



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSMVoices
from the
Gaps 

Surjeet Kalsey

“ “

Seeking freedom and taking it poses a contradiction in itself.

— Woman, Words, and Shakti

” ”

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1944
- * Indo-Canadian poet, short story author, and playwright
- * Writes in both English and Punjabi

Biography

Surjeet Kalsey was born in India. She relocated to Canada in 1974, and currently lives in British Columbia. Kalsey is a poet and short story writer, editor, translator, and counselor. With most of her writings appearing in Indian and Canadian publications, readers can easily venture out and explore the diversity of Surjeet Kalsey's works.

She received a Master's Degree in English and Punjabi Literature from Punjab University, Chandigarh, and a Master's in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. Surjeet's master's thesis from UBC was titled *Karma-Shakti Therapy: An Indigenous Healing Model*. She has edited and translated books and poetry. One translation appears in the Punjabi issue of *Contemporary Literature in Translation* (1977). Surjeet has also edited and translated an anthology of poetry, *Glimpses of Twentieth Century Punjabi Poetry* (1992). Kalsey's poems and short stories have appeared in numerous literary magazines. She has also written and directed plays on violence against women.

She has published books in both English and Punjabi – a book of poetry in Punjabi, *Paunan Nal Guftagoo* (1979); and *Speaking to the Winds* (1982) and *Footprints in Silence* (1988) in English. Surjeet has taught at the Vancouver Community College since 2001. She also works as a counselor for battered women and continues to write.

This page was researched and submitted by DeLoice G. Holiday on 12/1/02.



Surjeet Kalsey

Biography continued

Many of the works by Kalsey reflect women's issues in Indo-Canadian life. Violence against women and violence within the family are but a few of the issues that emerge in her plays, poetry, and short stories. Although little has been written about Surjeet Kalsey, she delivers a powerful spirit in poems such as "Disowning Oneself," where she speaks of the struggle of women and their desire to be free. Tree and leaf analogies in Surjeet's poems describe emotions such as bliss and jealousy and portray the struggle of women.

Not only do Indo-Canadian women have to struggle within their own homes and communities for basic freedoms, but they also have to deal with racism. This comes across vividly in "Saffron Leaves," in which Kalsey talks about race relations and diversity. Although Kalsey writes much about women disowning themselves and struggling in the world, she holds out hope. "Visions" is a powerful poem about the strength and power of women to change much of what's wrong with the world, unlike "Selection," in which she speaks of the infanticide of female babies.

Surjeet Kalsey is a champion of women's and children's rights. The invitation has been extended and the door opened for readers to learn about Surjeet Kalsey's poems, short stories, and plays.

Selected Bibliography

Works by the author

- Behind the Palace Doors* (1999).
- Women, Words, and Shakti* (1999).
- Sat Paryan (Distant Women)* (1994).
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