

Poetry Series

Anil Karki
- poems -

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Anil Karki()

All Out

This is the way we play our little game:
While I count up to 10, the others hide.
Do what you will, it always ends the same.

Some make classical physique their aim
Courting lust or envy, they decide
That's the way we play our little game.

Some seek fragile garnitures of fame,
Some drop out, claiming to slave their pride,
Do what you will, it always ends the same.

Others attempt to put the world to shame,
Rejoicing when their flesh is mortified,
This is the way we play our little game.

Of penance and contrition, meant to tame
A fear that we shall be caught and tried.
Although universally denied.

This is the way we play our little game.
Do what you will, it always ends the same.
Life is an accident, driven by sexual desire ...

Anil Karki

Battle Of Old Nepal

This isn't a poetry.
Poetry can't exist here in the field.
Where they killed her.

There's no flowers
Though there appear to be flowers.
There's a splatter of blood,
There's a pool of blood
There's a raining of blood.

When the Maoist combatants killed her
They wiped her off their hands
With gritty rags and a slap of water

They left the bodies in that field
To the flying, stinging creatures,
To damp butterflies of sadness and pain,
To the eyes of the everlasting
Who catalogues the cruelties of humans
From one nation to another
From one ragged scar to another.

The Maoists went on with their living,
Ate their dinner that night around a small fire,
Their arsenal stacked against a tree.
They called their mothers, their sons, their daughters
From their satellite cellphones
They remembered birthdays,
Mourned their dying,
Sang love songs for their wives and mistress
Waiting for them in the village,
In the battle of Beni

"We walked 30 kilometers, today
Through this damned nation.
We'd orders from our comrades.
And we fulfilled them, " they gossiped.

Neither these Maoist combatants

Nor any allusion to killing
Was just an allusion to killing

Their official documents,
The sun isn't a sun.
There's no gunpowder
for addition and subtraction.
No not, no nothing.
And the moon isn't the moon
watching everything
that happens in the dark.

Nor was I dreaming
When I saw this in a dream:

I was out of my mind.
I would rather be out of my mind
In this field of betrayal and unless killing
A pigeon who poised urgently
at the screen door
was out of my mind.
It travelled on pure nerve and singing
from the thread of the spirit
of all that makes beauty
before turning into a breaking sky
into a river of blood.
And back to the trap of reason of argument.
I must be out of my mind.

No killing.
Did you ever see her walk toward you?
That sad love song you're singing to the moon
moved her to dance, close, so close to the stars
to the man she loved.
And here's a dress
that still smells of her sweetness
like purple flowers raining.
Her moccasins of deerskin cured by smoke,
so she'll know the way to rivers,
To a nation that's out of its mind
with grief for losing her.

Nothing seems to change —
said the message unwound by the pigeon.
But there was a light by which I could
see the soldiers through the wings.
It's dawn.
They're coughing with cigarettes,
drinking wine, picking their teeth of meat.
A half day over the mountain are travellers
They'll kill because it has become easy to kill.
Because there's a reason to kill.
And reason kills reason.

The wound in the earth where they took
her is being tended by rain and flowers.

This is the story of the old Nepal, revealed
The song-line gleaming in the dark.
It's thin, breakable.

It can be broken into the smallest chips of bone and tears.
It can be put back together with sunrise and flint.

Anil Karki

Last Wish

I loved you with my heart
I loved you with my soul

But the world kept us apart
And gifted my heart a painful hole
My life is short and I will die,
But just once, can't I say good bye?

I want to look in your eyes,
And say 'Don't cry'
I know that I won't find you,
You're just too far away

Only for today,
Can't these borders be erased?

I remember the day you went away
Held guns and filled them with bullets
And ran around with blood oozing from your wounds
As if they were your companions

I could sense something wrong
Unaware of the unlucky star
My senses proved me right
You were among the prisoners of war

My tears went dry
And my fears started to cry
I didn't know whether
You would live or die

And now my life is on its verge
Life is slowly drowning
And death is waiting to emerge
A last wish: please come to my funeral
And sing me a dirge

I loved you with my heart
I loved you with my soul

Anil Karki

Mother Of Us All

Mother of the long silences
That pinned us to our chairs,
Where were you in your body
If not here with us?

Mother of the disappearance
That shadowed Father's face,
When did you decide you'd to leave us.

Mother of the diminishing voice
That broke into chalk,
How could we've known there're things
You'd wanted to tell us?

Mother of the busy hands
That tore at the spiked tongues,
What were you pulling, hiding at dusk for us?

Mother of the prayer beads
That pooled on our pillows,
What're you murmuring,
Hands like paper pressed from us?

Mother of the snakes
That coiled around each wrist,
Did it ever occur to you to poison us?

Mother of the stolen roses
That faded like kisses,
Why so pale by the windows,
Peering in at us?

Mother of the mirrors
That disassembled the walls,
How many times did we see you look beyond us?

Anil Karki

My Tactic

When I had no roof
I made audacity my roof.
When I had no supper
My eyes dined.

When I had no eyes,
I listened.
When I had no ears,
I thought.
When I had no thought,
I waited.

When I had no father,
I made 'care' my father.
When I had no mother,
I embraced order.

When I had no friend,
I made quiet my friend.
When I had no enemy,
I opposed my body.

When I had no temple,
I made my voice my temple.
I have no priest,
My tongue is my choir.

When I have no means,
Fortune is my means.
When I have nothing,
Death will be my fortune.

Need is my tactic,
Detachment is my strategy.
When I had no tactic
I court my sleep.

Anil Karki

Seed Of My Father

I rode on his shoulder while he showed me the moon.
He told its name with a kiss in my ear.
'My moon, ' I said, 'Yours, ' he agreed.
And as we walked, it followed us home.

Holding my hand, he showed me a tree,
Picked an apple, and let me hold it.
I took a bite, then he took a bite.
'Ours? ' I asked, 'Yes, ours' he replied.

When I grew up, he showed me the sun.
He made me a wooden wheel on a stick,
Of pine wood, raw and bright as the sun.
I used to run and roll it.

A flashing circular saw was the sun,
Like the one he made my wheel with.
'This little wheel belongs to me, the big one to you.'
'Yes, ' he agreed, 'just as we belong to the sun.'

He let me plant the corn grains one by one
Out of a long box thrust in the ground.
I, who plant seeds for my father,
I'm the seed of my father.

When the corn was tall, it swallowed me up,
Whispering over my head, 'You're the seed of your father'
And when the husks were sere, my father with a hoe,
In the winter of the year, made a river beside it.

He made a garden, and he planted me.
Sun and moon he named and deeded to me.
Water and fire he created, created me,
He named me into a human being.

His breath he gave me, he gave me night and day.
His universe is in me fashioned from his clay.
I feed on the juice of the apple from his eternal tree.
Each poem I plant is a seedling from that tree.

Anil Karki

She

She lived in a sinful happiness
And died in pain.
She danced in sunshine
And laughed in rain.

She went one summer morning
When flowers spread the plain,
But she told everybody
She was coming back again.

Folks made a coffin
And hid her deep in earth.
Seems like she said:
My body
Brings new birth.

For sure there grew flowers
And tall young trees
And sturdy weeds and grasses
To sway in the breeze.

And sure she lived
In growing things
With no pain
To laugh in sunshine
And dance in rain.

Anil Karki

Time

There was too much, always, then too little.
Childhood: sickness.
By the side of the bed I'd a little bell—
At the other end of the bell, my mother.

Sickness, gray rain.
The dogs ran through it.
They slept on my room.
And it seemed to me they understood
About childhood: best to remain unconscious.

The rain made gray slats on the windows.
I sat with my book, the little bell beside me.
Without hearing a voice,
I apprenticed myself to a voice.
Without seeing any sign of the spirit, I determined.
To live in the spirit.

The rain faded in and out.
Month after month, in the space of a day.
Things became dreams; dreams became things.

Then I was well;
The bell went back to the cupboard.
The rain ended.
The dogs stood at the door, painting to go outside.

I was well, then I was adult.
And time went on—it was like the rain,
So much, so much,
As though it was a weight
That couldn't be moved.

I was a child, half sleeping.
I was sick; I was protected.

And I lived in the world of the spirit,
The world of the gray rain,
The lost, the remembered.

Then suddenly the sun was shining.
And time went on,
Even when there was almost none left.
And the perceived became the remembered,
The remembered, the perceived.

Anil Karki

We, The Great Family

Gratitude to Mother Earth,
Sailing through night and day
and to her soil;
Rich rare, and sweet
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Plants,
Changing leaf and fine root-hairs,
Standing still through wind and rain,
Their dance in the spiral grain
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Air,
Bearing the soaring swift and the silent
Breath of our song clear spirit breeze
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Wild Beings,
Our brother and sisters,
Teaching secrets, freedoms, and ways;
Self-complete, brave and aware
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Water,
Clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers;
Holding or releasing;
Streaming through all our bodies
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Sun,
Blinding pulsing light
Through trunks of trees, through mists,
Warming caves where bears and snake sleep
Who wakes us
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Great Sky,
Who holds billions of stars
And goes beyond that

Beyond all powers, and thoughts
Within us
in our minds so be it.

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