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A Song for Singapore - Aches & Dreams

By Kirpal Singh

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I
dream of a Singapore that gives me the freedom I yearn for
But the ache is the need to be circumspect, careful, sensitive
I dream of a Singapore which will enjoy poetry readings
But the ache is that seats remain empty even when there’s no charge!
I dream of a Singapore which the world celebrates for its verve
But the ache is many of us don’t even know the word!
I dream of a Singapore where our schools, colleges, universities will educate
But the ache is that for now we mostly only graduate urchins making money
I dream of a Singapore that will allow the homeless to be secure
But the ache is the coldness of cement is where these sleep
I dream of a Singapore where the opposition in politics will be always welcomed
But the ache is it is a cruel world out there and the opposition is lonely
I dream of a Singapore where my children will hear and sing with joy
But the ache is my children find unsmiling faces and most out of key
I dream of a Singapore where the nites are delectably full of dreams
But the ache is that for most the nites are sleepy with nightmares
I dream and I dream and I dream of my wonderful and glorious Singapore
But the ache is no one else wants to dream these dreams with me.
My ache is that so many don’t know my beautiful lion city
But the dream is that one day they will
My ache is that Singapore gets maligned again and again
But the dream is that soon those maligning will know better
My ache is that Singapore is still seen as a cultural desert
But the dream is that culture will flow in the veins of all
My ache is that Singapore remains insecure, afraid to be bold
But the dream is that soon we will know the difference
My ache is that my people don’t want to know me well
But the dream is that many are starting to be curious
My ache is that so much humanity is wasted as we make loads of money
But the dream is that humanity will triumph and money will be just money
My ache is that no one comes to Singapore to gain intellectual capital
But the dream is that my students will challenge this and retort
My ache is Singapore is trying too hard, too hard to be global
But the dream is that we will become the hub of hubs, the global city
My ache is, my ache is deep and I cannot fathom how to sing
But the dream is that music is going to flow, embracing all.

These dreams and these aches find an outlet
In staccato and in verse symbolizing poetry
The leaves remain green while turning brown
As the clouds explode with thunder and rain
These aches and dream bring out memories
Charting courses, redrawing history, remembering

We move and mark our journeys with significance

While the sun and the moon and the stars shine.

Dream and aches. Aches and dreams -

Our life, our living, our existence, our Singapore

Framed and reframed, planned and unplanned

Beckons the writing of a real song, a real poem.

About the Author

Kirpal Singh is an internationally-acclaimed poet, scholar, critic and creativity guru and currently the Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre at the Singapore Management University where he oversees the new Arts & Culture Management Programme.