

Joginder Paul: The Inextricable Collaboration of Life and Writing

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Abstract: Joginder Paul (1925–2016) is known primarily as a fiction writer in Urdu while his substantial non-fiction has remained overshadowed. But Paul’s creative output is best understood when his fiction is read alongside his non-fiction. It is illuminating to see how he transforms his life’s experiences into stories as well as philosophical cogitations, presenting in wonderful ways how real life can translate unobtrusively into narrative life-writing. For instance, while he writes an entire novel on the impact of migration on memory, he also creates a “Self-obituary” where he sees himself as repeatedly birthing and dying with each physical “migration” that he undergoes. This coalescing of ideas of birth and death, politics and geography, migration, and transmigration, the real and imagined, creates an entirely unique body of writing that shifts seamlessly between fiction and life-writing. It is fiction replete with actual inexplicable events of history, geography, politics, and culture reconfigured in the lives of his characters, peopled with the living as well as the dead, with man and animal alike, where demarcations are easily transcended. In Paul we begin to accept how writing is simultaneously, particularly for him, the process of giving birth and embracing death, and of how a legacy can be processed continuously.

Keywords: Re-birthing in fiction, mapping memories, time and timelessness, life experiences, reconfiguring identity

Fiction and Non-Fiction: Illuminating Joginder Paul’s World

Joginder Paul (1925–2016) was an iconic figure in the Urdu literary firmament through seventy years of continued creative effort and output. He started out as a college boy keen to become a writer. To this end, he began publishing in the Murray College magazine where he was studying in Sialkot and very soon became a regular contributor to it. The vagaries of time played truant with research related to Paul and one was unable to find the earliest few of his literary publications. Uncannily, as a great relief – and in keeping with the writer’s lifelong belief – friendships, many times unexpected ones, and the generosity and compassion of the human nature and spirit, helped to unearth writings by him which were previously considered lost. It is precisely in these attempts and successes to establish connections, where boundaries seemed to abound, that one can reflect better to understand the philosophy and beliefs of Paul’s life and works.

Almost all of Paul’s fiction, as well as his many essays, along with the several Forewords and Afterwords he wrote for his own collections, can be seen as clear reflections of his own life experiences and the essence he drew from them. It is interesting that when he is read in entirety, his fiction mapped on to his non-fiction, the congruence between various pieces emerges more clearly. This helps to shape an entirely fresh canvas of ideas that the reader can fall back upon to understand this writer more empathetically. Paul’s life was marked by events that he could never treat lightly. His very thoughts and cogitations bore the stamp of these, and in his creative writing they assumed different shapes. He gave many different voices to his characters although the essential questions and dilemmas that they engaged with always remained the same. These events began with the Partition,

and after that in a new phase of life with his subsequent move to the distant continent of Africa, the return home to India from there which was as fraught with uncertainty and drama as the move there had been, and the final journey, so to speak, to Delhi where he lived till his last days. These made up his life experiences. And over time Paul translated these experiences into narratives, stories that took off from what he had lived through, but which also took on their own shape and import although, at their core, they held all the issues that their creator grappled with all his life till the very end.

Thus, Paul's creative universe abounds with questions which have their focus on birth and death, exile and migration, displacement, homelessness, nationality, and identity, in essence on the moot ideas of belonging and unbelonging, perception and imperception, and so on. He plays upon these concepts while basing his fiction on an everyday world that exists around us. He creates identifiable worlds with their fissures intact while his characters journey through time – the past, present, and future – and these varied factors meld with each other seamlessly. In fact, a lot of his fiction translates his life into stories, but the lines are redrawn according to the choices his characters make and what fits in best with their circumstances. Paul reconfigures actual events of history, geography, politics and culture in his own mind and then translates and transfers these onto the lives of his characters. His fiction is also peopled alike with the living and the dead, as well as with man and animal, where all the demarcations between disparate entities are easily transcended, in fact differences sometimes do not seem to exist at all. When the reader further maps these stories on to her own life, she takes her reading far beyond the page to inject them afresh with meaning. Paul's stories are so every day, so relatable at one level, that they seem to be our stories, not at all removed from the here and now. Therefore, on reading him, we begin to accept how writing is, for him, the process both of giving birth and embracing death simultaneously. And once the creative writer understands and accepts this, can he leave behind a legacy – like Paul has done – that can be processed over and over again.

For instance, therefore, while he writes an entire novel, perhaps his most direct look at the Partition, *Khwabrau* (1990–1991; translated later as *Sleepwalkers* in 1998), on the impact of migration on memory and the subsequent creation of liminal spaces by the protagonist that force his sensitive mind to fashion a “sane” world to be able to live as “normally” as possible, he writes around the same time a “Khud-wafatiya” (1993; “Self-obituary,” 1998), where he sees himself as repeatedly birthing and dying with each physical “migration” that he undergoes. This coalescing of ideas of birth and death, of politics and geography, of migration and transmigration, creates an entirely unique body, and very large at that, of writing that shifts between fiction and life-writing – or life-narrative – simultaneously.

Exile and Home: Reconceptualising Borders

Paul considered himself an exiled being. Like millions of others of that time, he and his family had been displaced in the Partition of the sub-continent in 1947. It was a hard blow, this loss of birthland, of a childhood home, as also the inexplicable severance of lifelong connections – geographical, historical, social, cultural, and linguistic among others that could not be labelled or named. This one horrific event became a repeated need in him to make sense of how it had affected human minds. Paul has written very often of this in terms of its baffling and unnecessary nature. Because where earlier those who could walk across to each other's homes for different meals at different times of the day now found themselves mired in political and bureaucratic officialese and paperwork that seemed unending. This made him strive to understand the consequences that went much beyond the obvious, beyond the fallout of a simple crossing over from the familiar to the unfamiliar and a forced acceptance of borders where previously there were none.

This loss manifested itself in Paul's writings in varied ways. The idea of home, which he himself always grappled with, begins to mean different things to his different characters. To an old lady, in his iconic "Dadiyan," an empty house isn't the manifestation of fear and loneliness. Rather she happily peoples it with her infinite memories and the multiple projections of her own self. The house is her only certainty in a world that's been shattered beyond recognition. She sees herself mirrored within its many rooms creating a companionship like no other. On her death, in fact, she is surrounded and mourned by her many alter-selves, comforted in the presence of these "many," self-sufficient in her journey to the otherworld. It is, in fact, her grandson who is startled by these "dadiyans," grandmothers, when he rushes to take care of her last rites, mistakenly fearing that she who lived "alone" will be bereft in her death as well.

It is this quality in Paul's characters that enables them to create fertile grounds in his fiction to inhabit spaces which they would not have access to typically. This human ability to create and ensure "sanity" in situations that can drive people insane otherwise, is what creates the most profound layers in a seemingly ordinary and mundane world that Paul builds in his stories. Interestingly, Paul hardly ever referred to the actual Partition. He did not often speak of it, neither directly nor obliquely, in the long years he created fiction, although he did write sharply about it in his essays. One does not even find a direct mention of it either as a historical happening, or a political necessity. And his characters – although they seem to go through the motions of living out this incident in a loop – do not ever speak of it in any way that can allow the reader to put a name to it. It is to be inferred and presumed, but no fixed meaning can be ascribed to the stories.

Perhaps the writer never saw this grey in-between zone of lucidity and fuzziness as madness. Perhaps it was, and should be seen as, a deep heart-wrenching pain at a loss and an even greater need by the human consciousness and mind to rebuild the shattered ramparts of the self to push on valiantly. It is this that occurs again and again in him, be it in *Khwabrau* through its protagonist Deewane Maulvi Saheb, or through the sage-like Khodu Baba of the eponymous "Khodu Baba ka Maqbara" who slips between periods of focus and delusion, or even the plucky Dadi of "Dadiyan" who surrounds herself with endless projections of herself to keep loneliness and madness at bay.

The Partition was not just the loss of land and home for Paul; it was literally the cleaving of the tongue, and the splintering of a shared past and emotions. In fact, he did not see any visible difference between the people and the goings-on on either side of the border. Therefore, the dog in his story "Bahar se Bheetar" is completely befuddled, at first unable to cross the road that seems dangerous and full of threat to its life. It doesn't help either when he does cross over from one side to the other, because the people on both sides seem as cruel as the other, kicking him about and raining curses down at him so much so that he can no longer recall where he belongs. Paul transfers the idea of the border on to the road. The road becomes a physical presence that takes on an identity of its own and propels a feeling of loss of self on a psychological plane. But Paul continues to impel his reader to read between the lines, to draw their own inference and to expand the horizon of the literary canvas to their own life experiences. Hence, the road that one can read as the border can also be seen as any divide inherent to the human situation.

Reconfiguring Memory and Space

This state of near amnesia (one can never be sure whether a character is really suffering from amnesia or if it is a protective mechanism that kicks in as and when required) is a recurrent one and it harbours a split self although it does not appear to be so. Duality as an integral part of any state of being is, therefore, intrinsic to Joginder Paul, in life as much as in his creative universe. He himself was a refugee in the physical sense of that word,

ousted and uprooted. The first uprooting happened in 1947 and it lacerated his being. But the subsequent ones came of his own choice, although yes, triggered by circumstances. In 1948, he moved to Nairobi in Kenya. His fourteen-year stay in that distant country was marked by a literary efflorescence that announced his arrival as a young writer with a fresh voice and style on the Urdu scene back home. Paul's personal life was characterized by his own state of mind, almost a self-flagellation at his improving circumstances while many of his family were left behind at home in India trying their best to cope under insurmountable difficulties. Even as he had stepped off the ship on the Kenyan shores, he was looking back at the country that he had left behind, yearning to return. His office desk held a resignation letter that he had penned almost as soon as he joined work as Master at a school in Nairobi. That letter waited over a decade to be submitted, its writer ever ready to take off for home. This was the situation that Paul inhabited, every day, always looking back, over his shoulder, always the insider-outsider.

These complex layers in Paul's nature, his continued need to address every issue in life in a penetrating manner, were then translated into his fiction and can be seen far more sharply in a phase of writing where the form of the short story defies the set parameters of a well-presented beginning, middle and end but rather unspools in a series of questions and answers between characters, and in fact, where sometimes the narrator takes over both the roles of the one who asks and the one who responds, almost setting off a performative tone much like the *dastan*. And it is indeed in this "ask and tell" that the reader is perhaps able to apply her various faculties to grasp the varied import within each story.

It was in Africa that Paul relived a situation very similar to the one he had just left back home. The struggle for independence that he had witnessed in the sub-continent was now playing out in Africa, its locals fighting against the oppression and injustice meted out to them by the British. The writer's belief in social justice and compassion, in fairness and equality, that had already begun to find expression after the mayhem and madness, the brutality and violence that he had seen unfolding around at home, now found a voice in his writing. Paul's Africa stories are full of vignettes that show up people for who they are. In fact, not only do the British masters come under his lens, the powerful and profiteering Asian business class is not spared either. In the multiracial society that he was a part of during his Africa sojourn, Paul brings alive scenes from an everyday world that many readers, even those that have never stepped on to that foreign soil, will empathize with because the experiences are essentially human. Paul, in fact, sharpens his satirical streak to such perfection that his readers are left marveling at the way his stories leave them feeling, at once uncomfortable and amazed. *Land Lust* (2019), the collection of stories from those times published originally as *Dharti ka Kaal* (1961), is not only a testimony to the history and social conditions of that time and place but transcends that past and remains as relevant a testimonial even today, one that allows the multiple voices and subjectivities of the social and creative space to remain energized.

Transforming Consciousness into Narratives

As a reader one cannot help but marvel at the way Paul felt affected by incidents that he had undergone and how they continued to simmer in his consciousness to manifest as different narratives written over time. One such incident that points the way to read a writer who shaped his own life experiences into philosophies is about his visit in 1959 to a blind home in Machakos in Nairobi. An ordinary visit for all purposes it impacted Paul so strongly that the experience remained with him all through his life and unleashed a creative flood across decades. He wrote short stories, and even *afsanche* or flash fiction, about the concept of blindness, about perception and imperception, about looking and seeing, and ultimately made the scathing comment that one does not need eyes to see and

understand another, or to build connections. These ideas finally resulted also in a novel, *Nadeed* (1983; translated as *Blind* in 2016). The process of creation of this long fictional work itself points to how seriously this writer took his creative role. Having once written the novel Paul felt that it seemed superficial, without any depth. It was as if someone was writing “fiction.” So, he tore the draft to bits and began to behave as if he was indeed “blind.” It took him months to feel his way around his home, his eyes tightly shut, as he groped his way up and down the stairs, trying to experience what it must feel like should someone lose their eyes. Months later he sat down again to write the same novel, this time his pen was steeped in experience and empathy, in a feeling that had been missing earlier.

The creative process of *Nadeed* is an eye-opening lesson for readers and writers. Paul seems to dive so deep into his beliefs of what a writer is meant to do and how he is meant to be, that he takes the concept of life in writing several notches up. He writes of the art of creating fiction in several of his essays, and in many he addresses the reader by giving them the place of co-partner and co-creator of his fiction. He believes that a reader must be ready to immerse herself as deeply as the writer in the unfolding of a narrative to experience every bit of the story and in as great a detail as when it was experienced and subsequently written by its creator. In this the reader must be prepared to exercise as much of her faculties as she can without hoping that the writer will make her creative journey through his narrative easy by putting out the meanings that are contained within it. Paul warns that if the reader is simply looking to be entertained or served then he is not the writer for them. For he believes that his journey as a writer will move forward only when the reader stands shoulder to shoulder with him or indeed walks along in step in complete rhythm not only with him but his characters as well. Taking this further Paul says that he likes to let his characters show him the way to what should become a natural journey and conclusion for any story. The act of writing in Paul, therefore, becomes one of partnership, a fellowship in writing and reading fiction, that stays true to the writer's lifelong beliefs of forging friendships and building relationships. As in the case of all writing – fiction or non-fiction – what the writer leaves behind in print is no doubt the primary vehicle in carrying that legacy forward. But Paul was astute enough to realize and acknowledge further the fact that this legacy could be better disseminated and upheld when each of his readers became a co-traveller with him in all senses of the term. Difficult as this sounds Paul's fiction makes it easy to understand what he perhaps meant. Readers and critics alike will accept that Paul's stories do not fit into a traditionally accepted structure of how a story must be written. His stories do not always have a conventional beginning, middle and end. As influential Urdu critics such as Nizam Siddiqui have put on record, the reader may not find “kahanipan” or “story-ness” in Paul. Therefore, a reader must be completely invested in Paul's fiction to read it insightfully and to be able to unpeel the layers that are hidden within the words. Paul expects his readers to move beyond the words he uses to the actual experience they entail. His attempt is, therefore, to push himself as well as his reader to sift through the obvious surface of the words to pull out the depths that they hide within. This unfolds a process of self-reflexivity, which the author firmly believed in and in which the reader must perforce participate if she wishes to co-habit the world of Joginder Paul. And, in doing so, the narrative takes on different avatars with each different reading and allows for the life experience of its writer to be created and re-created afresh in multiple other narratives, each of which draw strength and meaning from the varied life experiences of its readers.

It is worth relating another instance when Paul used his personal experience to create fiction. During their days in Kenya, the writer's wife was admitted to hospital for an operation. As the operation proceeded, she started losing blood at an alarming rate and the doctors, unable to find a match for her rare blood group, almost gave up hope of her

survival. But an unexpected turn of events helped to save her life and she came home soon enough. This incident took place in 1953 and nine years later, in 1962, Paul published a novel titled *Ek Boond Lahu Ki* (translated as *A Drop of Blood*, 2020). This incident must have been alarming and extremely distressing for the writer and his family and every moment of that period of stress, although brief, must have filled him with questions of why and how. The novel raises numerous questions, all of which are centered around the idea of blood. By bringing to the fore his overarching concerns about identity, about birth and death, the feeling of exile and aloneness, and ultimately the question of choice no matter what the circumstances, Paul's different characters point us to the nature of choice through their own choices and their consequences. The protagonist of the novel, Karan, handsome, charming, and educated finds no openings which allow him to make a living. He then resorts to selling his blood, his blood type being a rare one. His delight and budding sense of achievement at having successfully managed this "transaction" – after all he gives blood in exchange for money – soon pull him into a way of life that forces him to make choices that sap him of his strength – physical, mental, and psychological. His very life becomes a series of transactions, where each transaction slowly impacts him and his relationships. Karan ends up spent, drained of his essence. In this process he is deluded and seduced by the young wife of his elderly neighbour, impregnating her but never able to acknowledge or claim his role in any way. He starts out by taking the role of an assistant and researcher to a well-known doctor in the city but ends up as a frequent blood donor to keep the doctor in good health. His love life is in shambles and the self-laceration that he goes through about whether blood should be donated or sold does not leave him fit to live. It is only at the very end when he finally takes the decision to set up a charitable blood bank that he feels at peace with himself. But as he heads out to begin this work he meets with an accident and dies.

Death as Rebirth: Cyclical Creativity

Death is an integral aspect in Paul. It is not to be feared but expected and welcomed. In one of his essays, "Mere Jaane Ke Baad" (After I am gone), Paul begins by talking of his apprehensions of how he will be remembered as a writer once he passes on. To ensure that progeny does not forget him Paul draws upon an elaborate scenario where his wife is entrusted with the task of keeping his memory alive. The essay then moves on to another level and the writer takes recourse to an imaginary scenario in the otherworld where he comes across some of the most celebrated names from the literary world of his time. During his conversations with these other writers Paul begins to realize how the greatest creators have built an unforgettable legacy, and how over time it is no longer these writers alone who are responsible for carrying their names forward. This is because every single reader has contributed, through her own interpretation, to these writers' creative universe and has thus become a part of a collective consciousness and cultural memory by claiming that writer as their own. Thus, writers are no longer the sole owners of those works.

So, death, though inevitable, is not something to be afraid of because it can be transcended by creating memories as well as narratives. Rather, death must be embraced because the circle of life and death is in perpetual motion, with death becoming a reality as soon as we take birth. To Paul death was not really the end of life; it could be a presence even in the living. Not being able to "see" was death for him. Not being able to "feel" or allow life to wrench us inside out was death to him. He also brought out the pathos and brutal reality of death for those people who could not "afford" to live life as it was meant to be lived. These were the living dead who walked about like corpses, mired in utter poverty and with no foreseeable future to look forward to. Death, inevitably a part of life, manifests itself with its varied faces and moods through Paul's fiction. In fact, his fiction is replete

with characters who are dead or walk the thin line between the living and the dead. In stories such as “Fakhtayein,” it is not until the last line that the reader finds out that Lobh Singh, the protagonist, who has all along been writing letters to Fazal Deen, his childhood friend from across the border, to relive their memories and in the hope of reconnecting in the future, has actually been communicating with a friend who has been dead many years. In “Khodu Baba ka Maqbara,” the reader comes face to face with what seems like any other insignificant shanty town lifted out of its ordinariness by the sharply drawn life stories of each of its characters. This shanty could belong anywhere, to any town or city. It is unnamed, unremarkable and humdrum. But then maybe not really so. Khodu Baba, friend and guide, indeed confidant to the shanty dwellers, secret keeper to their inner selves, builds his living quarters at the edge of a graveyard, an important feature in a lot of Paul’s fiction. As in *Ek Boond Lahu Ki*, the graveyard is a mirror to the innermost feelings and emotions of the characters. Baba’s audience, which is made not only of the people of the shanty but also their four-legged companions, is also open to those that no longer breathe. But the narrative flows so smoothly across time, over ground and underground, between man and beast, life and death, that only a fully committed reader will be able to pick out the separate threads.

It is in these interchangeable names and identities – like the several Babas strewn across stories and even the *afsanche*, or the character of Khodu Baba himself, a man who supplies no clear information of where he has taken birth or of his connections to family or even an identity that can pin him down in place or time – that Paul’s fiction sends out a message that these are incidentals, immaterial to a life when lived in fellowship and support. Even the dog in “Khodu Baba” takes on the name Khodu, erasing the differences and divides between man and animal, the dead and the living. The message of oneness and compassion, of syncretic existence that was Paul’s lesson from the unforgettable days of violent division is given a cerebral twist, its meanings to be inferred from the depths of the story. It is up to the reader to find these meanings and see these reflected in the world around. Thus, man is not to be seen as man’s enemy, in fact, the enemy does not lie outside the self. Each person must remember that in the annihilated scenario that is present all around, whether because of political or historical reasons, or any other for that matter, the enemy lies within. In his story “Jungle,” Paul makes a scathing comment on the repercussions of the Partition without, again, referring to it directly. He writes, “At the last moment when there was no friend around, he depended on an enemy!... This one moment of friendship has brought back memories of all my previous births. I forget this enemy of mine in every birth but I am confronted with him in each birth. I die when he dies and he is reborn with my life.”

Social identity and human characteristics are not only bestowed on animals, rather Paul’s stories take forward this philosophy to bring into his fictional ambit the environment and ecology that seem to hold within them the DNA of the universe. For example, in a story like “Chahar Darvesh,” the trees seem to contain the knowledge that in times to come it will be the human race that will crave to replace them by wishing to become trees themselves. It is these trees, tall and independent above the ground, individuals in their own right, that are in truth entwined with one another, unseen, under the ground, where their roots go deep inside, creating a network that is inseparable, enmeshed, supportive and holding them all together. They are the real ones to provide a habitat for all of life.

In the novel *Paar Pare* (2004), translated into English as *Beyond Black Waters* (2007), a story of resettled Indians in the far away Andamans, Paul’s diverse concerns about birth and death, identity and nationality, home and homeland, all seem to culminate within this slim world of fiction. History is deeply intertwined with the daily lives of the people of this island. Past and present, history and fiction come together in an almost prophetic comment on the lives of those who people the island and also those that are never mentioned

but ever-present, that is people from the mainland. This locale of a seeming haven of peace is shown slowly to be disintegrating. The Andamans are reshaped in this novel as a land of love and friendships, a far cry from its dark and gory history that is etched in the memory of all Indians, associated as the islands are with the oppressive state of politics and society under the British. In the context of the narrative, it is the former prisoners of the island who show the way forward by re-creating a world full of sharing and friendship that makes it easy to forget that a certain phase of history ever took place, although the threat of divide soon begins to loom large over them. *Paar Pare* is about the individual who is part of a community, about what it means to carry forward the concept of nation and nationality in one's mind across the seas. Just as the enemy is within, does one carry within themselves the meaning of life as well, even when journeying across the seas? Or, is it physical distance that teaches one what life is meant to be? Everything seems to be the two sides of a single coin and it is in one's perception that one assigns to things meaning and value. Interior and exterior, meaning and meaninglessness, friend and enemy, life and death, it is the perceiver who holds the seeds and essence of it all within themselves. The capacity to fully unfold such meanings lies within each of us. It is in the choices that are exercised – by the writer, characters and, ultimately, the readers – that stories take shape and narratives are created. All narratives build histories. Story writing is also creative history building. But because of its very nature the reader is forced to walk the tightrope between her participation in a fictional account and the niggling suspicion that she is being made privy to veiled references about the author's life as well as the social patchwork that both the writer and she inhabit. Hence, the varied dichotomous labels that have come to be used. Some of these set fictions apart from writing that is considered more authentic, such as life writing, or narrative writing, where one sees the author as a documenter striving to leave behind accounts of a life and times that he or she has lived through or witnessed.

Why Write?

To quote the writer himself on the process of writing and the role of the writer:

Why does one write at all? For success or for suffering? If he strives to be a “success boy,” he should do it directly. Why resort to creative writing? Creative writing necessarily implies a sort of communication which predisposes the writer's involuntary urge to suffer for all his fellow beings. It may sound tragic that the poor writer has to live in and through all his characters by not being himself. He cannot become everybody unless he himself were nobody. So, he's no problem to himself: his problem consists in others, all including villains and vamps. He himself is the killer he chooses to portray. He doesn't *judge* the killer. He becomes him and owns his sins. It's in this sense that creative writing is regarded as confessional. Many a time, the writer choosing to operate “successfully” in his society would rather be one who withdraws, judges and condemns, not the one who is condemned. No, please! Rather than this, let the writer remain misunderstood and disturbed (“On the Making of Fiction.” Joginder Paul in Conversation with Sukrita Paul Kumar. *Blind*, pg. 215-16).

In the short story, “Peeche” (Looking back), that lets out its meaning only a little at a time over several readings, Paul goes back to an Aurangabad-like setting although there is nothing to confirm this city as its location. Aurangabad, the city of Sufis and saints and of graves and ancient trees, was where the writer spent fourteen long years. It was a place he loved deeply, as much as he had loved Sialkot, his birthplace. Its graveyards – there was one just opposite the house where he lived and which he “haunted” frequently, including a grave/dargah just below his own house – offered a companionship that he perhaps missed in real life. This graveyard was also where he found himself at peace and where he thought he felt his mother's presence and could have an uninterrupted conversation with her as do several protagonists of his stories. In “Peeche,” the narrator is right in the middle

of a situation that is at once dreamlike while it is a deeply philosophical and spiritual take on history and archeology – on the fluidity of time which flows from an ancient past to the present in spate like an uninterrupted river, where stone sculptures can melt and come alive at the slightest hint of solitude but where men can turn to stone when they have experienced the deepest connections with the infiniteness of time and the universe, to appear again as imprints on the craggy mountain faces and caves, just as one has seen in the Ajanta Caves.

This unbreakable connection between man, nature and universe is an assurance that the continuance of legacy, particularly of ideas and creativity, is undeniable. It is for the human spirit to will itself to open up to the mysteries of the universe and the world that surrounds it. And should one manage to establish that most essential and deepest of bonds with the world they live in – although they may not “see” it – then one can overcome what is finite, and embrace and rise above death and ordinariness, to not just uplift themselves to a level that dreams are made of but to also have played a small part in contributing to what is beautiful and eternal in the universe, both the real and the creative. And this is the life Joginder Paul lived, and this is world of fiction and narratives that he refashioned and left behind for his readers.

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