

## Poems by Bibhu Padhi

### Another Need

You have spent your years  
asking for nothing, and when  
someone tells you, you will

never get anything without  
asking for it, you have said,  
that's not my business,

the days and nights should know;  
the single universal force  
must respond to my needs

as it always does  
to everything else, including  
the earth's quiet rotation

round the sun, or a sapling's  
slow rise through space and time.

But I say, they had asked for it

time and again; asking is giving,  
no more, no less. I will not ask for  
things, you say. You say, I am rich

already with things I never asked for.

You may not know, but silences  
have their own modes of prayer

just as words have, but different,  
less visible, perhaps less arrogant too.

I cannot ask for things even in

silence, for words left me one night  
long ago, without my asking for it.

Perhaps, that night you dreamt of it?

**Body**

This is where everything  
is, lives and breathes  
or just ceases to be.  
Everything else—all that  
promises to be true—is vague  
and nameless, like someone  
you have never spent time with.

This alone is branches and leaves,  
fingers, toes and lips, the fruit's  
and the breast's haughty,  
self-contained accuracy,  
the statue's slow,  
incredible formation through  
time, each moment's limitlessness.

How can I forget what has grown  
through a careful, evolving  
history, or can bring in tomorrow  
long before its chosen time.  
Spirit of it all, it has its needs too—

the dark smell of the cave's depth,  
the very special intimacies.

## **A Question of Faith**

Someone who cares for me, says,  
“You have been so different during  
these past few days. Your smiles  
haven’t been like your smiles,  
your words not like your words.”

The mind seems to have  
turned the other way—  
the way the wind comes from,  
the way the trees look toward  
to find where all other good things are, how

they are being treated by people  
who so cleverly think they belong  
to the world the most proper way,  
how carefully they build themselves.

My reply is a question too: “A tired  
smile? Do you think so? Something  
for which I appear to be putting in  
a lot of effort even while this frail body

wouldn't permit me to do so?"

"Right," she says, "but we really need  
the love which is so much like you.  
Uncontaminated, like the upper air,  
the ever-renewing wish of the short grass  
for heaven, not a cold, distant smile."

I've nothing much to say, but it seems as if  
I am taking something away from myself,  
losing my knowledge of things in quick  
succession, my faith, even my faith in  
what I should indeed be for others' sake.

**What Am I Here for?**

I have been followed by days and nights  
as if they needed me badly—  
this slight body, this ragged mind—  
for a purpose far outside these thoughts.

And, why is it I don't ask why  
they are here? Perhaps they should  
answer that for themselves. I think  
each one must do that for oneself.

See, how different I am from  
anything else, including  
the blood in my capillaries,  
the pulmonary air, the breath!

The older questions reappear  
and then suddenly, there is a stop  
to everything. The answers may take  
some time coming, may not come at all.

**Early**

October. It is rather early  
even by date and wishful  
desires. And there is  
a lonely winter's  
fugitive touch  
on the skin, in the air.

It is too early to predict  
any new arrival, but  
the earlier than usual sunsets  
have been too quiet,  
too invisible for the mind  
for over a week now.

The power is being  
withdrawn every day  
in the name of  
autumn festivities,  
which are still  
some distance away.

The provincial town  
sleeps into late afternoons.  
And when it is dark,  
the lights appear too tired  
to offer a whole day's  
affection or desires.

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**Bibhu Padhi** has published eleven books of poetry. Her poems have been published in distinguished magazines throughout the English-speaking world including The Poetry Review, Poetry Wales, The Rialto, Stand, Wasafiri, The American Scholar, Colorado Review, Confrontation, The New Criterion, New Letters, Poet Lore, Prairie Schooner, Poetry (Chicago), Southwest Review, The Literary Review, Rosebud, TriQuarterly, Xavier Review, Antigonish Review, Queen's Quarterly, The Illustrated Weekly of India and Indian Literature. They have been included in numerous anthologies and textbooks. Three of the most recent are Language for a New Century (Norton), 60 Indian Poets (Penguin), and The HarperCollins Book of English Poetry (HarperCollins).

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He has also co-authored a book on D. H. Lawrence (Whitston) and (with his Minakshi Padhi) a reference book on Indian Philosophy (McFarland).

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