

Editorial

The twentieth century represented a difficult time in human history and the Punjabis were apportioned their share of problems. They fought along with the British Army in both World Wars, and also participated in the movement seeking British departure from India. The Independence did not bring any “tryst with the destiny.” Instead the Punjab was partitioned and the establishment of the boundary between East and West Punjab cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Punjabis. In the post-1947 period, the fighting of two wars (1965 and 1971) along the newly created border, the rise and collapse of the Naxalite movement in the 1970s, the creation of Bangladesh and its implications for West Punjab, and the violence that accompanied Sikh struggle for Khalistan in the 1980s, have kept Punjabi society in a state of continuous disarray.

This issue of JPS focuses on twentieth-century Punjabi literature and attempts to trace how creative minds of the period responded to the problems confronting their people. Part I contains a presentation of poetry (53 poems) that is divided in five sections. The opening section, “Nature,” focuses on the landscape and its association with history and myth, and the intimate connection between the land and human experience. The next section, “Interiors,” delineates the emotional landscapes, the promise and pain of love, the longing for union, and the lingering memory after separation. Poems in the section on “Partition,” voice the ever-present yet difficult to express emotions that surround this event, the politics of hatred, religious intolerance, and eclipsed notions of *Punjabi*. Section four, “Politics,” presents the disillusionment in both East and West Punjab in the years following Independence, the pervasive corruption ensnaring its people, the emergence of more partitions (1971), and religious violence (1984). The final section, “Home,” deals with the innumerable dislocations wrought by migration to new lands, the exile of the immigrant, and the nostalgia for an irretrievable wholeness.

Part II of this issue contains seven articles. Three of them survey literature produced in East Punjab, West Punjab, and in Canada, the largest Punjabi community overseas. The others examine the works of four living writers with an eye to tracing the themes and trajectories of their respective works and their place in the larger constellation of Punjabi literature.

Here is a sampling of a vibrant literary tradition that has had little exposure outside the Punjab. For a set of complex reasons, some of the poems and the literary figures discussed here are not even known across the political divide of East and West Punjab. We hope that this initial attempt to present Punjabi poetry in accessible translations and introduce Punjabi writers is just a beginning.

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