

Kaisra Riaz Jaswal

I was born in Lahore (Pakistan) in a Punjabi family although our ancestors are from Jalandhar (India). Because I was born into a Punjabi family, I am connected to Punjabi language. I would like to emphasize that I got inspiration for Punjabi from my family. My family encouraged me to speak and read Punjabi in my childhood. That's why I recognize Punjabi and adopted it in my future life. Moreover, I used to participate in debates, poetry and Punjabi story telling competitions at school level. I spent throughout my school life at the stage as I used to take part in one or the other cultural activity during school functions. I continued to participate in annual debates in higher classes at college level and I had become all Pakistan best speaker of Punjabi in 1980s.

My father was posted as a doctor in a hospital at Jhang, a small city of Punjab. Heer Syal, the heroine of the famous Punjabi *kissa* (folk story) *Heer Ranjha* was belonged to Jhang. Living there, I got more connected with Punjabi language as and fragrance of the soil of Jhang dwelled inside me and I had more love for Punjabi. I got awards as the best Punjabi debater at all Pakistan level. That's how I developed my interest in Punjabi writing. Then I left college, got married and had kids. Obviously, I had to give time to my family. My kids have grown up now, my daughter got married who has settled in Toronto (Canada) and my son has been living with me. Again, I have time for writing in Punjabi.

Currently, I am a library manager at Lahore School of Economics, a renowned university in Lahore. I am a Punjabi columnist and regularly publish articles in newspapers on burning topics to make people aware of issues rising in society and its impact on general population. Shahid Siddiqui, a professor in Lahore School of Economics, read my articles in the newspapers. He appreciated my writings in Punjabi and asked me to translate his book in Urdu titled *Adhe Adhoore Khwab*. I was hesitated to do this challenging task because translating another author's book means making his thoughts and feelings of your own and transcribing them in a new language, which requires a lot of consternation and hard work. Finally, I agreed to do it. Then I translated the book originally in Urdu to Punjabi under the title *Adh Puchade Supne*. To complete this job excellently, I tried to find some help. I approached Zubaid Ahemad Sahib. This is great honour for me that Zubaid Sahib has edited the translated version of the book and wrote its preface. It's published by Sangami Publisher in Lahore and is very popular.

I read first paragraph of the first chapter of translated book:

Summer evenings are rainbow in the settlements near the sea as these colours speak the magic of deep waters and if one thinks of keeping these cool breezes of the sea as a memory, the beautiful colours of these evenings remain at the palms of the hands forever. All of these settlements along the seas are the same, equally hot and wet, rain-soaked buildings and even more captivating evening magic. Today I came here many years later. Everything seemed so strange after so much had changed. In the college where I was studying, I heard that a lot of new people have come. People come and go, but the business of the world does not stop. This is how the world keeps moving forward. I was invited to give a lecture by a Community Centre in the city and was told that my stay had been arranged in a hostel. The desire to go to these old places sometimes becomes a reason to fall in love. This is why even if the beauty of these places is beyond the reach of the people. The journey from the airport to the city was about half an hour. I had revisited this city of mosques, temples and churches which has its own identity, which is very different from other cities. The driver reached to the address I gave and stopped the taxi. It was a huge white building. The silence seemed to be a place to stay. In the pitch dark, the light from the light bulbs on the lawn shone on the wall. I had just entered the gate when all the lights went out at once and darkness fell everywhere. The watchman said, "Bai, this load is

shady." The hostel building seemed even more frightening in the dark. But he lit an emergency light and pushed me to the hostel room. The watchman took me to the hostel room. I kept the bag, lay down on the bed and closed my eyes. As I passed through my mind, I began to see. I remember the day I first came to this city. It was evening when I landed at the airport. When I came out of the airport, there was a fair of people standing to say 'Welcome' to their loved ones. I had no acquaintances in the city. My eyes were searching for my name in this gathering of people. Then I saw my name written on a piece of paper 'Saharan Rai'. The college driver came to pick me up. I spread my luggage trolley in front of him. 'Sir, are you a guest of PTC?' The driver asked. From PTC his meaning was from Peters Professional College. 'Yes' and your name? "My name is Subir," he said. Sir, your stay for two days has been arranged in a hostel and now we have to go there. I got in the car. Subir was a talker. From the airport to the hostel, he gave me great news about the college, the city, the atmosphere and about the people there. Subir's words crossed the line very easily. After a while I checked in and was in my room. I unveiled the window. My room was on the 10th floor. In front of it, there was the largest street in the city, with passing cars looking like toys. The street lights were on. I began to think that by now it must have been dark in my city too, a faint spark of *oodhar* (known as sadness) began to take hold in my mind. The next day I joined the college. My early days in college were never to be forgotten. Teaching is a great profession for me. I consider this work constructive. I think *Tala Bilams* (students) are very good judges. They quickly explore their teacher and reach the conclusion. The beauty of a teacher is revealed in the classroom. Then in a matter of days, this splendour spreads from the students to the verandas, hostels and cafeterias of the college. Sometimes it seems like I have a lot of good times that students have grown and accepted since the earliest days. Apart from my class, other students of my college would also come to my office and discuss their academic issues. Three years have passed like a dream. I still remember the time to leave. When I arrived at the railway station, I was surprised to see that there were students whom I had not even taught, but they knew me and had just come to see off me.

Dr. Shahid Siddiqui is a renowned educationist of Pakistan. Being a Punjabi, Dr. Shahid Siddiqui's mother tongue is Punjabi. On completion of his basic education in Pakistan he went abroad for higher study and did his Ph.D. from the UK. After that he returned to Pakistan and got engaged here in teaching at a college. He taught in Lums, then in Lahore School of Economics. Apart from his usual routine of teaching, he wrote many books in English as well as in Urdu. He keeps a sharp eye on education system as a teacher and educationist. He discusses what's happening in the education system in this contemporary phase and what's role of education and students in it. His whole book is written keeping this point in view. He explores relation between a teacher and his students. When a teacher teaches his students sincerely, he wants to transfer his knowledge, his thinking process to his students. He transfers his knowledge to his students accordingly whatever he wants to make his students. When a student fully understands his philosophy, respects him, grasps his knowledge and that knowledge slips in, then he understands how to carry forward his dream. All this is illustrated in this book. This book is a novel on the education system, on the relationship between a teacher and his students. When I translated this book into Punjabi, he was so happy that it's service of his mother tongue i.e., Punjabi. He got the feedback from readers that the Punjabi translated version is more beautiful than his Urdu book. He expressed his gratitude to me with great pleasure and that was my inspiration. He wanted to get translated his books in Punjabi, so that these could be more popular in Punjabi speaking community as well.

Secondly, my concern is Punjabi courses will go ahead with good Punjabi books. One of the compulsory subjects taught to Muslim children at school level is about our religion Islam. But there are no books for that course. Now, I am translating books in Punjabi for that. Then we will be able to

teach Punjabi along with the religion. Without books, teaching is not possible. Along with my job as a librarian, I translate books in Punjabi as well as publish articles in various newspapers and weekly magazines. At present, I am also writing a Punjabi book for children as we wish to rise our mother tongue in Punjab schools. Children would not hesitate to speak Punjabi if they would learn it at lower-level classes. English is replacing all regional languages globally. Same is happening in Pakistani Punjab that Punjabi is being affected drastically. Punjabi speaking people have inferiority complex that they may be considered as backward. They think that on speaking English, they would be honoured as well-educated people and get more respect in the society. We are trying to make Punjabi, a part of school curriculum at lower-level classes so that children should feel confident in speaking Punjabi. Then they would talk to their classmates in Punjabi at school as well as to their parents going back to their homes. They will not feel ashamed speaking Punjabi when they grow up and go to the higher classes. Only then Punjabi language can survive.

Thanks