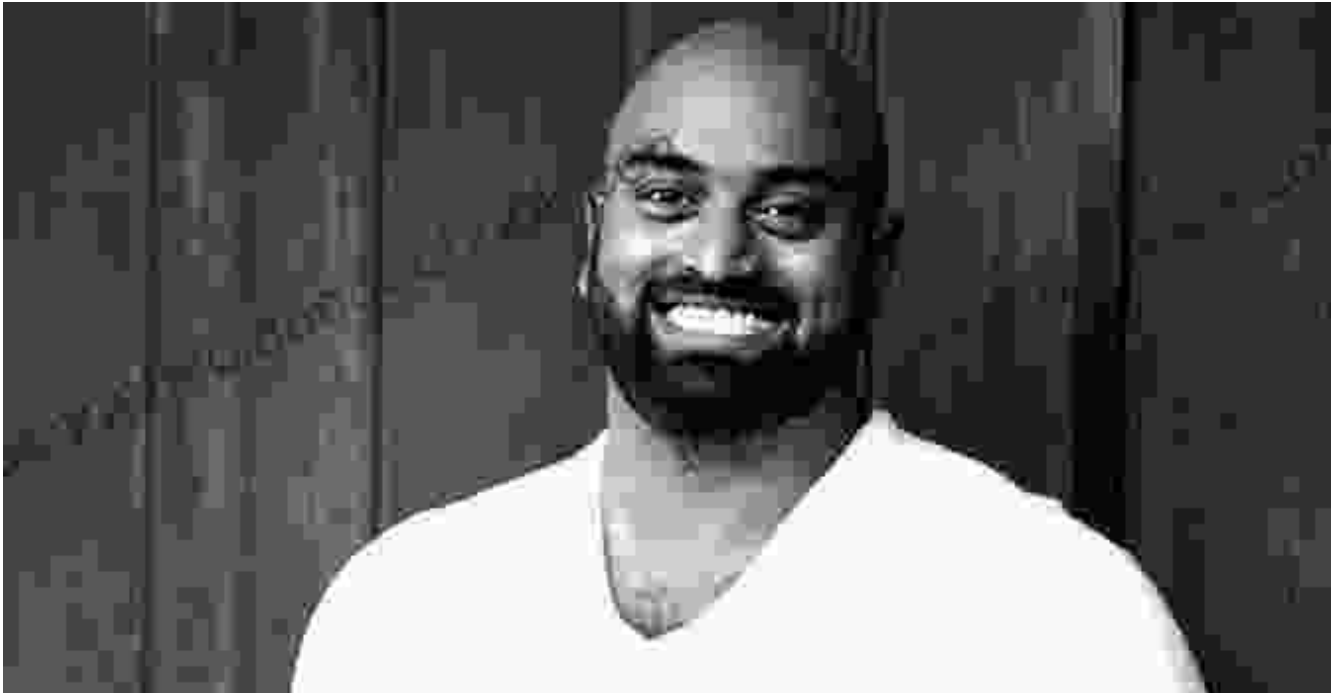


# Cutlish: The Lyrical Alchemy of Rajiv Mohabir

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## Cutlish by Rajiv Mohabir

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 875 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 116 pages

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In the vibrant and multifaceted tapestry of contemporary poetry, Rajiv Mohabir's "Cutlish" stands as a unique and captivating genre. Emerging from the confluence of Caribbean and Hindi traditions, Cutlish is a linguistic

alchemy that weaves together the intricate rhythms, vibrant imagery, and profound cultural resonances of two distinct worlds.

Mohabir, a Guyanese-American poet and scholar, coined the term "Cutlish" in 2011 to describe his own unique poetic style. Cutlish is a blend of Caribbean English, Hindi, and Bhojpuri, the language spoken by many Indo-Caribbean people. It is a language of resistance and fluidity, a celebration of cultural hybridity and the inherent beauty of linguistic diversity.

## **The Origins of Cutlish**

The roots of Cutlish lie in the history of indentured labor in the Caribbean. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of Indians were brought to work on sugar plantations in countries like Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica. These laborers brought with them their own languages, cultures, and traditions, which gradually blended with the existing Afro-Caribbean culture to create a vibrant and syncretic society.

Over time, a distinctive Indo-Caribbean language emerged, incorporating elements from both Hindi and English. This language became known as "Cutlash," a term originally used to describe a type of whip used by plantation overseers. However, in Mohabir's hands, Cutlish is transformed into a powerful and evocative tool of expression, a weapon against linguistic and cultural erasure.

## **Mohabir's Poetic Vision**

In his Cutlish poems, Mohabir explores the complexities of identity, language, and the immigrant experience. He deftly interweaves personal narratives with historical and cultural references, creating a rich and

multilayered tapestry that resonates with both the specificity of his own experience and the broader human condition.

Through vivid imagery and lyrical dexterity, Mohabir portrays the joys, struggles, and dreams of the Indo-Caribbean community. He celebrates the resilience and creativity of his people, while also confronting the challenges they face, such as racism, discrimination, and cultural assimilation.

### **Examples of Cutlish Poetry**

One of Mohabir's most famous Cutlish poems is "Cooling Out Father's House." In this poem, the speaker reflects on his father's death and the complex relationship they shared. The poem is a poignant blend of nostalgia, sorrow, and humor, with the speaker's grief expressed through vivid imagery and a playful use of language.

In another poem, "The Cowherd Who Would Not Bring Back the Cows," Mohabir explores the themes of identity and assimilation through the metaphor of a cowherd. The speaker struggles with the decision to return to his ancestral village in India or to remain in America, where he feels like an outsider. The poem is a moving meditation on the loss of one's cultural roots and the search for a sense of belonging.

### **The Significance of Cutlish**

Rajiv Mohabir's Cutlish poetry is not only a unique and innovative form of literary expression but also a powerful tool for social commentary and cultural empowerment. By blending Caribbean and Hindi traditions, Mohabir creates a language that is both evocative and inclusive, a bridge between different worlds.

Through his Cutlish poems, Mohabir challenges the dominant narratives of language and identity, demonstrating the beauty and resilience of linguistic diversity. His work serves as a reminder of the power of language to connect people across cultures and to create a more just and equitable society.

Rajiv Mohabir's Cutlish is a transformative force in contemporary poetry. It is a genre that defies boundaries, celebrates hybridity, and empowers marginalized voices. Through his lyrical alchemy, Mohabir creates a language that is both deeply personal and universally resonant, illuminating the complexities of human experience and the indomitable spirit of those who navigate the spaces between cultures.



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