

## **Winds of Peace Never Cease for Stephen Gill**

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Dr. Nilanshu Kumar Agarwal in his book *Discovering Stephen Gill*, published by Authorspress, states that Stephen Gill's "emotional cries to curb religious fanaticism and racial prejudices are sufficient to assure him a lasting place in the history of India-Canadian literature." (back cover). Professor Dr. KV Dominic in preface of his book *Stephen Gill's Poetry, a Panorama of World Peace*, remarks that Stephen Gill "is indeed the true representative poet of the current, turbulent, terrorist-hit world." Professor Dr. John Gorman from Texas, USA writes in preface to Gill's *Songs For Harmony*, "From a small Canadian city on the banks of the St. Lawrence, he weaves a poetry of worldwide consciousness", and in *Coexistentia*, a bilingual anthology of articles in Romanian and English, coordinated by Professor Olimpia Iacob, released by Timpul, Professor Dr. Daniel Bratton from Canada affirms that "Gill builds upon the theme of universal peace, the cornerstone of the corpus of his writing" (26).

Among the media, for daily *Standard-Freeholder*, (Canada), "For Stephen Gill, poetry is the language of peace...", and *Poetry in the Arts*, USA, says in one of its issues that Stephen Gill is "An indefatigable crusader for peace and champion of literary causes". *Daily Sarnia Observer* from Canada says "Poets such as Stephen Gill are certainly doing their utmost to promote world unity," and Rick Gamble, staff writer of *The Expositor*, a daily also from Canada, reports that "Stephen Gill builds bridges with his books." (Sept. 8, 1976)

Above are a handful of opinions selected from a multitude of opinions by distinguished literary critics of Stephen Gill's artistic creations, and social media. Below are a few lines from Professor Dr. Sudhir K. Arora, a prominent author of several books of authentic literary criticism. In preface of his book *The Poetic Corpus of Stephen Gill*, Dr. Arora notes:

He is a poet of peace and, hence, wishes peace for everyone, as he knows that fear caused by the followers of Satan is the furnace that burns man from inside, to the extent, that he lives a life of a dead man. It is his firm faith that his songs of peace will awake the people and inspire them to be united against the forces that intend to destroy the dove of peace. His poetry is the bible of peace that must be read for saving the humanity from destruction. Like Tagore, Stephen Gill also wants to execute his vision of a peaceful world. He is a human to the core...(x)

The winds of peace, along with the muscular winds of chaos, have been blowing since the dawn of civilization. Humans have been finding ways to make the winds of peace more meaningful, and energetic. Stephen Gill, an Indo-Canadian poet and novelist, in his remarkable modern epic *The Flame* writes:

Peace has been the hunt of humans from the time immemorial. There have been different theories to weave its rainbow. Some physicians who have appeared to give directions have given their lives to light its candle. Some of them taught unconditional love and some of them taught tooth for a tooth. Some prophets have taught to be neutral or indifferent to the pains and pleasures of the world. Terrorists also talk of peace. They believe that they achieve or will achieve peace by terrorizing citizens. A breed of these terrorists, fed on religious fanaticism, is most dangerously intolerant of the views of others. This breed is spreading fast and widely all over the world. Those who believe in preparation for war for peace have invented the deadliest weapons, such as nuclear bombs. Instead of peace, the world is coming closer to the threshold of complete annihilation. No one wants that sort of peace, except some morbid thinkers. (p.20).

To attain peace, Buddha suggests the way of live and let live. This path has been suggested also by Mahatma Gandhi, who believes in unconditional love that was the core of the ministry of Christ. Among the modern sages, Mother Teresa says, "If you cannot love a person whom you have seen, how can you ever love God, whom you have never seen?"

Different nomenclatures of peace, including family peace, peace of mind, inner peace and world peace, hint that peace is the dire need of humanity. Peace is not just stopping wars

and fights, it is loving and living together with harmony, respect, freedom and love. Peace is not just five letter word; rather it truly holds the meaning of life, like a bond which creates a bridge among people.

In pursuit of materialism, prosperity and excellence, mankind has gone astray from peace, crossing the boundaries of ethical, moral, religious and spiritual norms. Professor Shobha Diwakar from India and Professor Olimpia Iacob from Romania quote Stephen Gill on the front page of their book *A Study in Stephen Gill's Novel The Coexistence*: “Where there is no peace there is no health and where there is no health there is no prosperity and meaning in living. Peace, health and prosperity walk together.” In the same book, Professor Dr. Olimpia Iacob quotes from Stephen Gill’s novel *The Coexistence*, page 277:

Peace is the breath of the soul and soul is what matters. Peace is a quiescent rock even in the vortex which feeds suspicion and hostility. Peace means life is sacred and it should be touched with respect. Mind is the bastion where peace is born. Peace of every individual is the result of mutual cooperation. (44).

Mutual cooperation that Olimpia Iacob discusses in *A Study in Stephen Gill's Novel The Coexistence*, Professor Dr. Shobha Diwakar discusses further in her own unique way:

Surveying the global village, Gill concludes if man has to promote peace and do away with tyranny he must learn the lesson of coexistence to create a Garden of Eden on earth to enjoy God’s plentiful instead of tampering with Pandora’s Box to spread ill – fated diseases and unending problems before it is too late. Gill also borrows an example from the Mahabharata and quotes how Draupadi was married to the five Pandavas and performed her duties faithfully to all of them to show how coexistence could prosper even within the marital circle in those days. (100)

It is a fact that peace cannot be achieved in pieces. We all need to work together to understand and love one-another. Peace cannot be found in the outside world, it lies deep within us as love does. It is necessary to take a step forward to begin this charity from home so as to be the pioneer, ambassador and crusader for this great noble cause to establish the kingdom of peace based on the rock of caring and sharing. It is important to frame a circle of

peace in this terror stricken world, which is not very easy. To meet this challenge, we need to go back to the Holy Scriptures to live a life based on ethical, moral and religious standards, so as to love unconditionally, beyond all caste, colour, creed and sex.

About the connection of unconditional love with peace, Stephen Gill comments in *The Chhattisgarh*, where Reghu, protagonist of the novel who is spokesman of the novelist, deliberates on page 480 that love and peace are two sides of the same coin. Every individual need to be an instrument of peace to sow love where there is no peace and happiness, which are the cherished goals of humans. What if a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul? To save our soul from dangers and destructions, there are moral standards set out by sages for this present generation and the generations to come. The main moral standard is live and let live as Buddha, Christ, Gandhi, Stephen Gill and a host of others believe. George Bernard Shaw says somewhere that life is a splendid torch which he wants to burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations. Robin Sharma also talks of this torch. He says we are the torch bearers to light the life of others around us. Life is a journey and we have to find the right path. Life is also a chance and we have to make sure we take it and make use of it in a proper way.

To make the best possible use of this chance, it is important to get involved in the service to humanity. So that the peace may prevail on earth, it is a beautiful channel for the rebirth of life. It is well said that charity begins at home. So why not focus on the homes, the very core of humanity, from where love and peace flow to the shores of the world, which are in chaos and violence due to the shaken foundation of our homes. Stephen Gill talks of families in his modern epic *Amputee* that

...springs from the poet's deep conviction that peace needs to be discussed from the perspective of education, and a formal education ought to be initiated from the day a

couple decides to raise a family. Dysfunctional families continue spreading the virus of indignities which pollute the atmosphere of peace. Parental education is a notable way to stop social and criminal viruses. This area has been ignored largely by reformers, politicians, and humanists. The poet is convinced that peace is to be discussed from the point of education. Right from baby sitters, nursery and school teachers-- all are educated and trained with the exception of biological parents who are the primary caregivers. There are laws for foster parents, but no requirements to become parents. (back cover)

Shaken foundation of families leads to further degradation of peace, posing a great threat to the whole mankind. As the victim in Stephen Gill's *Amputee* does, silence needs to be broken to do something needful to restore peace. This is what Stephen Gill suggests in his novel *The Coexistence*:

*One way is that peace-loving citizens who are in the majority should speak out. Their silence encourages the demons that nourish on fear. Peace-loving Germans who were in the majority thought of the Nazis as a bunch of stupid citizens and remained silent. It was their silence in Germany, as it was in India that nourished the Lucifers to grow stronger. The first step to block their growth is awareness. In other words, to build the bridges of communication. (P. 136).*

The winds of destruction, being hazardous, have been causing extensive damages, uprooting and blowing down the trees of every kind of life. At the same time, the winds of peace have been blowing, energizing the minds and efforts of the committed poets like Stephen Gill who sing about peace to inspire others also.

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**About Author:** Dr. Aksa Rao had her master's degree in English Literature from Jammu University, India and her doctorate on Gabrielle Roy, a French Canadian author, from the same university. She has taught at graduate and post-graduate levels for twenty years, and presented papers at national and international literary seminars and conferences. She works as head of the department at Bishnah College, Jammu. The present paper is a chapter from the book she is writing on Stephen Gill.

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