

Classic Poetry Series

Subodh Sarkar
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Subodh Sarkar(28 October 1958 -)

Subodh Sarkar is a Bengali poet, writer and editor, was born in Krishnanagar in Nadia District of West Bengal, India.

Biography

Subodh Sarkar is a reader in English literature at City College, Kolkata. His first book of poems was published in the late 1970s, and now he has 26 books to his credit – 20 of poems, two of translations and one travelogue on America. His poems have been translated into English, French and several Indian languages and published in several journals and anthologies. Sarkar is the editor of Bhashanagar, a Bangla culture magazine with occasional English issues. In 2010 he was appointed as the guest editor of Indian Literature, the flagship journal of Sahitya Akademi.

Awards and Honours

Shakti Chattopadhyay Binodan Vichitra Puroskar (1997)

Bangla Academy|Bangla Akademi Anita-Sunil Basu Puroskar from Pashchimbanga

Bangla Akademy (2000)

Marilyn Monroe In Sealdah

With full stomachs and hungry stomachs and wearing shoes and in
Bare feet those who come
They are Lalgola, they are Ranaghat, they are Barasat
Every day, every month.

They are from Bengal, through the ages they are fathers, uncles
They usher in victory in votes
They are primary, they are total failures, they are MA, BA
They run, after they get off the trains.

They are action, they are revolution, they smoke bidis
The train stops in the ricefield
The ricefield is locked, the house opens up, who wants to go
Home in the dawn.

Full stomach, hungry stomach, wearing shoes,
Bare foot, it's me, me...
Ah Kolkata, you are Sonagachi, you are Bara Babu
Hypocrisy on every street.

Thousands, thousands I am Kakinara, I am Shimurali
I am alone in the middle
A girl, some have discarded after raping
In her I saw Durga.

Startled I stop, I look intently, like mine
Hundreds of other eyes
Stare at the girl, officer, clerk and judge
And the iguana.

Empty stomach, torn clothes and torn slippers
Yet a crushed moon
Your face is like Bethuadahari, you are Barisal
'My hopes and desires unfulfilled.'

You are like Hollywood in the Coke Pepsi cup.
I saw you
I saw you, really, I felt I saw
Marilyn Monroe.

[Translated by Sanjukta Dasgupta]

Subodh Sarkar

Two Fires

Here, every child is scared to play
Here, every squirrel has a bullet-proof home
Here, every old man wants to commit suicide
There is no difference between a soldier and a man
No difference between the killer and the killed
Both are poor, both are hungry, both are tortured.

Poets of India, can you walk between two fires?

[Translation from the Bengali By the poet]

Poets Not: A small little village in India, which was a home of birds and swans, has now been turned into a war zone where the poorest of the poor armed with AK-47s are relentlessly fighting the paramilitary forces deployed by the State. Since the advent of British rule in India, villagers have been deprived of the bare necessities, and during the last sixty-three years of independence the poor became poorer and the rich richer—more than 70 percent of the entire population in India has remained under the poverty line. But the ordinary men and women who neither belong to the militancy nor to any political party have been in deeper trouble—when they find the highway that runs through their village is left littered with corpses, even then they have no way to mourn the dead. A son is taught not to cry openly for his murdered father, a wife cannot claim the body of her husband, for they know it for certain that they will be the next targets. The situation is so inhuman that no political party has any control over it, nor does the rule of law prevail. A primary schoolteacher is shot dead as he is believed to be a communist. His body is thrown out on the road; he is seen with a pencil in his hand, which tells us the story that he was teaching his poor, unfed children even before he was shot. Those who are still alive are both lucky and unfortunate. They are walking between two fires, two infernos. They walk between two check posts—military and militant hide outs. I did not want to write this poem as it pained me for days and nights. A college student of mine who had a family in that village came to me one morning to tell me everything; he couldn't say a single word, but I found tears rolling down his cheeks. He couldn't say what he wanted to say, but I feel an eerie sense of guilt, which is reflected in this poem.

Subodh Sarkar