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Twenty Minutes to God

Prem Kumar

In Nurpur village lived a petty farmer:
He was tall, lean and hardworking.
From dawn to dusk he did drudgery:
Plowing, sowing, harvesting, winnowing.
Yet that was not enough for his family.
His cheerful wife had a pearly smile,
And his son was handsome and scholarly.

One day he confided to his wife:
Next year on his son's graduation,
He would put his land on auction.
That will end his grim toil and strife.
But first he must undertake a fast:
Be humble and trite,
And trudge to the *DEVI FORT*,
To perform an ancestral rite.

Finally he reached the temple knoll,
And where the road curved sharply,
Stood the Government Bungalow,
Now occupied by a Minister's family.

'Beyond this point no entry',
Sternly warned a uniformed sentry.
For six cold hours the pilgrim waited,
Till the Minister's party had departed.

At sunrise, the traffic resumed,
A cluster of peons swept and cleaned
The premises and heaped the empty cans
And bottles of whisky consumed.
It was the Minister's son-in-law from Canada,
Who was at night lavishly entertained.
Twenty minutes' walk from the temple boundary,
Was found the farmer's thin and famished body.