



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR  
**CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE**

WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

**ONE WORLD, ONE POEM: MANY  
VOICES, ONE VISION**

Satendra Nandan

*Fiji Sun*

7 March 2021



Charles Sturt  
University

---

There's no culture which does not have the sound of poetry. Every religion is really a poetic creation that makes it divine and soars our spirit to reach the sun through crucifixion and resurrection. The darkness of Good Friday disappears in the rising rays of the Easter Sun.

Recently I received an invitation from the Fiji National University librarian at Nasinu to attend World Poetry Day on Friday, March 19.

My response was spontaneous – to celebrate Poetry Day in Fiji is simply wonderful.

I'm a member of the first International Studies Poetry Institute located in the the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, an exciting and innovative centre for poets and poetic creations at my university where I'm an Emeritus Professor.

The institute runs an annual – 'Poetry on the Move' event – and invites poets in English and in translations. It also runs a generous competition, supported by the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

### ***Power of poetry***

Poetry, of course, is the essence of our existence. Without it, the world would be without a soul and our education would ring hollow.

The moon will look as barren as Mars, without breath and beauty of the earth.

And the moral imagination of a nation would dry up like a pond. What will happen to the lilies, the little fishes and frogs?

It's our poetic imagination that adds life to death and helps us survive the deepest sorrows and the breaking of hearts, the betrayals of human beings, the sacrifices of those who love us.

Poetry of life makes us beloved of love.

There's no culture which does not have the sounds of poetry. Our deepest thoughts, our most intimate moments, our drum beats, are contained in our utterances of poetry, in between the silences of words, in songs, mantras, chants, in our sighs and silences.

Every religion is really a poetic creation that makes it divine and soars our spirit to reach the sun through crucifixion and resurrection. The darkness of Good Friday disappears in the rising rays of the Easter Sun.

The world is God's poetic composition – the very idea of a God is the greatest poem, imagined in innumerable images.

Poetry is made in the mother's womb: from the first cry to the last breath in the tomb.

The rest is really our attempt to recreate and reconnect with that severed umbilical cord – whether it is a person or a place with a sense of grit and gratitude.

Poetry can give brutality a grace which makes us accept the vicissitudes of life which else will fever the brain or break the heart.

***Relevant, especially today***

There's no more devastating epic poem than the Mahabharata, composed by various poets three thousand years ago. Its oral rendition must be many millennia old.

Its unchallenged boast is – 'what is in this book may be elsewhere, but what is not in this book is nowhere else'.

Think of human history. You'll slowly discover the truth of our wounded world contained in this single epic : its grandeur and its grisly details.

Climate catastrophe is but one aspect of the same story. COVID-19 is another. Yet the epic's preamble is the most celestial poem ever composed – the Bhagwad Gita. It is the great civil war that is incessantly taking place within us – in our body, heart and soul.

But it has only one message – it is love that will survive us.

This is at the heart of all poems from exiled Dante's Divine Comedy to the exilic existence in the Ramayana, to the daily tragedy we're all heirs to.

Poetry has given comfort and solace to generations.

Even the Bible, King James Version published in 1611, can be seen as a great poetic creation by over 50 scholars.

Its beauty of thought and expression has never been surpassed in the English language.

It's poetry par excellence. Its incandescent thoughts are transforming like the sunrays on golden waves.

### ***Beauty in daily life***

But for me the real beauty of poetry is to be found in the dailiness of life, living and livelihoods, in our mundane dreams and quotidian nightmares.

Poetry is all around us like life and death – the splendour in the grass, the glory in the flower.

The sun rises, children go to school, rain falls, rivers flow, people go to work, or sit under a tree, the old wave at a passing car, the young play a game on a muddy field, plants grow, birds fly, fishes swim, the sun shines, and there's the sound of distant thunder, after the fire of lightning.

The wind whispers across green fields, blue waves.

We sit and have tea and coffee on busy streets, our voices mingling with the honking cars and winking boys and girls walking together, hand in hand.

We see weddings, funerals, festivals; we are born, we die. The caravan of life moves on over hills and across the landscapes. The endlessness of life captured in poems of all kinds; the ceremonies of innocence and experience never cease.

But there's no substitute for this life—the only one we're blessed with.

In an age when we're exploring space, the distant between human beings is increasing – the humanities are going out the university windows because the dollars are not there, nor much money, power or prestige.

We feel the glamour of technology will save the day. But all great scientists and artists know that the truth of life is indivisible. That is the wonder of living.

Temples, stupas, churches, mosques, gurudwaras, among other holy places, are truly the expressions of human spirit and imagination.

The visionaries – Socrates, Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, St Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, all had a poet's soul and widened our human embrace in infinite ways.

Perhaps it's time for us to find poetry in our fields, rivers, trees, hills, mountains, in the stars above and the stones below them, in the waters of the seas, in our dreams and daily struggles, the poetry of our lives with which we've existed from the First Landing to the cremation sands at Wailoaloa.

In between we live and die in words, between words and the silences within words.

### ***Celebrating Poetry Day in Fiji***

To celebrate Poetry Day in Fiji in her many languages, rhythms and voices, is to be grateful for life and death in more than an archipelago of peoples.

Poetry is not only in the holiness of heart's affections; it is also in the mind's quest in the primacy of a moral universe – to see we're fragments of the same Light.

Poetry may make us see the light within that light and illuminate our individual and collective lives.

The rainbow comes and goes But how lovely is the rose.