

The echoing poetess

Bureaucrat and painter Sangeeta Gupta comes out with her book of poems and painting "Pratinaad"



LOVE'S LABOUR: Sangeeta Gupta displaying her book in New Delhi PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

An IAS officer, a painter, a poetess and an activist. That briefly sums up Sangeeta Gupta, a Delhi-based Commissioner of Income Tax and a Benaras Hindu University product. Her current claim to fame is a book of poems complementing her paintings, recently published by National Publishing House. What makes this book titled "Pratinaad" special is, it has been simultaneously translated in English, Bengali and German. The English version is by famed art critic Keshav Mallick, ("The Echoing Groove"), the Bengali one is by Sahitya Akademi awardee Kamlesh Sen, and the German translation has been done by Jayshri Joshi and Celine.

Earlier we had one painter's works being complemented by another poet's creations, or a poetry book by a painter (a recent example is Sanjay Bhattacharya). So Sangeeta's book could be called unique in its attributes.

This is Sangeeta's third book after a collection of short stories titled "Naagphani Ke Jungle" in 1991 and "Is Paar, Us Paar" in 1996 on the hurdles faced by women in the society.

Says Sangeeta about "Pratinaad", "This book is based on harmony and nature's magnanimity towards one and all. It is also striving for the liberation of the soul to be one with the cosmos."

Versatile personality

Sangeeta always loved writing and painting, and she says, she had writer Mahashweta Devi inspiring and encouraging her during her college days. But she knew this medium wouldn't help her economically in a short span of time. "I am a person of great self respect. My father wanted me to stand on my feet. So I appeared for Civil Services as a duty-bound daughter. But my success opened new vistas to me. I realised I

couldn't have done social work that I am doing now, if I were not in this position. And a worry-free life from the economic point of view also helped me pursue my passion for painting and poetry." Sangeeta took her art training from Sanat Roy, a well-known Uttar Pradesh-based artist.

Now she has several solo shows to her credit in India and abroad. She is also "the second Indian painter whose works were exhibited in the National College of Arts in Lahore after a gap of 20 years."

The first Indian exhibition was held there in 1986. Sangeeta also has to her credit Snehalaya, an institution she founded in Karkardooma, Delhi for needy women and children where they are taught some job skills. She is also the founder of the Delhi-chapter of the NGO Stree Shakti, which fights for women's rights. Says this mother of a 16-year-old son who has acidic memories of her married life, "If life closes one door on you, it opens many. The need is to just look around and be positive."

RANA SIDDIQUI