

# Stirrings Of Kashmir's Soul

Kashmir is poor, un-peaceful, and antiquated -  
A sigh of nature, a tapestry of time.

But Kashmir has a lover's twinkle in her eyes,  
A mother's womb,  
A friend's unalloyed candor.

Long time ago I made a tryst to visit her,  
After a period of infernal turmoil among its people.  
When neighbor lynched neighbor,  
When women were compromised,  
And religion became a weapon of attack.  
But the majestically mystic scenery of Kashmir stood silent.

Why did gods stand in inaction when Kashmir was disrobed  
And subjected to crass humiliation?

I walked the street in front of the home I was born in.  
It looked deserted and forlorn and also changed.  
I flashbaked to my maternal grandfather with his  
Pagdi and cane, his rotund mid-section giving him dignity.  
My childhood was a mixture of adoration and torture.  
The former went up to the age of eight, the latter from eight to fourteen.  
I felt tortured because I was living away from my parents.

I went to see my home where I was raised.  
The neighbors swarmed around me with love-laden arms,  
Imploring me to have tea at their places.  
People say there is hatred between Muslims and Hindus.  
But I never saw it.

I went into the home room by room.  
I saw the rooms I used to study in and sleep in.  
Seventy percent of the house remained unchanged.  
I walked the streets which lead to my school.

Time seemed to remain standstill at the moment,

The backward journey to my past seemed a chimera,  
A return trip to my mother's womb.

Kashmir is on one hand one of the richest places on earth  
Due to its magnificent natural beauty,  
On the other a backward place, forever cursed  
With vindictive politics and foreign-assisted militancy.

In spite of Kashmir's stupendous problems  
It looks serenely sublime,  
A mosaic of enigma and endurance.

The soul of Kashmir is not connected to this world  
But to an ethereality above it,  
Kashmir may be poor in the worldly sense  
But it is very rich in its conception of the cosmos  
And man's place in it.

It is a place that gave birth to  
Abhinavagupta, Lalleshwari, and Rupa Bhavani.

The cycle of time will bring Kashmir again  
To its worldly prominence,  
Its tormented people will rise again  
To meet their God and heritage.

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