

Gateway to Wonder and the Unknown

By KANWAL PRAKASH “KP” SINGH



The 2008 Spirit & Place Festival theme, *Exploring Imagination*, implies our ability to see and transform our ideas and dreams into visions of reality. As human beings, we wonder, imagine, pray, and reflect upon the meaning, mystery, intricate facets, and boundless promises of life. We carry images of hopes and expectations that best reflect our talents, interests, and our commitment to change. Exploring our imagination represents an unmistakable desire that leads us in a constant search to excel, improve life's conditions, and find promising answers and directions that might fill our lives with a sense of pride and distinction. Our imagination carries an intuitive understanding that dares us to plunge into boundless fields of human promise.

We recognize imagination as a primordial second nature that inspires us to seek answers, unravel mysteries, and shatter stereotypes that hold us back. Imagination represents a powerful, driving force, a truly intriguing and motivational dimension in human affairs and advancement. Fascinated by the world around us, we seek to learn about our spirit and place in this awesome mystery.

With the constant dance of images, awaiting possibilities, and dazzling testimonies of others before us, our imaginations serve as powerful teasers, beckoning us to embark on brave new journeys to make our perceived and imagined, believed but not-yet-seen prayers, an incredible reality.

As a young child, I could not have imagined surviving the horrific ethnic cleansing and genocide that followed the partition of India in 1947. Nearly two million people lost their lives, and more than 15 million were dislocated. I remember the sounds and nights of terror; being surrounded by daily episodes of death, murder, and communal madness; witnessing and experiencing intense fear and anxiety during our

flight to safety in the newly carved boundaries of India.

Amid this frightening nightmare and its uncertainty, thoughts of survival or future study and settling in the USA were a universe removed from the reality of the moment. But as the dark clouds and devastating shock gradually lifted, the prospect of going abroad frequently flashed across my mind. This idea stayed firmly embedded in my heart while studying architecture and regional planning at one of the finest institutions in Asia. My determination, visual imaginings, and some unexpected support brought a call in 1965 to study at the University of Michigan.

When I eventually moved to Indianapolis in September 1967, I did not imagine making this city my home. Yet I affirmed my being here by engaging in modest ways in the arts, historic, and cultural preservation, the International Center, and multicultural and interfaith forums. Imagine my surprise and pleasure when my architectural drawings and writings finally were featured in a book, *The Art and Spirit of K.P. Singh—Selected Drawings and Writings*, and several hundred people came to the booksigning. What I saw in front of me was not anything that I had achieved, but a testimony to the trust and generosity of the many angelic spirits who had helped me walk across my own thresholds of uncertainty during my time in this place.

I always have trusted in destiny and hard work, and my life is deeply rooted in faith. I believe that God places ideas, thoughts, and occasional silent calls to witness so that we may conquer the impossible and unimagined, and further strengthen our commitment to enlightened study, righteous striving, and discovering the right answers. Such thoughts and lessons are the anchor and classroom of my journey.

Each of us has our own sanctum from which we draw our strength to make the unpredictable human universe a better place in which to dwell and prosper in peace. Imagining bold new ways to tackle our formidable challenges, uncharted spaces, intriguing mysteries, and spiritual tests is liberating—our gift to life and the divine.

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