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