

impressed by their new ideas which have generated heated discussions in literary parlour.

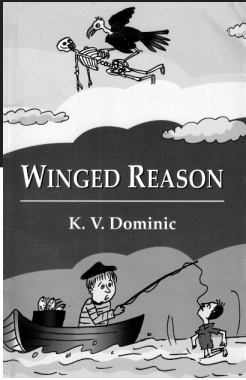
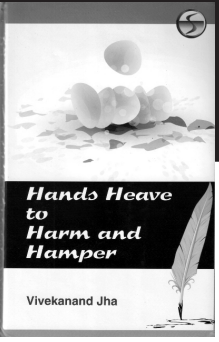
PRASAD: What message would you like to leave for budding writers?

RAGHUPATHI: They should read a lot. They should be conscious of what they write. They should look at their own writings as many times as they can to achieve near perfection. These days many practitioners do not use imagery. Some use stale imagery. Imagery is the hallmark of good poetry. Plus they should know how to blend feeling and thought. Some lack precision. They should aim at this.

PRASAD: What is your overall experience with Indian book publishers?

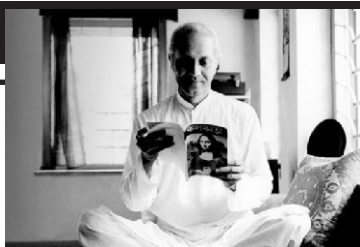
RAGHUPATHI: Oh, the less said the better. My experiences with Indian publishers are bitter. Many publishers thrive on the writer's sweat and blood. But there is no other way than to publish with leeches. The world is like that, we have to get on with it. There is no option. Either live or perish.



	ISBN 978-81-7273-530-2 Winged Reason - K.V. Dominic Authorspress - New Delhi First Edition (2010) Pages: 75 This collection of poems is about losses, including the ultimate loss which is the most unrelenting and grimmest loss of human life. The poet seems to have experienced those losses himself or has heard closely the cries of the bearers of those losses. The first poem begins with a question, which is the quintessence of Winged Reason. The question probes philosophers and touches the innermost chords of its readers.
ISBN 978-81-7625-675-9 Hands Heave to Harm & Hamper - Vivekanand Jha Sarup Book Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi First Edition (2010) Pages: 92 The thematic concern in this collection is contemporary sorrows and sufferings of the world. Apart from this the poet dwells on some fundamental and perennial problems pertaining to his native place, Bihar. This book also contains the great poet Jayant Mahapatra's interview with Vivekanand Jha.	

Obituary

It is with profound
grief and sorrow
that Labyrinth mourns
the sad demise of Prof. P.Lal



P. Lal: A Legend Who Created Legends

- Subhendu Mund

At 10.05 pm, on 3 November 2010, India lost one of its last great icons. Padmashree Professor Purushottam Lal is mourned by generations of scholars, academics, poets, writers and translators of the likes of Anita Desai, Jayanta Mahapatra, Vikram Seth, Kamala Das, who owe much of their success to him. Purushottam Lal, born in Kapurthala, was a Punjabi by birth but a Bengali by choice. To many, P Lal is a name associated with publishing, the founder of the now iconic Writers Workshop. Writers Workshop has published about 4,000 titles, not to speak of a journal of high standard, WW Miscellany (also launched in 1958), and the so-called audio-books. Lal personally supervised and effected all the productions. He was the editor, proofreader, designer and publisher of every single book. For decades, Lal was the centre of creative activities in Calcutta. The visitors to his reading sessions were such luminaries as R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Nirad C Chaudhuri, Raja Rao, Pearl S. Buck, Allen Ginsberg, Gunter Grass, Geoffrey Hill, Christopher Isherwood, Peter Brook, Paul Engle, Santha Rama Rau and Sasthi Brata. Lal's critics accused him of patronizing "unknown writers". To this, he would reply: "WW is not a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known." Many of the celebrated scholars, poets and writers of today began their career with Lal's encouragement and patronage. The list is a long and stunning one: Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Adil Jussawalla, Kamala Das, Vikram Seth, Pritish Nandy, R Parthasarathy, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Gieve Patel, Dom Moraes, Saleem Peeradina, Arun Kolhatkar, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Keki Daruwalla, Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander, Suniti Namjoshi, Vikram Seth, Asif Currimbhoy, Anita Desai, David McCutcheon, Syd Harrex, Stephen Hemenway, Laxmi Holmstorm et al. This is not all. P Lal's achievement as a poet, critic and translator (he preferred the term 'transcreator') has almost been overshadowed under the huge banyan of his institution called Writers Workshop. He has transcreated the *Upanishads*, and the entire *Mahabharata*, verse by verse. The English rendering of the mahakavya runs into 8832 pages! Through his Writers Workshop he encouraged translation of Indian classics and *bhasha* literatures. P Lal is no more, but his legend will continue to inspire generations of poets, writers, scholars, transcreators, and of course, lovers of literature. With him, and with the demise of the likes of K R Srinivasa Iyengar, C. D. Narasimhaiah, Sujit Mukherjee and Meenakshi Mukherjee, an epoch has come to an end.

Dr Subhendu Mund is a poet, critic and author, and is the vice-president of Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (IACLALS). He is a visiting professor at IIT Bhubaneswar.

Short Stories

A Blind Revenge

- Narendra K Sinha

That day Dinesh was greatly surprised to find an aerogram in the bundle of his letters. Who could have sent him a letter from a foreign country? Dinesh was indeed a cloth merchant but he belonged to a medium category of local merchants who had nothing to do with import-export business. He had no contacts with a foreign country. He tried to read through the postal seal on the aerogram, but nothing was clear to him at first. Then he started looking at it, one letter at a time. On the faded seal he found two kinds of scripts, one had some queer combination of straight lines and angles that he could not understand. However, the other one had letters in Roman. After straining his eyes a little and making some guess work the place name he could decipher was Beer Sheba. What a weird name? He opened the letter. There was a brief message:

Dear father,

You will be glad to learn that I am widowed. But I am OK.
Please do not try to find my whereabouts.

----- Anita

The eyes of Dinesh moistened. Every word in the letter was soaked in bitter venom of malice. A gap of even twenty years had not softened any corner of Anita's heart. Today Dinesh might have turned seventy and be spending every additional day of his life as a gift from God, but about twenty years ago it was not so.

Twenty years ago, Dinesh had house full of members of family. He had two sons and three daughters. A daughter-in-law was added to the family a couple of years ago. She even had got a child. Dinesh sometimes used to play with his grandchild in his lap. Two of his elder daughters were happily married but still were frequent visitors to his house. His wife Kamala was the sole custodian of the household. Dinesh had wholesale business of cloth. He was rich and commanded respect in his community. But his way of life was, rather, conservative and traditional. He himself was not educated beyond high school. He had hardly finished his high school that his father asked him to share the responsibilities of the family business with him. Since then thirty years had passed. Dinesh stayed in the same position and grew with the growth of his business. Anita was his youngest daughter. She was, then, around nineteen. As per the new custom prevailing in the society he sent her to a college as soon as she finished her high school. Everyone else in his community was doing the same, sending their children for higher education. Even the

children did not want to do business anymore; there was the lure of government jobs. So, why would even daughters or sons-in-law stick to the age old business of shop-keeping?

Dinesh was recollecting. Anita had hardly spent a year or so in her college that she started wandering off the track. It was true that three children of Dinesh were already married. Two of his daughters were sent to their in-laws, and one of the sons, married and staying with him. The second son was receiving higher education. It was time he could get his third daughter married. But, the selection of a boy for Anita was to be made according to the conservative family traditions. It had to be an arranged marriage. No choice! But it could take some time researching.

Apparently, Anita was in a hurry. She kept her love a secret for months. However, one day she was caught red-handed by her brother in the college premises. Dinesh wanted to act immediately. He even went against the advice of his wife. He denounced the act of his daughter strongly and threatened that he would not only withdraw her from the college but also get her lover killed and thrown into a well. He, still, remembered her words, and why not? For the last twenty years those very words had ever been ringing in his ears and painfully echoing in his mind. By virtue of being not only her father but also head of a big family he thundered proudly and arrogantly, "Anita, do not befool yourself with the idea that because you are my youngest child and a daughter I would exercise any leniency with you. With whosoever you are involved if you are seen again with him I will not only get you tied up with a rope and restrain you within the house but also get the boy killed and thrown into such a blind well from where not even the police can retrieve his dead body".

Anita had never talked face to face with her father about the affair nor had she, then, given any reply to him. She, of-course, talked with her mother. The boy with who she was madly in love was a Jew. He was very handsome and talented. Best of all, he too was truly in love with her. Anyway, Anita's mother could not do anything in this regard. As Dinesh never interfered in her domestic affairs similarly he never allowed anyone to interfere in matters managed and controlled by him. He didn't care for the tears of his wife or her meek advice. By now the arrow had already shot off the bow. Anita's nature was no different from her father's, proud and uncompromising. She didn't care to make any request or cajoling to her father nor did she give any justification for or clarification of her act. She felt it was an insult to her love and to the boy she loved to offer a clarification or justification. Just one day when she left for her college, she did not come back home. She remained out of trace all these years. Only after twenty years arrived this brief letter from her.

Dinesh was greatly disturbed by the sudden disappearance of his daughter. To the best of his capacity he made all kinds of enquiries and searching. He made a report to the police. He kept waiting on the

superintendent of police for long. The police could not find a trace of her either. Disappointed, one day they admonished him, "Your daughter was no more a minor. If she has eloped with someone why are you making a fuss? Nobody has forcibly abducted her, nobody has killed her. Let her stay in peace and you also stay in peace."

After disappearance of her daughter Kamala became lifeless. After sometime she suffered with tuberculosis and eventually died in a short period of time. Both of her sons had already left the home as they got jobs at different places. Dinesh continued to stay in the house all alone and was stuck with his cloth store. No member of his family cared to look after the business except for a hired accountant. And now this sarcastic letter!

Howsoever harsh were her words his daughter had at least remembered him. Perhaps some rays of love and affection were shining behind the mountain of sarcasm. After getting widowed perhaps she was looking for some emotional support from him. Perhaps she wanted to rejoin the family she had discarded. Dinesh resolved he would find out the place where his daughter was living. He immediately contacted his sons to know where the place was, that was called Beer Sheba. The boy with who Anita had eloped was a Jew and according to the college records his name was Joshua. Further enquiries revealed that Beer Sheba was a city in Israel and it meant "seven wells". Dinesh was surprised. How did they arrange for everything before leaving the country? There was no consulate of Israel in India at that time. How could Anita get her passport made and wherefrom could she obtain a visa for Israel? All of this must have been arranged by Joshua. His daughter by now must have become a citizen of that far land! He felt an urge he must go there. His daughter had called him from one of the seven wells of Beer Sheba. Even when she had asked him not to try to find her whereabouts he must go there and meet her. Even at this age he was prepared to take the risk. His children forbade him. His friends warned him against the terrorism gripping that country and all around. Then there were difficulties in operating in an unknown country, a country that had a different culture, a different life style, and used entirely a different language. But he did not deter. Again, it was only he who could go, nobody else would. His sons had totally forgotten that they had a sister called Anita. She was dead for them.

Luckily, by now, an embassy and a consulate of Israel were set up in India. Many people, especially Jews, were not only travelling to Israel they were also settling there. Dinesh continued to learn about the country, their people, culture, and living, and also their monetary system. He had to know in detail about how to reach Beer Sheba. He got some important information from the embassy of Israel in New Delhi in this regard. He had to catch Israeli El-Al Airlines from Bombay. He was told that the city of Beer Sheba was situated in a desert area at a distance of seventy miles to the South-East of Tel Aviv, the capital, where the plane would take him. From Tel Aviv he would have to take either a bus or a

train to Beer Sheba.

Once on the plane all kinds of worries began bothering him, not only about the travel and the place that was new to him and about how the people would treat him, but also how his daughter would behave with him. He was also worried about how to make a search of someone in an unknown place. He had researched extensively about how to trace out a person just with the name of the city. Different people had given him different suggestions. He had carefully secured all of them in his mind. If he had got some help from a governmental source it might have been easier to trace his daughter out with the use of computer. He could also get help from the police. But he did not want to get involved with such sources for the fear he might get implicated by the police in an unknown country, where he was not aware of the law of the land. Post offices could be another source, but he did not remember his daughter's married name. If he could meet any Indian Jew he might get some help from him or her. He remained in a dilemma. Although he was at first excited to take risk and do the discovery, by now while he was on the plane he was having second thoughts and dragging his feet. However, so many steps were already taken and there was no going back.

When he arrived at Tel Aviv International Airport and cleared custom and immigration he thought he was to get a taxi to the railway station. He first exchanged his dollars into shekels and then hired a taxi. He was impatient to get to the railway station thinking per chance he might bump into an Indian Jew there or at least might get information about them. The taxi driver informed him that Jews from India were all over. On his way to station he could see some people who looked like Indians but the taxi driver said they weren't. There were people of several colors and races walking the streets. He was not sure who to talk to. At the station he looked for Indians but could not gather courage to talk to any in the gatherings. He was not even comfortable in talking in English, he had never ventured before.

After a ride of about two hours he reached the station named Beer Sheba Central. It was late evening and he had to find a place to stay first. He took another taxi to check into a moderately priced hotel because he was not sure how long he would have to stay there. He found things to be expensive but was glad that as a senior citizen he could at least ride the train for half the price. He had, of-course, lots of money with him because he knew that in an unknown place money was the only help and support. But he had to spend wisely. At the hotel he anxiously started asking everyone about Jews from India. He got the information that not far from there, in the South- East corner, there was a colony of Jews from India. The colony was named Cochin Village because most of the Jews there were from Cochin. Dinesh was relieved. He had a good dinner and then went to sleep with a sigh of relief.

He was surprised to find that offices were closed on Fridays and Saturdays. He had reached on a Friday. Next day it was Saturday. It was good for him because then he could meet more people, especially the men, in Cochin Village on a holiday. He decided to hire a taxi and visit the Cochin Village. But when he reached there he was disappointed. Nobody was there from north India. None of them even understood Hindi. He could not get any information about Jews from north India in that locality. He hired a return taxi. While driving back to the hotel his taxi driver told him that there was another railway station in Beer Sheba. It was called Beer Sheba Jaffon. He had seen an Indian lady working there. She was relatively of fair complexion and was in her late thirties or early forties. The driver suggested that that lady might be of some help. He agreed that all the Indian Jews living in the Cochin Village were of dark color while the lady working at the station was definitely fairer. Dinesh guessed that she must be from north India and that she could be of some help; she might even know Anita.

As Dinesh reached the railway station, called Beer Sheba Jaffon, the security man, on duty, informed him that the Indian lady, who he was seeking, was enjoying her weekend. She would be back to work Sunday morning. Enquiring about the time he was told that her time was five in the morning to two in the afternoon. If she didn't come in the morning shift then she might be available in the evening shift. With great curiosity Dinesh asked for her name. The security man replied that he was not sure about that because he had been transferred to that place only recently, yet it was something like "Anila or Anita". Now Dinesh grew impatient. He was sure he had found his daughter. Where did she live? The security man didn't know but added that she always walked to her job and back. Dinesh concluded that if she walked to the job she must be living close by.

Dinesh lost no time in quickly walking away from the station even without thanking the security man for the all important information. He was sure he would find her out. Coming down the stairs of the station platform he found there was an open space where lots of cars were parked. The parking lot was dusty. Dirt was visible everywhere. When he came down the road he turned left. At the right side of the road the place was not yet developed, perhaps that was a place to dump garbage. But as soon as he came to a broader crossroad he stopped for a while. He could either take a right or a left. If he took a left turn he would be entering busy shopping area. Residential area was mostly at the right. He felt the sun was hot. But he had learnt from his experience of a day that as the city was close to a desert even if the days were hot, nights were usually cool. He crossed the road and took to the broad pedestrian path, and turned right. The path was shaded with trees and was cool. Now to his right side was the broad street where lots of cars were running, while to his left were several apartment buildings in a row. He thought Anita must be living in one of these buildings.

All the apartment buildings were within an enclosure skirted by a decorative concrete yellow-colored fence. The fence was only three to four feet high and had a couple of little revolving iron gates to enter. Dinesh immediately entered through the first gate. On the outer verandah of the ground floor of one of the apartment complexes he noticed some older men chatting together. He couldn't gather courage to disturb them. He continued wandering within the campus and giving a searching look at other buildings nearby. He was waiting for a lone person to pass by so that he could ask him or her about his daughter's apartment. In a few moments he saw one senior and bulky lady wearing a frock with white and blue stripes walking towards him holding the leash of her dog. That was a good chance for Dinesh to stop her and ask. The lady spoke only broken English. Dinesh himself was not very conversant with English. What that lady appeared to have told him that he had taken the wrong gate. He should have entered by the second revolving gate. She guessed that in the apartment building just close to the second gate lived a lady of Indian origin. She had actually moved into that building recently. The old lady, however, didn't know her name. Dinesh thanked the old lady and walked briskly to the second gate. As soon as he reached the second gate he found a younger lady, in professional pant and shirt, coming out of the same apartment building he was trying to enter. He stopped her and checked again. Yes, on the fourth floor, that is, the top floor, there lived a lady of Indian origin. She confirmed that earlier she lived somewhere else but now she had moved into that building.

Dinesh took to the staircase and climbed up. On the fourth floor he right away found a name plate in blue reading the name "Anita Kahn". Now he remembered; Kahn was her last name. The boy with who she had eloped was Joshua Kahn. He held his breath for a few seconds as he was breathing heavily after the exercise of stair climbing. With a great suspense, anxiety, and uncertainty he pushed the button of the door bell. As the door opened he found his daughter Anita standing in front of him. Despite a great physical change it was no other than his daughter. She was dumbfounded and was in a state of more shock than surprise. Her eyes broadened and bulged out. In a trembling voice she could only exclaim, "You?"

Anita was still in a state of disbelief when she led her father to the sitting room. She asked, "How is it that you are here?"

Dinesh, "If my daughter would have given her address even in the deep forests of Africa, I would have searched her out. But your letter suggested that you have not forgiven me yet."

Anita was blunt and harsh, "I had forbidden you. How much Joshua wanted to stay in India with all of us and wanted to get acquainted with Indian culture but your ego didn't allow him to do anything like that."

Dinesh was frank, "You silly girl!! In desperation parents can say anything