

Neera Kashyap

***Nanda Devi**

Cloud and snow spume
drift about your summit
veiling your face

Ma Nanda Devi
fixing my gaze to eternity

▶

Rising like a giant shard of
rock carved over a million years,
snow fields scoured by
avalanches, your steeped
peak a vast cathedral

▶

Impossibly tall and steep
you rise abruptly over a
guardian ring of summits
witness to your inner realms of being,
the outer gorge of Rishi Ganga's roar

▶

Climbers say in higher climes
light contrasts with darkness, flower
leas with worn ridges, fear with elation
O paradox of the sublime
your name means Joy, enduring Joy

▶

The veil lifts, was it the smoke of
fires lit by sages on your summit?
Your natural symmetry of two identical peaks
suddenly at ease
is visible from my cottage window.

*Nanda Devi is a loosely structured Japanese Tanka string.

The River Lost

I don't need to be a nomad, traveling from country
to country in search of a better life.
My mind does it for me.
There are countries that offer hope and justice:
rewards for hard work - success and the good life;
there, lights shine unendingly, roads unspool bales of black silk.
I feel the throb of newness in my veins.

I know of others where I compete with millions,
get nowhere;
success and the good life wantonly elusive,
powered by nepotism and a terrifying need.
Lights shine here too and there are roads,
though not bales of silken black;
the blood in my veins grows sluggish,
poverty strikes at the heart of things -
octopus arms, sucking me under.

Where do I belong?

Sometimes to the good,
not other times.
There is a constant swing - clinging to the good, balking at the bad
clinging to the good, balking at the bad.....

I come to see the promise of the good as illusory
and aversion to the bad a consolidation of my own self-love;
painful, isolating, full of myself.
This swing skews me like a power boat to let go little by little
of countries, both good and bad;
the bad feels less substantial,
so does the good.

Sometimes I feel on an island where things feel in balance;
I can witness my self-conceit rousing eddies;
my patience generating flow.
Maybe this is an island in the sea
for when I clamber on and cling to it awhile

the tide with its eddies and calm, eddies and calm....
loses its insistent throb.

It must be the depths that makes it still.

Her Poems

She wrote her poems for the winds
If you read the winds you can read them
Sometimes the winds also
bring them to you
as a sort of caress
to the eyes, to the blood
to the heart.

About the Poet

Neera Kashyap has worked on social communications, specifically health and environment. As an author, she has published a book of stories for young adults titled 'Daring to dream' (Rupa & Co., 2003) and contributed to five prize-winning anthologies published by Children's Book Trust. As a literary writer of short fiction, poetry, essays, story/book reviews and creative non-fiction, her work has appeared or is forthcoming in South Asian journals which include *Kitaab*, *Papercuts*, *Out of Print Magazine and Blog*, *Earthen Lamp Journal*, *Muse India*, *Indian Review*, *The Bombay Literary Magazine*, *Erothanatos* and *Indian Literature*. Her poems have appeared in *Mountain Path*, *Verse of Silence*, *Reading Hour*, *Kritya* and *The Bombay Literary Magazine*. She lives in Delhi.