



Indo Canadian Sun



Gurdas Mann Concert, Pantages Theatre, Winnipeg, September 19, 2015

▼ Anupam and Timmy Sharma

Gurdas Mann visited our city and he performed to a sold-out crowd. He did not at all disappoint. As always, the concert was a smashing success!

We thank all the sponsor, **Awaazmediagroup**, and its members - Aman Sidhu, Manpreet Khosa, Bali Bhathal and Raj Gill. India Centre - Academic, Business and Community Excellence was a silver sponsor to the concert.

For those who are aware of the work and music of this complete and great artist, Gurdas Mann, will know he is a formidable personality with an immense following in India and across the world. His work transcends both folk and modern - as he is also engaged with the Bollywood film industry. He at the present is indeed among the national cultural icons of India.

Punjab is a state/province in India which over the centuries has been a major stream contributing to India's national culture - that is liberal and accommodative of its diverse communities, languages, outlooks and religions. Gurdas is part of this rich trajectory that has produced formidable works and propositions that are cited and indeed known to this day. Gurdas is highly steeped and informed of this rich heritage and experience. However, with a difference, he is not a dreamy idealist but very much engaged with the context and space he lives. He is an empathetic artist who is aware and indeed distressed about the concerns and issues that today are debvilling the society and youth today. Billed as the "Eternal Jogi" concert tour, at this concert, Gurdas captured this thought.

"Jogi" is a colloquial form of the Sanskrit term Yogi, which relates to a practitioner of Yoga. As a generalized stereotype, the term often refers to people who have given up on worldly charms to devote themselves to a higher-selves - usually the spiritual - such as the pursuit of understanding and the meaning of life. However, Jogis wandering across the area, especially across Northern India, in the past have would also have served as social commentators. Along with the learned, they would have communicated and commented on ideas using colloquial and vernacular that

could be understood by everyone.

Back to the concert. Over the intervening four hours - the master - took through his selection of songs took us a journey of Punjab (and India) that once was- nostalgic experience of folk and culture. His collection for the evening for the uninitiated would have been breath-taking in terms of the time and space travelled. His songs incorporated the philosophy and sayings of major poets who serve as the foundation of Punjab's catholic and liberal tradition - **Khwaja Fariduddin Mas'ud Ganjshakar** (1173-1266), **Baba Bulla (h) Shah** (1680-1757) and **Waris Shah** (1722-1798). For their era and times, they are the perceptive observers and commentators of the society of the day. He tipped his hat to his predecessors - **Asa Singh Mastana, Surinder Kaur and her sisters**. His credentials as a national personality of India came across with his incorporation of some iconic songs from Bollywood films. This represents the connection between the past and present.

Gurdas Mann is person who is very much engaged and is concerned about his beloved Punjab and India. Punjab is presently facing issues related to addictions - alcohol and drugs. A great segment of the youth is mired and, is hopeless about the future. He is very much a critic of social and political leadership that is not paying the required attention. The concert presented a moment indicative of his empathy and distress. "**Apna Punjab Hovae...**" is an enduring song that speaks to the energy and vibrancy of the state. However, there is a reference to alcohol... Despite, urgings from a segment of the audience, he refused to sing this song. We salute him for this stand.

Through the medium of music and song, Gurdas Mann forces us to think and reflect. He wants us all, at least to at least think and, perhaps do what we can. Within the context of entertainment for the day, for the split moment, he had us at least paused to think about the world we live in.



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