

Classic Poetry Series

Nandini Sahu
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Nandini Sahu(23 July 1973 -)

Dr. Nandini Sahu's preoccupation with poetry began very early in life, and today she is a major voice in contemporary Indian English poetry. A double gold medalist in English literature, she was award winner at the All India Poetry Contest, has been honoured with the Shiksha Ratna Puraskar and has to her credit the coveted Bouddha Creative Writers' Award. A doctorate in English literature from Visva Bharati where she worked under the tutelage of eminent poet and academic, Late Prof. Niranjan Mohanty, Nandini's creative output has been widely published in India, U.S.A, U.K., Africa and Pakistan. Her published volumes of poetry include *The Other Voice*; *The Silence*; *Silver Poems on My Lips*, and *Sukamaa and Other Poems*, and *Sita (A Poem)*, and most recently an edited anthology of women poets titled *Suvarnarekha*. Presently, she is Associate Professor of English at the School of Humanities, Indira Gandhi National Open University [IGNOU], New Delhi, where she has designed academic programmes on Folklore and Culture Studies, Children's Literature and American Literature. Broadly, her research interests span across Indian Literature, New Literatures, Folklore and Culture Studies, American Literature, Children's Literature and Critical Theory. As a serious academic, Dr. Sahu has presented papers on various subjects in India and abroad. She has authored/edited volumes like *Recollection as Redemption*; *Post-Modernist Delegation to English Language Teaching*; *The Post Colonial Space: Writing the Self and the Nation*; *Folklore and the Alternative Modernities (in 2 Vols)*, all titles that cumulatively bring out the range of her oeuvre! She is the Chief Editor/Founder Editor of *Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature and Language(IJLL)*, and *Panorama Literaria*, both

bi-annual peer-reviewed journals in English. Her most recent poetry collection Sita (A Poem) promises to be a whole new take on the Indian epic.

Bridge In Making

I am an Indian poet in English!
How long shall I wear this elegant
garland? Can I even put it down?

Poetry in English is like a passion for empire building.
It's the subaltern speaking
the words pleading to be universally, intently heard.

I guess what I write is no English.
Still it's a negotiable alternative
to breathing, to the art of living.

It's the aroma to keep my spirits buoyant.
It's a reconciliation, a bridge-in-making,
between the privileged and the marginalized.

Oh Muses! Teach me how to break down
this boundary – poets and Indian English poets–erected
since ages, between the periphery and the centre.

Make my poetry as delicious as
watered-rice-brinjal-fry and
dry-fish. To look the world in the eye.

I write in English to free my words
lying imprisoned in the arms of the heart.
Be it Orissan or Indian, but it's out of this earth and wind.

I am the drunkard and I am the glass
of beer. I have committed no sin
which you haven't ; I share your fate.

Odia is to think ,feel, dream and
be my funeral pyre. English, to me,
is my garland and my sword, my sole refuge.

It's the voice of my longings and belongings.
honest as the west wind and the yearly floods in
coastal Indian villages, it's the frozen marrow in my bones.

But it gives me a name, my very own.
It comes to me without tireless waiting.
It torrents with the haste of the Yamuna in July rain.

Language is like raindrops shaped into a pearl.
It's like happy-healthy sprouted beans ; like red wine
from Goa; like silken embroidery on my outfit.

It kick-starts the day with the mercury boiled,
it clears all barriers between the
heart and the home and hearth.

The alphabets of the English I use, with their
jingling anklets, flood my world with joy.
Poetry falls down in droplets, the stars melt away.

I am Indian, Odia by birth, with
wheatish brown skin, dark eyes. I am just a
poet – English or no English– my taverns filled with Muses.

Nandini Sahu

Loving Stranger

After you left
only after you left
I could guess
that your shadow spreads
beneath my lonely heart,
and you are a stranger
the most loving stranger;
time came to a halt
pain sprinkled over my earth.

This contention crushed me to dust
clipped my wings
addicted to fly
pushed me off the branch
where I was resting, relaxed
in an endless sphere;
my heart broke.
The vibrations
spread across the sky.

Can I ever write a love poem
for you? Exclusively for you?
Time is ripe
sharpening its claw
to rupture the skeleton of pallid earth.
Why am I roaming in the sun
when the shady tree
has always waited
even though the shadows have only
troubled me
playing hide and seek.

Why didn't you play that tune
earlier
taking away all pain
giving joy of self-introspection?
There is no want to drink
when the cup overflows.
I had always wanted

to drink life to the lees,
but a poor mortal that I was
I saw an empty cup
and pierced my heart with thorns.

Safely sail through life.
Oh fateful one,
tears are dear to you.
Beneath the troubled waters
I too love to float.

Today
I am awarded
with a life time of turmoil
and a stranger, loved the most.

Nandini Sahu

My Home

The whimsical moon shot past me
like an arrow, in a flux
I saw it as a mirror
revealing myself to me.

My home.
I love sitting here
in the windy balcony
and flying in the night sky.

This is my home in Delhi,
Delhi away from Delhi,
my dream home
the home of my long-cherished desires
at the foot of the hillock
flowers all over.

Here I am given more
than I could ask for.
Peacocks dance
to the tune of the wild rain
camels graze,
birds of hue
sing lullabies to my tired soul.

My little son plays around
runs like the wind on the sloppy road,
the country road,
a feast to my eyes;
lying on my bed I watch
him with flower-like kids
flying audible kisses from there
at me
I hum a tune to myself
in my velvety voice
keeping a book close to the chest.

The pretty dappled trouts
with joyful haste

move in the aquarium
like the brook.
This was a present to my son
on his award of a medal –
he wants trouts
for he loves to see them
moving patient,
for not being noisy.

I arrange my home
with a careless care –
nightlong in winter, I hear the silence
silently here. In full moon nights
the nightingales sing frantically
in summer.

The passionate rain
with its vibrations
tinkle my inner self, here.
I discover a newer world
close to nature, close to
a power, unknown, and
rediscover myself.

I cry no more
my world is wet enough
here my heart is grilled
with green moss
I have transfigured myself,
the base of my harmony
is my loneliness.

I have just started
to count life beneath
my fingertips.

Nandini Sahu

That Foot (For My Baba)

That foot that has walked
On thorns
All through the day for you.
That foot which has shown
You foot-steps to follow.
That foot.
That foot behind the orange sun
Has walked through arches
Bare foot
On fire, on water
Near parapets
Has cracked doors and windows
For you to enter safe.
That foot.
That foot walked, crossed the
Never-ending roads
When you aspired for the colossal.
That foot. Your passport
To utopia, to dream of
New truths, passport to planets uncharted.

That foot, is walking away, weak,
Parting with fantasia forever.
Will you join?

Nandini Sahu

Who Says Death Is The Only Truth?

Death stands at a distance
all day all night, smiling, unblinking,
like that picture under the staircase.

Are you waiting for the last bus?
Do you know, the sands are slowly
rolling through the gaps of your fingers?

Tighten your fist. You are enlightened to
pick one – the coffin or a life of action.
From one birth to another, augment the civilization.

Does your laugh tear your shrunken lips?
Open your wardrobe, cover the breast of the poor,
apply on your lips the balm of a millennium's rebellion.

Who says death is the only truth?
See, your body of fog is still seated on the throne.
You still shine in the firmament of stars.

Nandini Sahu