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A Song for Singapore - Aches & Dreams

By Kirpal Singh

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i

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.

ii

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.

iii

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.