  
to live happily  
how to die,  
to die happily (Umbrella day)*

Her poetry is soulful, engaging and her vein of expression is not just in a mere portrayal but lies in life lived through nature. The readers will find pleasure in reading those poems which fill the empty spaces in life.

*All joys are your possessions.  
Words now vulnific  
worsen the scattered bruises  
collected long  
lying bare and abhorrent  
waiting for winds to soothe. (Words)*

The poet admits, 'Poetry gives space to all dimensions of conscious living. It engulfs in its gamut- the wide range of visible and invisible experiences that do not need the crutches of thoughtful logic and a set of beliefs.'

*Breaths are counted  
so are the moments.  
May the divine moments  
outnumber breaths! (Night went by)*

There is no tedium, no laziness in this poem, it generates only the flurry of excitement and sheer energy. Showing what in retrospect seems like considerable restraints, her poems are like a memory of what it is like growing up and come up like freedom as well as constraints and give us a through soaking.

*There seems no exit.  
Swirling, whirling  
Dying within. (Exit)*

Parneet Jaggi is candid on her writing, 'I owe the most to the stream of consciousness that flows inside me and finds its way out in the form of words and expressions.' Sometimes the metaphor and simile rise to the mystical empire and the images are both crisp as well as clear-eyed.

*The unwieldy basket  
Intricately mixed with thoughts  
of past, present, future  
hangs over the head*

*causing pains in body,*

*I sort out to empty it (Unwieldy Basket)*

The poet takes her readers on an idiosyncratic and wonderful walk through her joy of nature. It is where the human imagination gets moulded and takes flight to the unknown destination. Some of her poems never seek the new, as if what goes around, comes around.

*Accomplishments awaited*

*in a world so vast.*

*A butterfly flying in the air*

*Watches ants,*

*Circumambulating in large circles*

*carrying their loads*

*reaching where they start. (Little Ant)*

Her matured and inventive poems are an amalgam of hues and textures, get into one another seamlessly introducing a new dimension to rhythmic narrative of conscious living through love and unstoppable movements back toward light. She is a meticulous observer of the surrounds and finds her expression by attending to the tiny moments with easy authority. Her poetic virtues maintain a balancing act between mystical and the moving. We are reminded of Tennyson, 'I am a part of all that I have met'.

*In a sky full of eagles*

*I feel like a dove*

*finding hiding places*

*here and there, (Dark Cave)*

To understand the joy of love, the poet revels in her brevity and imagery, '*Just loving flowers relishing nectar*'. Here the concept is the occasion to get things going and in the following poem it turns out to be a reflection on love, imagining how it may drop down for its joy. What strikes me most in her poems, is the spark and power surge in reshaping love in our life. Her 'basket of apples' is always replacing 'the basket of anxieties',

*Heart starves for drops of love*

*if not showers,*

*shuts itself to the world*

*to wait for the clouds to burst,*

*heavens to smile,*

*open the locks and pour nectars of love. (In a  
World so New)*

The observations drawn from her poems are elegantly evocative and has the appearance of effortless. The language is utterly simple at times and the words and sentences are laced with minimalism. Her diligent poem sketches all these in this sharp and highly charged poem,

*We can't help growing,*

*Show me how not to grow. (Show Me How Not  
to Grow)*

The most important thing in poetry is the relevance as Sylvia Plath always talk about. Parneet's emotive, profound, relentlessly sonic poems that record beautifully the creative potential of the nature and the boundaries of the self. Everything in this Universe is connected, more than that, everything is infused or always infusing.

*sounds are not hoarse  
but soft as the fur of a rabbit  
smiles pure as the whiteness of lily  
emanating from all around (The Tranquil  
Emotion)*

The poet believes in 'just flowing/Moments of flow/are moments of life,' the nuances of which she seeks to explore and does not want to miss the glorious point when the tiny blades of grass sway in breeze.

*Tiny blades of grass  
sway unnoticed with  
symphonies of the breeze.  
Tall blades  
pose for the passersby. (Tiny Blades of Grass...)*

There is a productive nonconformity to her poems, finding surprise and profundity in unpicking objects, phrases and words which are the natural home of our psyches, a part of our beauty.

*Don't let the waters flow down,*

*for they carry my jewels,  
my collections of births,  
I left them somewhere  
in the midst of the river.  
I gave you my pool  
to grow a few lotuses  
to find the beauty of your share. (Don't let my  
pool go dry)*

Satiating hunger of lives and waiting for dead leaves to revive are not passing thoughts. The unfailing desires to reveal, to listen and to explore are tested in her poems.

*Passing by speedily  
Leaving trees of memories  
in the empty spaces of the mind  
to stay there for years to come.: (Trail of Trees)*

Like this, there are several gems that everyone should read in this elegant and well-compiled collection. Poetry is meant to be read and heard. We feel a powerful sense of connection in the end.

Parneet Jaggi is one of the most powerful voices amongst the contemporary Indian poets writing in English. The book is written with charm, passion and fervour and is elevated by fluent and freewheeling style that's made her an accomplished poet. Recapture, innocence, reflection –

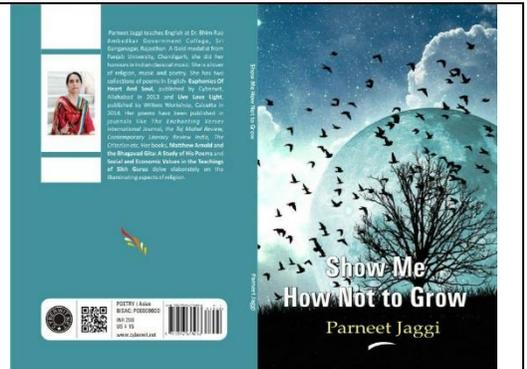
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'Show Me How Not to Grow' is a striking meditation on conscious living, for the all the joy of it.

The cover page design is illuminating. And surely, it's a must for every poetry lover's bookshelf.

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**Author: Dr. Parneet Jaggi** having teaching experience for 17 years, currently teaches at Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Government College, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan. She has written several anthologies including Euphonies Of Heart And Soul, Live Love Light, Show Me How Not to Grow, Matthew Arnold and the Bhagavad Gita: A Study of His poems, Social and Economic Values in the Teachings of Sikh Gurus, and Wordwine.



**Reviewer: Gopal Lahiri** is a bilingual poet, writer, editor, critic and translator and widely published in Bengali and English language. He has had seven collections of poems in Bengali and eight collections of poems in English which includes four POD books published from Lulu Publications, USA. His poems were published in various anthologies and journals which includes Indian Literature, CLRI, National Treasures, Home Bound etc. He is an experienced book reviewer both in English and Bengali and his review has been published amongst others in the prestigious Desh weekly and The Telegraph Kolkata in the eighties and nineties. He is currently in the panel of reviewers of Indian Literature of Sahitya Akademi, (Print journal), Muse India and Setu online journals.

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