

## ***Prison Days and Other Poems: Agyeya's Triumph over Adversity***

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper outlines a critical inquiry into the collection Prison Days and Other Poems by Agyeya. Specifically, its focus lies on the poet's expression of resilience and triumph over atrocious experiences in prison during the time of incarceration. Agyeya was a notable literary figure in Hindi, and his use of distinguished imagery draws on personal experience. He, therefore, questions how Agyeya's personal experiences facilitated his use of unique poetry to reflect his personal experiences with imprisonment. Its leads to the following research question. How does Agyeya use imagery and symbolism to reflect experiences of being inside against freedom beyond the prison walls? Specifically, the paper aims to answer this question through an exploration of the poets' expression of the tension between personal suffering and communal liberation. The paper also navigates the ways through which the themes of isolation and connection are examined and the following themes. Finally, the paper provides literatures experience of how human beings overcome physical Incarcerations in poem analysis and revealing specific ways through which the poet used symbolic imagery when expressing the longing for freedom.*

**Keywords:** Adversity, Agyeya, Vatsyayan, Hindi literature, Chandrashekhar Azad.

Agyeya, the pseudonym of S. H. Vatsyayan, 1911-1987, was a towering figure in Hindi literature. His inventive contributions to modern poetry, fiction, criticism, and journalism highlight a multifaceted oeuvre that not only characterizes literary creativity but also conveys the multifaceted socio-political tumult of his time. As Agyeya was a prominent participant in the freedom struggle, his time in prison and his volatile relationships with famous revolutionary leaders, such as Bhadagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad, after aligning with them for a common end, influenced his literary progression. Notably, a period that influenced his writing in general, inspired his most famous novel Shekhar, where the author depicts most vividly those existential and emotional hells of prison. His excellence in literature was widely admired, and he received prestigious awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Jeelpeth Award

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for poetry. *Prison Days and Other Poems*: A collection of essays on poets who became poems in prison and other poems provides a firm perspective on his exceptional ability to mix his own story with broader narratives about the end. Motivated by the emotive symbols of determination and the rogue sentiment of freedom encountered during the drafting. The primary objective of this research paper is to discuss and analyse how his stint in prison and activism served as a powerful force in transforming his poetic expression through the special blend of introspection and rowdiness. I am also interested in demonstrating that the poet and writer Agya explain some of the resiliences.

“Perhaps he was thinking all along how this inner life could be revealed, not just through his own poems and novels, but also through another’s pen. Not just in his own time but thereafter. Perhaps they were meant to affirm that ‘ambitions do not die’, that a writer’s legacy is not simply quotation and counter quotation, but a means to resist and frustrate the stories that are told and retold, a process of shifting memory, a plea to confront its complexity.” (Agyeya and the Art of Biography)

In the poem, ‘I who am bound’ the persona, bound with actual shackles, paradoxically states about freedom with unwavering spirit. This paradox exposes deeper strength and resilience, identifies Agegya ‘s success. The shackles, freeing objects by themselves, become the proof of the whole persona’s soul. The line ‘You are whole You are free’ brings spiritual liberation state to mind. A state that opposes occupation, violence, and slavery, regardless of their object’s outer limit, still free. The persona becomes incredibly strong mentally and cannot be put into chains. The persona refuses to admit that, even if placed into actual shackles, they are finally enslaved. The theme of enslavement is replaced by “You are whole, free, and ashamed of their jailers.” These shackles “speak,” “rattle,” “moan,” and say that the person’s bonds are a symbol of how free for your ” brothers. On the one hand, suffering is collective, and on the other hand, the problem lies in the individual’s divine purpose of suffering. Perhaps their slavery will become a “sacrifice” for their brothers. The theme of resilience is enhanced by the fact that personal suffering does not have to condemn anyone.

“I who am bound

Sing joyously of freedom:

My shackles keep murmuring-

'You are whole

You are free,

Your bonds are only symbols of your brothers' freedom.' (Prison Days and Othre Poems 3)

For, those who are physically free has ironically been portrayed as living in “restless fear”; ensuring security so that the narrator does not go free. Here the role of freedom and ideas of freedom are contrasted: the Servant who is physically chained at hands and feet; sitting in the darkness and sometimes beaten, trespassed, starved, wrongly treated is just free. In contrast to him, those possessed with freedom, in their case, are living in insecurity; always having restless fear of losing their possession. They are always forced to ensure that they keep intact and will be in full control of the other person. This is just ironic and generate ideas as to true freedom is an idea of mind and spirit not possession. The repletion of “No, We must hold him, Captive Or we shall die” the insecurity and the psychological coercion are so much deep among the ragged oppressors. Agyeya’s work is powerful, revealing and full of emotions. Freeing oneself from fear, trepidation, maiming ideas of failure, cowardice, rejection and of terrible dreams is the highest idea of freedom; this person is the free Servant. Agyeya’s work portrays the ideas, which contradict the functions of conventional writings of freedom and strength. It is used as a medium to highlight a person who is always in control over all failure by a man over man. This work always invites every reader to think and critical summarize the role of freedom and its functions in society.

In the poem Arrival, which is one of her most famous Anglo-Saxon experiences: In lines like Iron gates swung to, unseen And Invisible manacles clanged and grated convey a feeling of imprisonment that is both real and metaphorical. And even though the narrator does not see that face, in tears they both recognize - as a "brother". This automatic sympathy for the difficulty of another human is a strong testament to inter-personal relationships between people suffering. The poem elaborates to how the oppressed now collectively have power. (We have no power—Our only strength is in the rising of our arms) which means that although they are not powerful or strong enough by appearance, their real force lies in how united and determined they can be. They are "searching, not seeking," suggesting a demand for justice and fairness, rather than an appeal to grace. It reveals the dignity and steadfastness of those who are dispossessed, even as they "wear their iron shackles.

“They can shut the gates on us.

But beyond the bars

Remember, stars will always shine.

It is in them that victory

Shall be ours, brother,

Yours and mine.” (Prison Days and Othre Poems 4)

Though these limitations are external, the poem contended that "They can close the road on us. So chain me in these songs And I'll never break free But through the bars Just know, stars always sing. This little phrase serves the metaphor of hope and unending steadfastness. The stars, symbols of freedom - hope and unlimited human potential still shine at the heights totally invulnerable to all oppressors. This is celestial imagery reminding us that no greater the darkness, higher and dignified spirit cannot be also diminished in those oppressed. The closing lines, "In them shall victory Space out itself bro ', Thine and mine" also highlight the theme of collective struggle with inevitable success. The victory is conceptualized not as a physical breaking free of chains but as an internal and ethical triumph, the transcendence over present pain through absolute faith in some celestial promise of ultimate justice and release. Such is the poem's strength as a visceral reflection on freedom, unity and hope under oppression. What Agegya has to say resonates with a deep level of spirituality wrapped in an unwavering faith that the collective accomplishment of mankind will be successful! It signifies finding fortitude and triumph from within, no matter what things look like outside.

In the stirring poem Bars Facing Bars, using a prison setting as metaphor for entrapment by each other; "My cell facing your... But even though they are apart physically, both of them go through a similar experience under the "same slanting sun flooding us with fire A red glad good morning. They are separated by time and space, yet each sees the same morning light; it is one of those few moments when they meet spirituality - isolated spirits connected with warm rays from above. This sense of distance and separation is echoed with the line, "I see your face stranger. You are far." The narrator posits that distance - physical, potentially emotional - both in grander terms and between the lines of her work, is holding them back. The singing or waving, trying to communicate with the other -they would not hear it through their barriers even if they could see because the sun was in front of them too – are pointless. This subtly reflects the sad truth that how isolated we are and how hard it is to communicate with despite of having closer than close people around.

“I do not see your face, stranger.

You are far.

If I sang to you

You would not hear my voice;

If I waved my arms to you  
You would not see it for the sun in your eye.  
I have not known you,  
Yet with every throb of my heart a voice seems to call-  
'His also beats.' (Prison Days and Othre Poems 5)

However, the poem plumbed profounder into an intimate, almost metaphysical joinder. "Never have I known thee, yet with every throb of my heart-chamber a call seems to cry-'His also beats.'" This line transcends the fleshly confines, suggesting an intrinsic bond 'tween the twain. The shared rhythm of their hearts waxes a metaphor for their shared humanity and suffering. Despite ne'er having met or communed, the narrator feels an innate conjoining to the other prisoner, recognizing their shared plight and the throbbing of their hearts as a token of life, tenacity, and solidarity.

"Life is all bars facing bars,  
But if every morning with every heartbeat  
We could fill with the knowledge  
That to the same rhythm  
Another's also beats-  
Ah! would the glad red sun not always shine  
Into the morning of Eternity? (Prison Days and Othre Poems 5)

The poem profoundly captures the essence of human fellowship amid suffering. Though walls and cells impose physical and emotional isolation, a shared sunlight and synchronous heartbeats reveal a deeper bond transcending all barriers. Agegya's portrayal underscores life's inherent link between all people—a common experience surpassing any division. Viplab Kumar Mandal says, "Ajyeya's philosophy comes handy as a talisman to fill in this vacuity. It leads us to real personal freedom. This then leads to self-belief. Self-belief, then, helps us to comprehend our situation, take control of it, and accept opportunities with all fairness, express love, compassion, and camaraderie." (Mandal 916) This realization bestows profound solidarity and resilience, suggesting that even alone we are never truly alone. The narrator begins with a chilling remembrance: "From behind these very bars two years ago / Two eyes looked out / That never saw again." Referring to a past prisoner who lost sight, this emphasizes confinement's grim and soul-crushing reality. The words "never saw again" signify not just physical blindness but also a loss of hope and vision—both literal and metaphorical:

“They tell me

From behind these very bars two years ago

Two eyes looked out

That never saw again.

I do not stand self-condemned

Yet how lovely is the thought that I too,

Could shut out these bars.

I do not fear death-

Why then is the blindness not in my eyes.” (Prison Days and Othre Poems 17)

The narrator then reflects on his own psyche and spirit: "I do not stand self-condemned." This statement expresses a deal of self-comfort and coping, almost as if they themselves believe that they did no wrong or do not merit consequences. The following line, "But oh how like to me Is that glad train, -," pairs resignation and longing together. Locking the bars appears to evoke a refusal of these physical confines, and speculatively- an urge permanently escapes or transcend through death. Although, it is the storytellers confrontation with death that stands out: "I do not fear death -- Why then / Is this darkness in my eyes." This line expresses a deep existential question. The narrator says she is not afraid to die, which of course links with the notion of the end-out-of-suffering itself. Still, although are not terrified of the now barred cell they remain sighted bodies that see bar bon work bars and that know it is a. This paradox underscores a conflict between fatalism and the eternal human quest for choice and purpose. In the cramped space of her confinement, this sense is a metaphor for vision; reality pushed in overtop of it fails. They have the capacity for vision which, even before their oppressive environment makes them blind (like the first prisoner), ensures that this blindness does not claim their souls. It expresses a decision to stay awake and present within their circumstances, instead of slip into the black hole of despair.

In "Face on the Wall," a deep and multivalent presence confronts the narrator inside their cell. Even though they do not know them, it seems like implicitly to me is as if the addressee can envision having "pictured you" on a cold white wall. This presence takes the form of beings and their existential forces, from Life to Death all in-between hell-Fiend itself to pure eternal. This ambiguity and magnitude of these forces demonstrate the internal struggle with which the

narrator wrestles. There is some very hot, fiery passion behind this figure being put on the wall. This compulsion demonstrates how the narrator must force themselves to wrestle with these daunting ideas. The line "Impaled you" suggests a violent, almost sacrificial move performed by the narrator as they project and stick these existential parts into the wall.

"There on the cold white wall of my cell I have pictured you.

I do not know you.

You are Life

You are Death

You are the dark unnameable Fiend

You are eternal

You.

I do not know your face,

Yet it is under a scorching impulsion of passion that I have put you there-

On the wall.

Impaled you.

Yet it is my blood that drips." (Prison Days and Othre Poems 23)

But the real suffering belongs to the speaker as they lament, "And still it is my blood that stumbles." These images accurately depict the type of inner suffering and ordeals one must endure when confronting these archaic energies. The oozing blood is the cost, a permeating weight whose quantity cannot be measured in bodies alone and it drives home their internal battle with these behemoths of existence at significant personal expense. With just a few lines, the poem is evoking human beings wrestling with existence in its most fundamental sense: it stages an intense voyage of introspection and self-exploration amidst all too clear solitary confinement.

Reflecting on a moment of limbo and truth for prisoners gathered en masse in "Prisoners on Transfer. There is quiet immediately after the "rattling of chains", it seems relatively relieved to noise and constriction. One of the most effective examples is in the line "emerges from grey dead mouth of north horizon" The image produced here by Yeates instils an ominous sense, and further adds to this unescapable mood that arises. The prisoners recognize here their slovenly condition as the train is described, personified by "dripping and panting Spewing forth gall". The clatter temporary While it gathers us up the chafe of our pain. - from Recently, In

The Dark It conveys the prisoners' permanent misery, even this fleeting moment's relief. What begins as relief and becomes a line is both a statement or command, with the about-face: "The train will not take us anywhere. It is just one more turn in their endless wheel of hopelessness, called "yet another chain fragment/Of other metal.

“We are prisoners on transfer  
Waiting this cold winter morning  
For the train which now  
Emerges from the grey dead mouth of the north horizon  
Dripping and panting Spewing forth gall-  
With its clatter soothing for a moment  
The chafe of our pain.  
The train will not take us anywhere.  
In this damnable chain of futility, it is only one more link  
Of different metal-

Only a moment's lull in which I see in a flash Pictures...” (Prison Days and Othre Poems 36)

The conclusion of the poem, "only a moment's lull in which I seen an / instant Pictures," suggests visions or recollections that arise during this pause. Even in the bleakest circumstances, as transient as these are, they allow us to look at images that illustrate greater human depth and remind u of dreams, and perhaps skeletons buried deep so many years ago. With profound restraint, the poem manages to address themes of captivity, hopelessness and fragile hopes in a system that exists without mercy.

“Prison Morning” gently conveys that duality between the world closed into himself and outwardly uncovered incarceration. The poem starts by the hopeful gesture of singing to somebody at daybreak - a statement that simplistic ritual searching for something within some more terrible and absurd in jail life. The "morning light" is that point for a break to rejuvenate, it wants so bad your traces are gone and you have only lingered hope. But then reality quickly slaps that hope down: life inside is not a fantasy ballad:

“Yes, I am there.  
I am all there in the quivering deadhouse of bars and chains  
Of crisp orders and hard straight footsteps  
Of sitting and standing in the middle of a meal



Of the humiliation of slaving away at work that is not labour

Being not for the good of Man But an end in itself I am all there

Where you are not, nor ever can be.” (Prison Days and Other Poems 41)

The account of their daily hellish life, "quivering deadhouse of bars and chains," cool commands and curt stiff steps", drudged work only tells a side story on just how dehumanizing conditions could be. Such tasks are "that is not labour" and "not for the good of Man" but an end in itself, which further stresses their reduction to pure brainwashing propaganda under this slave-like puppet; Using machines such as instruments that restrain personal freedom only because it provides a primitive entertainment tool on play-casts: The essence has nothing-nada no kind-to do when we manually implore thus attention)) They have long forgotten how they never really had one either task or goal. The closing phrase, "I am wholly here/ where you are not or can be," is testament to the inescapable solitude of a prisoner. With the ritual of song and its brief moments to relate, they are tragically barred face-to-face from the world beyond them - a single note could plunge us into chaos. This last statement exemplifies the stark contrast between their harsh reality and an outside world, symbolizing the existential alienation which informs every aspect of their lives.

In the end, this paper provides a deep and thorough examination of resilience, liberation, and human nature in terms of imprisonment. In the hot house of agitational incarceration, Agyeya's poetry bloomed beyond his own personal maltreatment into larger themes about elemental effort and campaigning to unite. Rich in sensuality and emotional complexity, his arresting poetry touches on the severe injustices of incarceration yet also honors unbreakable spirit deep inside every person. Agyeya makes use of this paradox, the spiritual and emotional freedom which can be attained even when a man is physically imprisoned-he illustrates it in poems like "I Who Am Bound", or "Arrival"-which he creates. "Bars Facing Bars" and "In a Condemned Cell", explore the kind of empathy, kinship prisoners often feel between each other highlighting an unbroken connection that remains even though there are physical boundaries built to separate them. The images of "Face on the Wall" and "Prisoners on Transfer," continue to dig into truths about our existential social landscape, while one also paints a picture of brief comfort found in reflection invoking State. Malati Mathur says, “His charm and appeal stretched across generations as a reticent, enigmatic personality, famed for his aloofness which he possibly also consciously draped around himself later. He distrusted government institutions and juries that presumed to judge a writer’s work for awards but did accept some of those awards.” (Mathur) Agyeya offers a rebuke to such hollow ideals of freedom and power Throughout, proving that

ultimate liberation relies on the foundation provided by the insurrectionary spirit. His legacy is a potent reminder of the unceasing pursuit for truth and unconquerable spirit.

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