

**ISSN : 2454-3365**

# **THE LITERARY HERALD**

**AN INTERNATIONAL REFEREED ENGLISH E-JOURNAL**

---

*A Quarterly Indexed Open-access Online JOURNAL*

---

**Vol.1, No.1 (June 2015)**

---

*Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Siddhartha Sharma*

*Managing Editor: Dr. Sadhana Sharma*

---

[www.TLHjournal.com](http://www.TLHjournal.com)

[sharmasiddhartha67@gmail.com](mailto:sharmasiddhartha67@gmail.com)

## An Interview With Geetika Kohli, the Youngest Poetess from Jammu and Kashmir

**Waseem Majid**

**Research Scholar**

**Dept. of English and Foreign Languages**

**Central University of Haryana.**

Geetika Kohli, born in 1988 is a young poetess hailing from Jammu. An academic topper throughout, she is an MBA and has been working as a management professional since three years. She has penned two books of poetry in English: 'The Lost Sonnet and Other Poems' and 'Yonder'. Geetika has also taken up several editorial assignments from across the country and abroad, and has been writing for some of the dailies in Jammu. She pens both prose and poetry, in four languages: English, Urdu, Hindi/BrajBhasha and Punjabi.

Besides being an ardent poetess, she is a painter and an orator. Her childhood poems have had the honour of being published in an American anthology, 'Blossoms of India'. Currently, she is working as an HR with Renault Nissan, Chennai.

### **Q and A:**

**Q: 'The Lost Sonnet and Other Poems', your first book, is a collection of sonnets, haiku, free verse, blank verse and experimental poetry. How are you so familiar to these diverse poetic forms, being from the management background? One certainly cannot draw parallels between business and poetry!**

**Ans.** Thank you for this question, Waseem. Well, I have been reading and writing all my life. Ever since my school years, I have been maneuvering my tight schedules into accommodating my amoebic soul, this inner self that yearns for art. I stay up late in the night, reading and working on my literary projects. And I love to experiment with meter. The 'sound' of poetry is very important to me. And on drawing parallels, well, poetry streams from one's everyday experiences. I watch people at work. I am very observant of the common life. There's always something to inspire me, for I'm constantly thinking. I am a Cassiopeia to my mind space!

**Q: Do you love 'Geetika' as a poetess or as an HR professional? Why?**

**Ans.** I love her in all her roles because she dares to follow her heart. I love her for her mistakes because they too are the offspring of her passion. She does not cheat herself into jobs. She does what she likes to do.

**Q: What inspired you to write your first and second book?**

**Ans.** My life has always been a 'Colosseum' and I oscillate between being a player and a spectator. My inspirations come from within and without.

**Q: It has been mentioned in the biographical note of your poetry collection, that you address yourself as 'The Lost Sonnet'. Where does this come from?**

**Ans.** As a child I used to write under the pen name, 'The Lost Sonnet'. In Hindi, the name 'Geetika' means a short poem. So I made an innocent word-swap, calling myself a sonnet. And I added 'lost', because that is my nature. I wander all the time!

**Q: You are from the region of Sanjana Kaul, who is known for her depiction of the terror and uncertainty stricken valley, in her novel ‘PashaanYug’ and short story collection ‘Kaathki Machhliyan’. Does your imagination drift to the valley?**

**Ans.** Yes, it does. But I try to look beyond the image of a bloody Dal. I try to hear the Azaan from Hazratbal, the temple gong from Shankaracharya, drowning the sound of bullets in my heart. It is true that uncertainty cripples the mind and I worry for the youth of Kashmir. But I teach myself to be positive. I want to show the world the true side of Kashmir – the exceptionally gifted land, the depth of the Kashmiri culture, the brilliance of its people. I have many friends in Kashmir who are talented, tolerant but hidden from the world’s eyes because they are NOT terrorists. And when I say this, I do not overlook Kashmiri pandits. I have lived their pain and I include their vision for Kashmir in mine. I believe in spreading the message of love rather than accounting for the wrongs of others. This is the only way the blackness of Kashmir can be undone.

**Q: Are you ever going to write on Kashmir? If yes, what would be your theme, beauty or bullets?**

**Ans.** It will be about love, whatever I choose to write.

**Q: You are a polyglot, writing in English, Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi. Which one suits your expressions the best? What book is coming up and in which language?**

**Ans.** I identify with all four. They are like birds that perch on my lips awhile and then are gone but to be back another season.

The next book which is in the process of getting published is another anthology of poetry in English titled, ‘Nothingness at Boiling Point’. Besides this, I am working on a Hindi poetry book in free verse, titled, ‘Shunyaansh’ and two untitled poetry collections in Urdu and Punjabi. Then there is also a novel in English that I am writing at snail-pace.

**Q: Writers who you would name as influences?**

**Ans.** Sylvia Plath, Whitman, Frank Pessoa, Kafka, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Gulzar, Amrita Pritam, Harivansh Rai, Meerabai, Amir Khusrao. There are far too many.

**Q: Currently you are based in Chennai. How relevant is the word ‘nostalgia’ to you? Does it add flavour to your poetic concoctions?**

**Ans.** When you say ‘nostalgia’, yes, I feel it... deeply. But I have always been like that. Even while I was in Jammu with my people, I would be homesick for something. I reckon that this nostalgia is not for my recent past but for an age which has long gone. I live outside of my body. My soul belongs to the olden times.

**Q: What are you reading right now? What are your favorite books? Which one influenced you the most—and why?**

**Ans.** I am currently reading Chekhov’s plays. I don’t have a list, but I can quote my recent favourites – The Metamorphosis by Kafka, Heart of Darkness by Conrad, Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf, De Profundis by Oscar Wilde and Ariel by Salvia Plath. I like them because they touched me deeply.

**Q: What, according to you is the future of English literature in Jammu and Kashmir?**

**Ans.** We still have miles to go. But things are better than they were some time ago. Over the years, I have developed an audience in Jammu even for my ‘difficult’ poems. This shows that people want to read and they want to scale up to contemporary standards. I like the ‘student’ spirit of my readers. It keeps me going.

**Q: What would be your advice to the young writers and book lovers of Jammu and Kashmir?**

**Ans.** Write the truth when you write fiction. Be fearless and shameless. But educate yourself. Nothing comes without learning and a good deal of effort.

\*\*\*\*\*