

Ode To Prison Guard

G. N. Saibaba

He smiles
he laughs
through the bars
to shake me up
from my early morning dreams
with a hug
of a good morning
clanking a huge bunch of keys
into the cage of my life sentence.

A dark blue Nehru topi
on the scalp,
brutal khaki robes
from top to bottom
girding with a snake-like
black belt around the waist,
he stands and sways
in front of my sleepy
half-opened eyes
like a devil
guarding the gates of hell.

He appears like an apparition
from an enemy's army
but with a warm smile
and friendly face,
checking if one were alive or dead
as the day breaks
and counting each live head.

He opens and closes
the locks of the iron gates
a thousand times a day
without expressing pain
or complain.

He demands no tips
or favours
for his untiring services.
He calls the unattending doctor
repeatedly on his wireless set
patiently
when I am sick and unconscious

He hides
his own sad stories
lending his patient
and compassionate ear
to those of the chained
melancholic souls
never bothering for their
crime or innocence.

He listens,
debates,
and damns
the evil forces in power

with scorn
and frown on his eye-brows
when the bosses
are away into their offices.

He stomps
on the dark steps
of the devilish state
all night along
with his eagle eyes
of surveillance.

He comes from
the deepest well
of our social misery.
He has no time for his beloved ones
languishing outside the gates.
Imprisoned by his duties
days and nights
behind the high four walls
and closed gates,
he spans away
a life time in prison
for a pittance.
The cursed souls come and go,
but he is a permanent prisoner,
he has no holidays
or holy days and week-ends.

He is a nun,
a nurse,
and a priest,
a pious persevere
of patience.

A tireless slave
sticking everlastingly
to the bars of my cage,
he is friend,
a cousin, and a comrade.
He is the guard,
and the guardian
of my life's sentence,
phrases, words and syllables