

## Poems by Nandini Sahu

### Ritual

My granny crossed the ritual of death  
today, a long awaited, comatose death,  
not a spitting, shitting, urinating on the bed,  
coughing, aching, unwilling death, but  
a graceful, peaceful, angelic, silent, indifferent  
ritual,  
indifferent to all the four corners of that  
ancestral house where her three daughters and  
foster son learnt the ritual of living.  
Indifferent to her dissatisfied middle daughter  
who made a hell of her life.  
Who emptied her of her jewels, policies,  
breaths,  
thoughts and  
her other daughters.  
Who never let her sleep till she slept forever.

Indifferent to widowhood, my granny  
had fought with life  
had taught us life  
putting on starched white saris, full sleeved blouses,  
sandals, unusual for widows,  
and now at eighty-five  
said naught to live.

My granny crossed the ritual of death  
today to reach her cherished husband  
dead forty years ago.  
Our imperial, royal, oil-painted, photographed  
grandpa, who would put on suits, ties, specs in  
an age of *Khaddars*  
who lived as a proud smile on granny's  
widowed lips all her life,  
who had never had a 'no' to anything on earth,  
who was *the mightiest of all, the king of kings*,  
granny would whisper.

Granny slept her last sleep  
in that corner of her house  
where grandpa had died once upon  
a time. As if it were a space for royal deaths,  
these rituals.

Our granny's ritual emptied us of  
every other ritual, of thinking of our  
childhood fancies, hidden '*pakodas*' in her sari,  
of the fish and vegetable markets, road side  
lemon-soda, of sugarcanes and toys  
in her almost bursting hand bag,  
and of air, water, earth, fire.

Till now granny had been walking,  
smiling in tearful eyes, cooking for  
her daughter breathlessly, though  
all these years since grandpa's  
historic death  
her feet have been bleeding.

## **That Foot**

*for my Baba(father)*

That foot that has walked  
on thorns  
all through the day for you.  
That foot which has shown  
you foot-steps to follow.

That foot.

That foot behind the orange sun  
has walked through arches  
bare foot  
on fire, on water  
near parapets  
has cracked doors and windows  
for you to enter safe.

That foot.

That foot walked, crossed the  
never-ending roads

when you aspired for the colossal.  
That foot. Your passport  
to utopia, to dream of  
new truths, passport to planets uncharted.

That foot, is walking away, weak,  
parting with fantasia forever.  
Will you join?

**Dr.Nandini Sahu** is an Associate Professor of English in IGNOU, New Delhi, India. She is a poet,creative writer and literary critic; is the author/editor of nine books, two more under publication, and has more than forty research papers published in India, U.S.A., U.K. and Pakistan. She is a double gold medalist in English literature and the award winner of All India Poetry Contest and *Shiksha Rattan Purashkar*. Her areas of research interest cover New Literatures, Critical Theory, Folklore and Culture Studies, Children's Literature, American Literature and ELT. She is the Chief Editor of the bi-annual refereed journal, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature and Language(IJLL)*. [www.kavinandini.blogspot.com](http://www.kavinandini.blogspot.com)