

Nadir Munjays At Tarakh Halwoy's Shop

Evening has assumed a serene yet exciting mood,
Everything is pregnant with tranquil hopefulness
After day's shattering struggle with survival;
To make money men would stress themselves to death.

I have worn the best night suit I have
And carefully disheveled my hair in a Dilip Kumar coiffure
And slipped the best khaddaon we had in the house.
Off I go to Tarakh Halwoy's sweet shop
To have a good time.

Tarakh Halwoy's sweet shop is near Habba Kadal,
An elite shopping center of Srinagar.
It is a small, dark and dingy place.
Full of cooking utensils,
With little room for the customers to sit and eat.
Tarakh Halwoy himself is rotund and mouth-shut,
Continuously busy cooking sweets in a big kadai,
Never bantering with his customers.

Maybe, it was the first take-out in Kashmir.
The shop serves nadir munjays, dodhu alavs, pakoras, samosas,
Puris, seemniy, burfi, ladoos, pedas, and other things -
All high delicacy Kashmiri snacks.
Although the place is renowned for its dodhu alavs
But nadir munjayas give me a gastro-delight high.

The scene outside the shop is that of crushing high traffic,
With tangawallahs exhorting their emaciated horses with voice and whip,
In the nightmarishly narrow lanes panicky pedestrians scrambling for their safety
And sometimes colliding with the shop walls.
The scene is soaked with chaos, fear, noise, and excitement.
But those were the sounds and the sights we would want to experience

When visiting Tarakh Halwoy.

In those days of youth, primitiveness, and poverty,
Habba Kadal was our Times Square and Tarakh Halwoy was our Macdonald's.

Besides the delectations at Tarakh Halwoy's sweet shop
There were delectations at the street in front of it to be had:
Sweet, nimble, love-filled girls walking toward Habba Kadal,
Pretending not to look at Dilip Kumars in the sweat shop
But yet stealing full amorous glances at them,
Contoured with caressing sexy half-smiles.

My visit to Tarakh Halwoy's sweet shop was just an excuse
To have a chance to see Bimla, my dancing heart-throb,
With whom my eyes-only romance
Had been born on the neighboring Habba Kadal bridge,
On which we would walk round and round,
Though in opposite directions of traffic,
With our gazes inter-locked,
Till the street cops and the stray animals
Would look at us with angry suspicion.
Much have I fantasized to share Nadir Munjays
One day with Bimla at the sweet ship.

Suffern, New York

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