

Poetry by Sadhu Binning

From East of Main: An Anthology of Poems From East Vancouver
Edited by Calvin Wharton and Tom Wayman (1989)



Race Relations

We - the job seeking immigrants
transform our language
exchange our dresses
suppress our culture
form committees
hold dinner parties for MP's
present our folk dances and songs
shout slogans, wave sticks

in every known way
we try to improve our race relations

AND THEY - the leaders of our motherlands
with their Ghandi-caps in their hands
the tip of their sarees or turbans
shaped as beggars' bowls
seeking 'financial aid'
come to Washington, London, Ottawa
and the next morning newspaper headlines
sweep our every effort away

The Postman

in the dark
from the mouth of the radio clock
english words hit like a hammer
half opened eyes, unstable feet
from toilet to kitchen
dead silence
a cup of tea, a lunch bag
labelled clothes take control of your body

sorting mail for Jacksons, Sandhus and Yees
surrounded by people
who have learned life's secrets
from Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse
some of these 'brothers'
don't want to laugh with you
but at you
they don't even see you
they see an image
nailed in their minds
by the Creators of Donald and Mickey

letters in your hand
rain on your head
every dog is a lion in its house
crooked high stairs
the cats watch you and jump away
buried under flyers from Sears and Bays
your back screams
still you watch your steps
and they watch you
through their half open curtains
whites, blacks, indians, chinese
those kept in the house
have sharp eyes
some of them see you
as another somebody
who goes on strike just to trouble them

you deliver letters
that travel from your hand

English 11 Honours

Ms. Shin

to the garbage pail
that was once a tall and proud tree somewhere
piece by piece delivered to the garbage heap

you start with a handful
end with nothing
one year, two years and you count no more
along the way your hairs change their colour
perhaps to make some white man happy
the rest remain the same to the end
yet piece by piece you deliver yourself

Chhaledde (Chameleons)

on our way back home
the plane ride
from Vancouver to Delhi
seems to take million light years
our thoughts fly higher
and faster than rockets
in a few hours' journey
we go through total change
like a *chhaledda*

we forget the strawberry flats picked
while stooping and crawling on our knees
we forget the crowded windowless trucks
in which we are transported like chickens
to and from farms

we forget all the dishes washed
the back pain from mopping floors
and the never ending flow
of two by fours on the green chain

we forget the stares
that burn through our skins
the shattered windows
we forget the pain of not being able
to speak Punjabi with our own children

English 11 Honours

Ms. Shin

we forget everything that we once left in a hurry
the only thing that occupies our thoughts
is multiplication
faster than a computer
we churn out figures
by multiplying one with ten
our pockets become much heavier
changing our entire personalities
by the time we get off the plane
we become members of a different class