

Anecdotes

Dina Nath Nadim

Translated from the Kashmiri by Arvind Gigoo

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I

A flower spoke to the soil
but its pains remained untold;
the bushes were pruned
but
they were trapped in snow.

They say the garden is abloom,
the sunshine washes the flowerbeds
and the cool reigns.

II

The topmost branch of a tree
trembled in the early morning
and
saw its shadow on the ground.

It looked towards the sky
but
fell in love with the earth.

A wind shook the tree;
it lapped the pain.

III

Two eyes gazed out of a window
and then
came the wind.

The willows clothed the bride,
the anklets were for the bridal dance,
the headgear looked a rainbow.

Revellery was afrenzy
where the spring happened.
The people closed their shops,
not a sound was heard.

IV

A path, running through a field,
ended near a stream.
Over the other bank
they shaped a road
that led to a village.
Someone sent a message
over the stream.
The stream howled
as
it heard the tales
of the village
and
the city.

V

The crows shouted
for
they knew not how to spend the leisure;
the nightingales adorned their nests,
the hay became stacks.
The nightingales hatched,
their breaths were visible.
One flight ----
and the world knew the newborn.
Suddenly all shouting stopped.

VI

Spring-wind passed by our door
and
with restive fingers
beat its breast.
I asked a flower, "What happened?"
In a corner
it puckered its lips.
Soon a dry petal appeared
and
the springbushes
beat their breasts.

VII

Time rested on a picture,
trees grew like mad;
On the canvas
there was a forest.
He who took the road
reached home.
Breath came into being.
Where is the forest?
Where is the mind?

VIII

His colour told me
it was he.
I tried to name him
but
my breath froze,
lips petrified
and mouth was still.
All was darkness
but
a lightning showed its teeth.

IX

A shoe
with its mouth open
lay on the road
longing for a draught of water.

A dog came,
shattered the shoe
and
took it to a stream.
Is thirst quenched?

A brick said to a stone:
“You are a part
I am the whole.”

X

A vessel
washed by the raindrops
looked like a woman's liquid face.
The raindrops
washed off its sins.
Somebody came
and kicked the vessel.
Shards lay here and there.
Two days later
children played with fragments.

From hell to heaven
there are two and a half steps.

XI

A hut leaned against a house
counting its days
winter after winter.

One winter
snow shattered its roof;
another winter
rain felled it.
Someone bought the house
and
raised a bungalow instead.

One upon a time
a hut was there;
now
it is sod.

XII

A plant irritably said to the slope:

“You have held my feet.

I crave for

a jump

a play

and

a song.”

One day rain cast aside the plant.

The slope lost its patience.

Who knows

the plant may have been wise

but I know that

I am a ninny.

XIII

The oil in the lamp dwindled;
the wick was a flicker
and
the light too dwindled.
A moth danced into the dying flame;
the half-burnt hope
fell into a niche.
When the flame died
darkness gave a hysterical laugh.
Why trust laughter!
Weeping knows no end.
Who lost
and
who won?

XIV

A pebble in the street corner
lay washed by the sun.
The builder
piled a stone upon stone.
The pebble was lost
in the gravel.
Long back
Fate had written on its face:
“For the road”
The builder ground it.
The pebble was dust.

XV

A wind
carrying twigs
climbed down a hill
and
walked on the riverbank.
The twigs got stuck against a mound of sand
and
found their place.
Since then the people say:
“The twigs are always for the fire”.

XVI

The wind lost its way
but
a whirlwind caught it
in the middle of the road.
The leaves swerved
and
screamed.
Satan had entered the fray.
It was daytime.

XVII

A broken mirror
shone on junk.
A cow came
and
looked at it;
a dog came
and
breathed at it;
a mad woman lifted it
and
wrapped it in her rags.
Nobody knows
what happened to the broken mirror
afterwards.

XVIII

A thin stream
flowed down the hill
like a king.
A twig was its crown.
The river will overflow its bank
and
shake the earth.
After a splash
the twig got stuck against a mound of sand.
Beauty is no slave to hollowness.

XIX

A chrysanthemum espied a marigold
and said:

“Why hurry!
Stay a while.

The sunshine is still all colour.
You are in the dawn of youth;
my childhood died a long ago.
Yours are the shavings of autumn;
mine is only the incense of spring.”

XX

The silence of the night said:
“The dew is born.”
Each leaf perspired.
The morning ray was aghast
and
died near the frost.

XXI

A lone naked poplar stood aloof,
there was a crowd of crows.
The leaves of a Chinar shook
and
the children shouted: "Caw...caw."
The crows fled like the wind
and
the branches trembled.
The poplar looked all around
and
found itself alone.

XXII

A breeze left for a walk
for it
wanted to attend a fair.
A wind engulfed it;
the breeze lost its soul.

XXIII

A cloud shinned up a mountain,
a lightning struck it;
it felt helpless
when
trapped in the lap of the mountain range;
flight was forbidden,
a rock gripped it
and
it fell
and
reached the bottom
with a bang.
I thought it was a thunder
till
the unexpected happened in home.
A friend invited a friend to a feast.
Does anyone ask the first snowfall:
“Where were you born?”

XXIV

A leaf detached from a tree
and
fell dancing upon the earth.

The turf said:

“This is a friend come
from the unstable
and
fallen upon the stable.”

XXV

A road jumped into a lane;
darkness was rooted there.
Two doors closeby
whispered
and
laughed
when they saw the road.
If spoken
the talk will lengthen.
The flowers shed tears below
and
the sky was starry above.

XXVI

A sculptor sculpted a relief,
painted it
and
rediscovered its each limb.
When he looked at its face
he found the lost
and
lost the find.

XXVII

Mynahs espied a small blackbird
and
from afar said:
“Hey, where are you going so early?
Who do you call up this time?”
The blackbird replied:
“You have to hide the booty of autumn,
I have to collect the treasures of spring.”

XXVIII

Ink spilled on a white cloth,
night ran away
after a long sleep.
I recalled the day
when
a crowd stared at me
for
a patch hid a hole in my garment.
The white
and
the black
quarreled.
All existence rests on this duel.

XXIX

By the foot of a hill
a butterfly winged back trembling
to its home.

On the way
flowers welcomed it and said:

“Come,
sit beside us
and

live your youth.”

The butterfly replied:
“You tempt and unfold and madden;
I show my colours in vain.”

XXX

In the mid summer
the leaves of young poplars
fell.

Only a few leaves
crowned them;
the rest were taken away
by the rain.

Listen:
“Fellow travelers are strangers here.”

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About the Poet

Dina Nath Nadim (1916-1988)

Nadim is considered to be one of the greatest and influential poets of the 20th century Kashmir. He is known for his only collection of poems *Shihily Kul* (The Shady Tree). The collection includes his *ghazals*, *vakhs*, *haikus*, *sutras*, songs, sonnets and other small poetic forms representing different phases of his life as a poet. The anthology won him the Sahitya Academy Award (India's National Academy of Letters) for 1986. His poems *Mye Chham Aash Pagahich* (I Hope For Tomorrow), *Bu Gyav Ni Aaz* (My Song Shall Remain Unsung Today) and *Nabad Tyathavyan* (Candy and Wormseed) are some of the finest poems of modern Kashmiri Literature.

About the Translator

Arvind Gigoo has translated many Kashmiri language poets into English. His recent English translation of Arjan Dev Majboor's book of Kashmiri poems *Waves* has won rave reviews. He teaches English Literature at Government Degree College Udhampur, (J&K State) 182 101, INDIA

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