

Tale of a Farmer

- Sarbjot Singh Behl

Till, sow, plough and reap
Are the promises I keep
To the good earth beneath my feet
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
The soil I watered with my sweat
Storms I weathered on my chest
Biting cold or summer heat
Could never make my spirit retreat
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
What nature could not, the ruler did
Put my spirit's effigy
Like a scarecrow in fields of plenty
For his mirth and mockery
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
In days gone by, my fields were spread
Where heavens with the earth met
But alas! Now I'm only left
With a couple of acres to pay my debt
Such is life...
Till I breathe my last breath
My harvest gold, white, and green
I bring to market hopes umpteen
Dashed hopes and empty hands
Are the gifts of my lands
Such is life...till death agrees

To put me out of this misery
Children whine, unfed, unlettered
Their dreams now lie scattered
Under the roof, just debris
Bodies broken, souls shattered
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
All the gems, jewellery gone,
Empty stomachs, souls forlorn
But I have promises to keep
To quell the hunger and the greed
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
The golden harvest that I reap
No merchant ever wants to keep
Debt ridden, in distress so deep
My leaden heart can hardly beat
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes
Can there be another solution?
It's either noose or revolution
Sickle and scythe no longer tools
But are now arms indeed
Such is life...
Till the last breath this body breathes

(Translated from the original Punjabi by Jeena Singh, a poet from Amritsar)