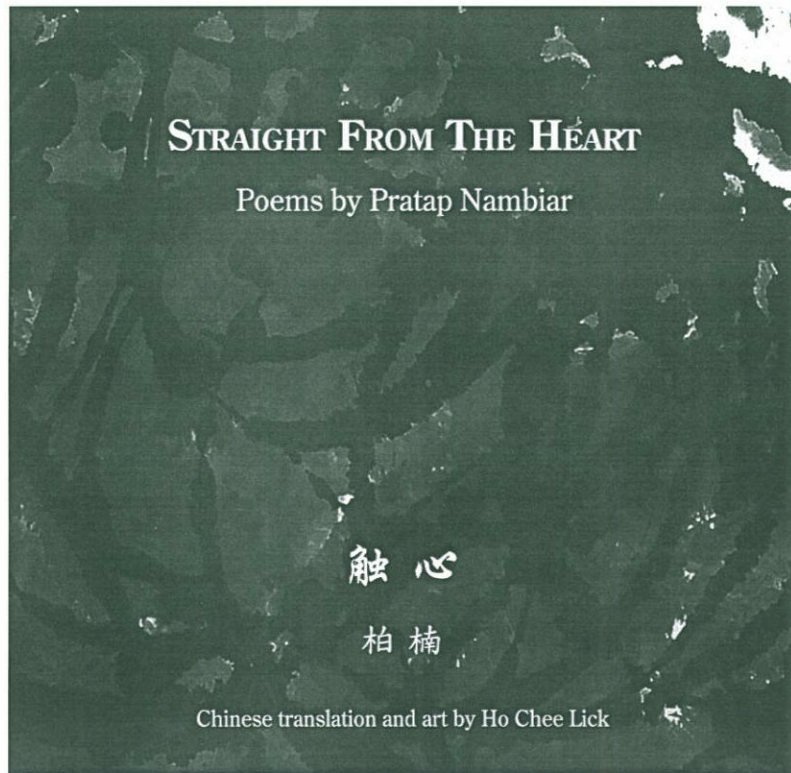
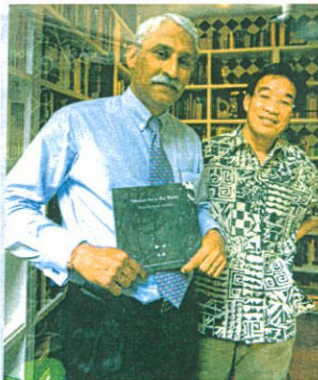


# A unique collection of English poems with Chinese artwork and translation



*The Sunday Times, Singapore, Sept 21, 2008*



## Straight shooter

Pratap Nambiar's choice to study economics at university might seem like a pragmatic one but he was actually being a bit of a rebel.

"I chose to study liberal arts at a time when, if you were good at your studies, you study science and become an engineer or a doctor or an accountant," says the India-born poet, 54, who has lived in Singapore with his wife for 14 years and is a Singapore citizen. His two adult children live in the United States.

"Liberal arts was considered to be for girls who just wanted to get a degree and get on with life. It was not seen as a serious thing for a male student to do."

With the support of his parents, however, he graduated with a bachelor's in economics from the University of Bombay (now Mumbai), worked in advertising, marketing, sales and management, before moving into finance. 16 years ago he also holds an MBA from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

He says he has always had a love for writing. "If there was any money in it, I would probably have been a writer" - and wrote poetry on the side, mainly for himself and a few friends.

"I do not think about writing on anything specific. It is something I have to feel very intensely, a major event or something quite dramatic about which I have strong feelings," says Nambiar, whose poems have been inspired by incidents as varied as the suicide of a friend, the Asian tsunami or even a stranger he observed at an airport.

His first collection, *Over The Years*, was published in 1990 by Calcutta-based literary publisher Writers Workshop. Most of the poems are reprinted in his new collection, *Straight From The Heart*, published by Ethos Books.

They take up about half of the 43-po-

ems, with the rest being new work. Who makes the collection unique is that each poem is accompanied by a Chinese translation by Dr Ho Chee Lick, an academic and a painter.

Nambiar had been looking to get his poetry translated into Chinese for some time.

"It is a fact that I have lived here in Singapore for 14 years with this huge Chinese community and I have this great desire to share my feelings with them, as my way of showing appreciation."

Nambiar says why he had his poems translated into Chinese.

"The two men were introduced at a party by a mutual friend about 10 months ago and hit it off instantly."

Says Dr Ho, 58, a senior lecturer with the Department of Chinese Studies at NUS, "When I read his poems, I was rather touched because I could sense that this was not something someone writes to show off. It is coming from deep within his heart."

He adds, with a laugh, "I normally stay far away from people from the corporate world. But he is so different."

The book also contains reproductions of several paintings Dr Ho made during the 10 months he worked on the poems.

He says, "I was getting involved in deep and genuine feelings and something in the poetry affected my art."

Meanwhile, the poet's next project is a book of short stories and, of course, he will be writing most of them while travelling.

He says, with a laugh, "I have just finished writing my first one. In fact, it is about some incidents that happened on a plane."

*Straight From The Heart* (\$19.90 before GST) is available at major bookstores.

## About the Writer

Pratap Nambiar has been writing poetry for some years now and his first collection entitled "Over the Years" was published in 1990 by Writers Workshop a small non-profit and non-political publishing house devoted to Indian creative writing in English.

Born and brought up in Mumbai, Pratap has been a product of the Indian education system. He left India in the late 70's and has lived and worked in many parts of the world. For the last 14 years, he has been living in Singapore.

This collection is unique because it is bilingual (English and Chinese) and is co-published by Ethos Books and the National Arts Council of Singapore. Dr Ho Chee Lick, Professor of Linguistics at the National University of Singapore, is an acclaimed artist and has worked closely with Pratap to translate the work into Chinese.

In a cultural sense this has been great teamwork - Singaporeans of Indian and Chinese origin working together where both are equally comfortable with the English medium. The author has studied in India and Singapore whilst the translator has studied in China and USA.

*"The poems are specific to a context, a history and geography which have invariably affected the poet and which have contributed to his peculiar sensibility - a sensibility which I can only best describe as being global, philosophic and worldly-wise."*

- Dr. Kirpal Singh Singapore Management University, Republic of Singapore