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Did you Happen to See My Childhood of Yore?

Ghulam Rasool Santosh
Translated from Kashmiri by Shantiveer Kaul

The Mirror
Of the true, straight path
Was my mother's bequest!
One vision of twin eyes
Nursing the dear child with love.
Meanings curled:
Soderbal(1), Haremokh(2) heights.
Sound milched:
Spring, Fount of Ragas
Raginis.
Pure lake nestled in mountain gorge!
Factor of time.
Snow capped peaks
Kissing the forehead of sky
Pine Forests a-riot with gazelle leaps
Lovely ringlets creeping down
From the Sunshine of Haar(2a)
Waterfalls descended from hills
Rippling with laughter over meadows
Velvety pollen come from the woods
Robin and thrush, vocal on snow laden branch
Cuckoo call under chinar shade in for villages
Awakening the rhythm of life
In Willow groves.
Roff(3) and Vanvun(4) hovering
Around gathering twilight
Fairy voices crooning the Vyoog(5) Songs:
Ritual passage-offering(6) of the Naggas(7).

The fire ravaged Dal*(8) is all lament today!
The whole world would seek its image
In my mirror
What do I do, my own sight
Is moth eaten
Shall I pull the stars down, ask them:
Did you happen to see my childhood of yore?
Parbath(9), manifest next to soderkhon(10)
Is my express history

The earliest truth was satisar(11), Neelnag(12)
Celestial beings met in heaven, decided:
Our habitat is the 'Sa-land' 13
With Kashyap's(14) call was revealed
Kashmiri, Kashmir.
The Vitasta(15), flowing unclad, is Kashyap's call
Yet.
Encountering sin it recessed underground
Often.
Holding the benighted vitasta aloft
Today we recede.

Budshah(16), in abiding faith
Set lighted lamps adrift (in vitasta)
Observed the birthday, put vermilion
On its forehead
He observed Veth Truvah(17) on the banks
Of Vitasta at Khanquah*(18)
He called out from memory
Brought forth the First Truth
The Bhatta(19) remembered seven generations
In his morning oblation
In our strength of belief
We uttered 'eleven, eleven.
Made the 'eleven-named'(20) come
Our tongue was already pure
And then we read the Kalma(21)
Fountainhead of knowledge.
Many came through the ages
We read them in our own way
We embraced the floodtide, held drifting fire
The sea of knowledge, in its introspection
Took a deep draught.
Good Sons: Abhinava(22), Kalhana(23) and Vasugupta(24)
The articulate, perusing tomes of truth and rectitude
Are dumb now
Lalla(25) made us suckle the mother's milk
Of Vaakh(26)
Should I not cry, cry out in despair
For why have I lost my articulation?
In our Rishi-garden(27) were Yogis
Yoginis and Sufis
Satiating the thirst
Of the departed in heaven
With knowledge.
With Shrukh(28) did Nund Rishi(29) unravel

Ties and Knots
Get up, someone
Make them hear, ask:
Did you happen to see my childhood of Yore?
Was our told fortune not full of bloom?
What dosha has come about
The Siblings have had a tiff, separated
In enmity does
A brother stalk another, yet
Is a brother the support of the other
Ultimately
A family is in its members
It is an old saying.
The way is ever moving
Movement is happiness, sorrow
Which Abhinava, will come
Sing a paeon to Rudra
With Shant Rasa(30) abate, rein in Tandava
The buildings we sculpted with out Padava hands
Stone by stone have we taken them apart
What is left?
When word revealed meaning
Rivers cascaded down
The meaning of words lost was
Learning wiped off
Lalla has come forth, wearing
Heavenly robes of Fire
Seeing all, she will jump back
Into the Fireplace.
Nund Rishi will emerge
And Wander, Scanning, tombs.
'One and one are eleven.
All even have been given
The last ritual fire(31)
We had houses supporting each other
They are burnt down now.

The hawk chased doves
Of the heavenly abode, away.
Wounded bodies bear the pall
Of a dead one
The hermits of Smoking urns
Under Chinar(32) shade, have fled
Alas! Time has corralled
The children of destiny
Poshikuj(33), decrepit, with her pathetic sack of utensils

Is going around, back bent, seeking refuge
Zoon(34) is crying her heart out
In the
She has lost her grown up sons
All seven of them.

Tell me- how do you read my expression?
Does universal time have a distinct visage
Of its own?
Only I be the slave for my grief
I myself the corpse
And the mourner
Today I am exiled
With a land my own.
Did you happen to see
Santosh(35) of yore?

Glossary

1. Soderbal: Literally, place of the (inland) sea; a place in Srinagar, Kashmir.
2. Harmokh: Literally, the countenance of Shiva; a mountain in Kashmir 2aHaar: The month of Ashadh, the sunniest month in Kashmir.
3. Roff: Traditional Folk music/dance, celebratory in nature
4. Vanvun: Traditional wedding songs, sung in welcome.
5. Vyoog: Ritual sanctified space, marked on earth with rice flour for Hindu bridegroom.
6. Passage-Offering: Ritual gift for the bride on her visits to the parental home.
7. Naggs: Traditionally regarded as the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir, also several springs named after them.
8. Dal: The Famous Dal lake at Srinagar; dal also means a large body of water.
9. Parbath: Hariparbat at Srinagar, seat of Sharika Chakreshvari.
10. Soderkhan: Literally lap of (inland) sea; another name of Nagin lake
11. Satisar: Traditionally regarded as the name of the great inland sea which was drained by the sage kashyap reclaiming the submerged Kashmir valley.
12. Neelnag: Traditionally the Chieftain of Naags (see 7); also the old name of Verinag, the source of river Jhelum; the source of Neelmat Purana.
13. Sa-land: Reference to the name given by Lord Krishna to Kashmir, as referred to in Neelmat Purana.
14. Rishi Kashyap (see 11).
15. Vitasta: The original name of river Jhelum, Kashmir was also known as Vaitastika.
16. Budshah: Zainul Abidin, the illustrious and much loved ruler of Kashmir.
17. Veth Truvah: Vitasta Trayodashi, the birthday of river Vitasta (traditional).
18. Khanah: The mosque of Shah Hamadan, a very holy shrine of Kashmir
19. Bhatta: Kashmiri (and also Sanskrit) nomenclature for Kashmiri Pandits.
20. Eleven-named: Appellation for Pir Dastgir Sahib, a Sufi Saint. A memorial mosque is in Srinagar.
21. Kalma: The Muslim incantation of faith. Literally, word or speech.

22. Abhinava: Abhinavagupta, paramcharayafa of Shaiva tradition, author of 40 works.
23. Kalhana: The great historian, author of Rajatarangini: the earliest recorded history.
24. Vasugupta: Great Shaiva scholar and philosopher, author of Shiva Sutra.
25. Lalla: Lallded or Lalleshwari, the greatest poetess of Kashmir.
26. Vaakh; A poetic Form in which Lalded wrote, also edict or writ, literally.
27. Rishi-garden: Kashmir is called thus because of being the abode of the sufi cult of Rishis.
28. Shrukh: A poetic form in which Nund Rishi Wrote; also know, literally.
29. Nund Rishi: Sheikh Nooruddin Vali, the patron saint of Kashmir, founder of the Rishi cult.
Also known as Alamdar-I-Kashmir (standard bearer of Kashmir)
30. Shant Rasa; The ninth Rasa not included in Bharata's Natya Shastra. Abhinava Gupta recognises it as a basic Rasa in his work, Abhinav Bharati.
31. Last ritual Fire: Cremation; also the numeral ten.
32. Chinar; The premier tree indigenous to Kashmir. Belonging to the maple variety.
33. Poslikuj: Name, female, Kashmiri Pandit. Literally, flowering plant.
34. Zoon; Name, female, Kashmiri Muslim. Literally, the moon.
35. Santosh: Name of the poet. Also contentment.