

"What Is the Point of Living Without Love?"



An Interview with Pratap Singh by Ana Hughes

Ana Hughes (AH): What does your art mean to you, personally?

Pratap Singh (PS): Nothing. My art does not make sense in my life, but it surely makes sense in my day-to-day existence. It gives me something to do; it keeps me perpetually occupied. I am filling my material space with colors and thoughts.

AH: Are you in the mood for negation?

PS: No, who am I to negate anything or find something? I am merely an observer. I derive essential meanings in my life through art.

AH: Your first painting series, "Deep in Love," brought you recognition in European cities. What does that signify for you?

PS: "Deep in Love" is exactly that—deep in love. It does not harbor any indirect meanings or logic. Through this series, I sought to recollect my old feelings for a lady.

AH: Do you still love that lady?

PS: Love never dies; it transforms from one form to another.

AH: Have you also dedicated your "Virginity" series to the same lady?

PS: No, that series represents an unfulfilled love. Virginity is inherently sexual, and through that series, I attempted to find or touch some form of spirituality while making love.

AH: What about heaven? You have written numerous poems on heaven as well.

PS: I painted heaven for my father, who passed away on January 23, 2016. I painted heaven for two years, right up until the morning of January 23. I believe heaven is the most beautiful place in the world where my father resides now. However, in the material world, when a man dies, a world dies with him. As a rational human, I believe that too. But in the realm of art, you cannot kill someone you love most; otherwise, there would be no art, no sunrise anymore, and the world would be devoid of human feelings and emotions.

AH: These days, you are painting nature. What does nature mean to you in the contemporary world?

PS: I have a very personal relationship with nature—sunset, sunrise, and midnight. I find a form of poetry in it, and these paintings are minimal in their aesthetics. Through pieces like "Daybreak-Whispering to Your Soul," "Morning Bliss," "The Sun is Setting Down on Me," and "A Passing Evening," I seek to express my inner beauty within the context of the outer landscape. Nature is the purest form of love, akin to Indian classical music, which encompasses ragas and alap that depict the rising and setting sun in a minimal form, relating to human emotions. This can also be seen in Ritwik Ghatak's cinema, though in a violent form, while Satyajit Ray expressed it in a more minimalistic manner. Like this poem, it is a minimal form of expression, and another poem, "From My Window," is a very expressive one. The same rhythm and tune I follow in visual art too.

"From my window, I see birds flying in their own way
People crossing the streets in their own narcissistic way
The sun fades in a very obscured way
I try to write but nothing comes to mind
Perhaps nothing moves while the world moves
And I move within them but nothing is visible,
Silence that leaves me nowhere but leaves a void in my heart
My friend, all things are passing through in a very silent way
I guess today is taking its last breaths,
But before the sun loses its whole presence, moment by moment, inch by inch
I shall write something on it, to let this evening speak for itself..."

PS (continuing): Every day after painting, I find myself empty. A feeling grips me that it's only the body that hangs empty, devoid of breath. Naked, I flop onto my pillow in the hope that perhaps the pillow may return my breath to me. It doesn't happen though, and through it all, you are always near me. So near that sometimes, I can't distinguish if my breath is my

own or if it was lent to me by you. Every night, I wish to lay my head on your bosom and lose myself. When the morning light opens my eyes, may the balmy scent of your body linger in mine.

AH: What kind of thought process do you follow while painting?

PS: Nothing specific. I paint in the midnight, on the empty road. There is no other way of doing it, I guess. Perhaps I have enough catharsis to relive through my art.

AH: What do you mean by catharsis?

PS: You need some real pain to burn out every moment you live, and art is the remedy for that pain. In the world of art, you need the center of creativity to fulfill you as a human being.

AH: What kind of pain do you feel when you paint?

PS: Like an innocent man dying in an accident, A young man losing his job; a lover breaking his heart, A lonely man walking alone in the midst of a ruthless crowd, An old man dying somewhere in the sky... There are many. It's hard to remember a particular one. Perhaps the absolute pain of my father's death or some unfaithful friendships.

AH: What kind of things do you do in your spare time?

PS: I do not have many friends. I do not like to express myself to my friends either. These days, I hardly get free time. Art is the only thing I live for and would like to die for as well.

AH: Is death and love the prime source of creativity?

PS: Love is just a word; you have to give it meaning in your life. Otherwise, what is the point of living? Authentic love gives meaning to my life, and we are all born to die. Perhaps nobody wants to die in the absence of love. In a thoughtful world, it is impossible to reciprocate love in the same manner. Through my art, I seek various meanings and interpretations of our day-to-day existence. Does love really exist? Do people go to heaven after death? What is the meaning of soulmates? Everywhere, I see knowledge and power relationships in a very Foucauldian perspective. That makes the spiritual quest vulnerable and more argumentative too.

AH: With this note of love and death, I thank you for giving me this meaningful interview. I have truly enjoyed our conversation. I hope you find your soulmate and never feel sorrow or sadness. May love always walk with you.

PS: With warm regards, Ana Hughes , London , 2018,