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## THE STUDY OF THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN THE POETRY OF NANDINI SAHU

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### Abstract

Poetry written by both men and women poets have made a transformational journey from pre-independence period to post-independence period. In the poetic journey Indian women poets have their own rich contributions to take Indian English poetry to the glorious heights of success and recognition. Earlier there were few names of women poets to have made their contribution but during the post-independence era there has been a rich array of poetic creativity by women poets. The women poets of recent years have moved even further making Indian English poetry recognized with completely new trends created by them. The present research paper has presented the themes and techniques in the poetry of Nandini Sahu. Nandini Sahu is a promising voice of high reputation in the post-modern Indian literature. She is regarded as a poet who has been instrumental in voicing the issues related to women as a true ambassador of femininity.

**Keywords:** Indian poetry, contemporary, American literature.

### Assertion of Self

Nandini Sahu's poems reveal her quest for establishing an identity for women in general and herself in particular. She does not like to be sidelined in the world dominated by men. She becomes spokesperson of the deepest strength of common woman in the society. She writes "I write poetry when words dance on my pen's tongue; when my spine starts melting; the heart aches unbelievable, when I have the ecstasy of being a woman; when my pen needs to disturb the slumber of the society on sensitive issues like mental slavery of the human, subjugation of women, and when I rejoice at the beauty of the creation. Then I open up petal by petal through my verse. The 'woman poems' assume a feeling that not only the human but even the

celestial beings need the feminine power to sustain them" (Preface of *The Other Voice* vii-viii).

Sahu writes that a woman needs to assert herself to establish an identity for herself "myself echoes the self purgating the creation, performing role /and I wish I could speak opposite, perfect and different /from behind the walls. (*The Self: The Opposite Sex, The Silence*). Nandini Sahu strongly asserts her identity with a great simplicity and directness. Her poems strongly express that women keep on contributing in every aspect of life but their contributions are trivialized. She writes her poems to voice the importance of women's contribution in the society. She wants her women to come out of the shadow of male chauvinism and stamp their own identity in the society. Her women refuse to stand in

the margins and cry on their fate. On the contrary she wants her women to assert their identity and make a mark for themselves

### **Feminism**

Nandini Sahu is powerful leader of the feminine voice. She does not want women to be marginalized where her contribution trivialized. She advocates the significance of various roles played by a human in different capacities that is ie a professional, a house wife etc. She believes that a woman existence should not be clouded by the male chauvinism. Her poem "Draupadi" is an appeal of a poet to a woman in general to assert the individuality of woman:

Sycophants, one and all, encircle me  
Sway and swindle me, sweltering my bones  
As if tickling me  
by putting one after another tiara on my head  
Trying to heal my unlocked hairs – the  
'Kuruksheetra'  
Of the Pandava. ("Draupadi", *The Other Voice* 10)

### **Loneliness**

NandaniSahu in one of interviews said: "The feeling of solitude is often a problem and a paradox too for a sensitive creative mind .It is on the one hand a necessary pre condition for many of my poems, which narrate a felt and perceived state of existence" (Nandini Sahu's Interview with Santanu Halder, 2013). Solitariness or loneliness is a state which generally dissuades the person from the worldly affairs and leads to the problem of identity crisis. Loneliness means separation from the society and reflection on the self. It also means a kind of rejection by the society leading towards isolation. Nandini Sahu is able to portrait the pain of loneliness in her poems. She expresses the same feelings in an interview. "The Other Voice, must poems manifest alienation and existential absurdity, being influenced by classical art, my personal as well as social consciousness" (Nandini Sahu's Interview with Santanu Halder, 2013).In her poetry, loneliness is an interesting design and silence is her power weapon. She says "The Silence is my second collection of poem dealing with the human feelings, which are so

silence and the poems reveal a complex and rich treasure of emotion" (Nandini Sahu's Interview with Santanu Halder, 2013).

Nandini Sahu's poems also reveal the inner conflict. The focus is on individual struggle to dealing with this personal conflict and also to show the struggle in the process of doing so. This personal conflict is beautifully express in the following lines: "Smile is what the losers use / always / pretending that / pain doesn't matter." ("Yet Another Anniversary" *The Silence* 71). The poet is aware of this conflict and wishes to come out of that. She writes "This anniversary / I / no longer smile / There are things / I no longer wishes to win" ("Yet Another Anniversary", *The Silence* 71).

The pain of separation is very depressing and loneliness further intensifies that agony. When the lovers are separated the feeling of loneliness results in poems showing the bond of love for each other. True love does not disappear even after separation. Even if the lover's don't see each other regularly they keep remembering each other through their creative art of poetry;"We don't see each other any more/ Was it art for art's sake/Or did we get some poems out of it" ("End of Scene" 17). The poem "I Leave Myself. . ." also probes deep into the loneliness. The narrator speaks; "I leave myself in the terrace and go downstairs, I leave/myself in the living room and go to the kitchen./I get together sometimes" (54).

### **Indianness**

Like other contemporary poets Nandini Sahu's poetry also portrays a remarkable sense of Indianess. Her poems reflect Indian consciousness and ethos in exceptionally beautiful manner. These poems present a panoramic view of India society, culture, religion and the political situation. This aspect of Indianness can we seen in the following lines:

O mother of the earth  
come down with your gaiety  
and make me mortals  
feel your mortal presence.  
your auspicious hour has come  
...

O Shakti

Come down. ("The Mother", *The Other Voice* 3)

The above lines show that the poet's soul is deeply rooted in Indian mythology and the fragrance of Indians soil. She presents Indian culture which is full of peace and love. Similarly Indian rights and rituals are vividly presented in her poems reflecting her sense of Indianness.

Indian gods and goddesses find reference in the works of Mani Rao like shiva ("Location"). In "Make Poverty History- Indian Restaurant, London" the poet refers to India as a place which is known by the world as a land of wonder but at the same time there are people who suffer with poverty. She writes; "The world over one wonders/why some have nothing to eat/in India are there no restaurants/Bless you rats says fat Ganesh" (48). The poet is concerned about the poverty and growing population of the country. B.K. Das rightly epitomizes the depiction of the theme of Indianness in Indian poetry in English. He writes; "Both in content and language the 'Indianness' of the poem is revealed beyond a shadow of doubt" (Das 159).

#### Nature

Nandini Sahu seems to be in love with nature. She feels elated in the company of nature and she draws peace from nature. Every aspect of nature seems to delight the poet. These lines show how the presence of the bird makes the morning beautiful: What a lovely bird comes flying / from an unknown realm / in the morning" ("In the Morning" 78). Bird here is symbol of freedom that has come from an unknown territory and world fly without any fear to an unknown destination .Here through nature and bird the poet tries to advocate the sprite of freedom irrespective of caste, color, creed. Nature has a great power to take an individual from all the agony and unhappiness towards a life of happiness and light. Sahu writes; "Where are the feeble dreams gone /the vision of the hours of the darkness /And the dreams into intoxication "("In the Morning 78"). Nature for Nandini Sahu is an escape from the materialistic world. Human mind is so much engaged in the material world that doesn't have time to feel the happiness in the company of nature. Her poem

"The Jungle Within" reveals the philosophy that one should come of the dark chamber of arrogance to realize and feel the happiness outside: The Valley at the heart of it / Hides age-old secret / swallowing in love / and Arrogance ("The Jangle Within" 84). Nandini Sahu reveals that the negative qualities within our life Jangle with many trees in the complex mundane world. One can get a clear park only when he disentangle his soul from the world of senses. She writes "How many Jangle do we /Cross and come across ! ! / Jangle disappears sometimes / You can't see the parks."

#### Love and Romanticism

Nandini Sahu writes on the theme of love. She portrays the emotion of love in various shades in her poems. In Silver Poems on My Lips love seems to a great power for the poet to hold her strong in trouble times and the cause of smile on her lips. She writes "Even when my mind is a flame /and soul a fire /...you hang like silver smiles /on my lips" she further writes "I would not need the spring after winter /as you masquerade warm tender love.../you hang like silver smiles /on my lips...". Her poem "Loving stranger" expresses the intensity of the felling of love for some stranger or someone who is gone. The desire or longingness for the company is very obvious in the poem when she writes "After you left /only after you left /...my heart broke." The pain of separation is so deep that the protagonist expresses the inability to compose any line "Can I ever write a love poem for you? /Exclusively you?"

#### Marriage and Man Woman Relationship

Man Woman relationship also finds place as a theme in the poetry of Nandini Sahu. She does not want the woman's voice to be crushed under the power of male supremacy. She becomes the spoke person for the women and motivates women to come out from subtle role of typical Indian woman. The poet in her poem "Draupadi" asks her to express her feeling with independence and conviction. "Sycophants, one and all, encircle me / Sway and swindle me, sweltering my bones/...Trying to heal my unlocked hairs."("Draupadi" 46-50). To her poem, Nandini Sahu pleads for the equal treatment of the woman in an institution of marriage. She is not ready to accept that there should be any sort of

discrimination on the basis of gender. Her poem vehemently speaks that woman should not their pain and the burden because of male domination. Woman should be able to express their feelings freely and stand firmly at park of woman. In a marriage man woman relationship should not based on inequality:

The broken glass bead rusts  
with dots throughout the soul, black.  
Dots from an unmatched marriage,  
Matched for convenience  
compelling me to cross sometimes  
The forbidden territories. ("A Glass Bead",  
*The Silence* 65)

Nandini Sahu was also attracted towards the theme of death. In her poems, death acts as a metaphor for renewal for restoration for her as a reliever. "A man was sitting sad / I did not know him / I only knew the masquerading sorrow" ("Hand- in – Hand" 1-3). " In her poem "Who says Death is the Only Truth" Nandini Sahu writes "Death stands at a distance / all day all night, smiling, unblinking / like that picture under the staircase" She further writes "who says death is the only truth ? / see, your body of fog is still seated on the throne / you shine in the firmament of stairs" ( "Who says Death is the Only Truth" 11-17).

#### Sense of spirituality and Moral Values

Nandini Sahu breathes and air of spirituality and optimism in her poems. In age of turmoil, her poems balmy influence: "Flower - hungry thou art, O-my dear butterfly / Your heart is as intimates as the expansive sky. / I wish, I could put out your lucent wings" ("Long After", *The Silence*" 14). A sensitive soul in Nandini Sahu comes in the forefront when her poem becomes an ambassador of moral values. A true poet is always disturbed when the moral values in the society go down and there is no ray of hope to raise the human soul and enlighten them with righteousness. Her poems sensitize the readers and make an attempt to purgate their souls.

you are white washing  
every wall, rising the  
verandah, wiping the sky,  
cleaning the idols and faces  
But whatever you've

written in the black of the past  
and whatever you've  
thrown on hearts and souls,  
who is going to wash ?  
Rather throw some water  
on hearts  
and save some  
for future thirsts. ("Heart", *The Other Voice*  
7)

Nandini Sahu is a strong advocate of humanism and the freedom of the soul. Her poem expresses a complete rejection of fanaticism, terrorism and excessive religiosity and barbarism. She writes in the poem entitled "The Thirteenth Impurity";

Did the mention any let out like global peace  
for the thirteenth impurity, the hell that  
lives in human mind ? A mind that  
throws atom bomb on Hiroshima and  
Nagasaki, mind that oils the fires of war in  
Palestine and Israel,  
That loves watching America's vengeance  
on Saddam Hussain, killing innocents,  
and Vietnam war Kargil war. (*The other Voice*  
107)

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