

INTERVIEW OF A SENSITIVE LITTERATEUR: SONNET MONDAL

By Dr. Sangeeta Sharma

Sonnet Mondal is an Indian English poet and editor of the younger generation.

He has authored 8 books of poetry and his works have been included in the editions of The Sheepshead Review (*University of Wisconsin, Green Bay*), The Penguin Review (*Youngstown State University*), Two Thirds North (*Stockholm University*), Nth Position, Fox Chase Review, The Stremez (*Supported by The Ministry of Culture, Macedonia*), California State Poetry Quarterly (*California State Poetry Society*), The Thing Itself Journal (*Our Lady of the Lake University, Texas*) and Dark Matter Journal (*University of Houston-Downtown*) to name a few.

He was featured in Famous Five in India Today magazine in 2010 and was long listed in The Forbes Magazine's top 100 Celebrities 2014 edition (author's category).

He is the Founder of the *The Enchanting Verses Literary Review* and is on the editorial board of the multilingual magazine *Levure littéraire* based in Paris, France. He is the youngest Indian to have represented India at the "Bridges Poetry Event (*Struga Poetry Evenings*), Macedonia".

Excerpts of an e-mail interview:

Q.1: What prompted you to venture in the art of poetry? Tell us something about your marked poetic journey.

The ingress to the world of poetry has been sudden for me. I never used to write poetry in my early schooldays but as I started writing, poetry itself became an inspiration for me pulling

me into its gracious corridors. Even after eight years the hallway still brings fresh surprises for me each day.

Throughout my short poetic journey, I have always tried to balance between how can I derive peace through poetry and deliver something good to read as well as create some platform for some good poetry to be featured from around the world. Hurdles have been as frequent as potholes but my tyre is still safe.

Q.2: Have you dabbled in any other literary genre than poetry?

Apart from poetry, I have been writing short stories from my personal experiences and I hope to get them published soon.

Q.3.You have taken long strides in the arena of literature across the globe. How could you do it at such a young age? Was it passion or technology that helped you reach these great literary heights?

Of course there cannot be any technology while I write. It is purely what I feel. At the same time technology and World Wide Web surely helps when we want to reach out to the masses with our creation. Though entry to a magazine or journal is through the filter of editorial opinions but at least anyone interested can know where to approach and how to approach to get their writings evaluated. So I have to admit the contribution of both passion and technology in reaching the achievements however small or great they are.

Q.4: Who are the enduring influences on you as a poet?

As I have always been saying, poetry itself is my inspiration to pen more poetry but coming to works of poets I like the works of Walt Whitman, Tagore and Rumi among others.

Q.5: You have represented India at the world's oldest and largest poetry festival: The Struga Poetry Evenings, Macedonia this September 2014 (from 20th to 26th).How was your experience?

I was first invited to Struga in 2011 and I failed to attend their 50th anniversary celebration due to some personal reasons. Visiting Strugathis year was magical. One can know how poetry matters to humanity there inStruga. Poetry is the soul of the city something which every poetry lover should see once in his/her lifetime.

Q.6. You have been in focus several times in the Bulletin of Ministry of External Affairs, Macedonia for contributing to international cultural exchange with Macedonia through The Enchanting Verses Literary Review. How do you view the whole thing?

I feel honoured that my humble contribution matters to that level where cultural cooperation between the countries comes into play.

Q. 7. Share your feelings on receiving the letter from Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam praising your poem “The Portrait of the Deer”. Underground Literature (a Kolkata based Publications in 2007).

It was my first ever encouragement I had after publishing my poetry for the first time and I will cherish it forever.

Q.8: What is the role of an artist in 21st century?

Centuries or decades do not matter to an artist. I strongly believe art and artists are immortal through their sublime contribution to the world. So I feel the role of an artist is to create and create in such a way that would further inject the seed of creation into its followers.

Q.9: Does age help in writing?

Poetry has nothing to do with age. It is ageless. But minimum exposure to the crude realities of life is very essential for good social content in one’s writing.

Q.10: What attributes make a poet/writer big?

Nothing other than his creation! In their writings: There should be an element of surprise above twists &turns and the writings should not reveal themselves in just one or two

readings. It should give a feel of rock-climbing to readers and breathing a fresh breath upon successfully completing the adventure.

Q.11: Your favourite Indian writers?

I like the works of Tagore, AK Ramanujan and Kamala Das in particular.

Q.12. Comment on the current landscape of Indian writing in English? Where do you place India in this context?

The graph of Indian writing in English is increasing day by day and currently it seems to be indirectly proportional to the graph of readership. If its fiction or nonfiction, India is one of the leading countries but in case of poetry the self contradictions and inclination only towards foreign and veteran poets will have to be curtailed to compete in a complete way in the international showground.

Q.13: How has been your experience of Indian editors and publishers?

What I strongly feel here, is, very few Indian publishers and editors read and publish poetry. Their parameters seem to be different from that of exploring something fresh, innovative, and qualitative voices or something that deserves to get a positive chance to stand in the limelight.

Q.14: Your message to young writers?

Never stop writing and never get influenced by unhealthy criticisms.

Q.17: How do you sum up your life so far?

A simple journey with mixed flavours of weather paired with inquisitive eyes always trying to see a new Sun through the uplifting fog.

Bio:

Dr Sangeeta Sharma is Associate Professor and head, department of English at Birla College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Kalyan, affiliated to the University of Mumbai, India. She

is widely published as a critic and poet. Some of her poems are published in Stephen Gill's World Peace Academy (Ontario, Canada); Labyrinth (Gwalior); Acerbic Anthology (USA); GIEWEC's Writers, Editors, Critics (Thodupuzha, Kerala) research articles have got published in reputed journals like Panorama of English Literature (Delhi); GIEWEC's Writers, Editors, Critics (Thodupuzha, Kerala); Global Responses to Literature in English (New Delhi); Changing Face of Women in Literature: The Flaming Spirit (New Delhi) and World English Literature: Bridging Oneness (Delhi).

In 2012, she published a book *In the Shadows: Women in Arthur Miller's Plays* (YKingBooks, Jaipur) and co-edited *Delightful Dickens: Some tributes* with Sunil Sharma published (YKing Books, Jaipur). In 2013, she co-edited Indo-Australian Anthology of Poems (New Delhi) along with Dr Sunil Sharma and Rob Harle.

Besides that she is a regular freelance for the supplement of Times of India, Mumbai edition; D.N.A, and Mumbai Mirror. She has recently submitted her UGC-sponsored Minor Research Project on the *Structural, phonological, orthographical, grammatical and lexical differences in British and American English*. Under Faculty Exchange Programme, she visited the University Department of English, Clayton State University, Georgia, USA, in March-April 2012.