

“Tarvun Chhu Karnav” - A Great Kashmiri Song

<http://kaulscorner.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Artist-Track-09-Red.mp3>

(Note: Move the music sound icon in the music box above to the beginning of the track.)

Great songs are only a few in every region of the world. So, when one stumbles on one it is a great experience. So was my experience when I heard Master Zinda Kaul’s (Masterji’s) written poem, *Tarvun Chu Karnav*, sung as a song recently. It is my misfortune that I had neither read the poem nor heard the song all this time I have been on this earth.

Master Zinda Kaul (1884-1965) was a preeminent Kashmiri litterateur who initially wrote in Persian, Hindi, and Urdu. He only started writing in Kashmiri in 1942. In 1956 he was awarded a Sahitya Akademi award in literature – first for a Kashmiri – for his book *Sumran*, written in Devnagri. It was a book of verse supposedly based on his son’s untimely death. It is considered that his writings in Kashmiri surpassed in quality to those in other languages. He translated Parmanand’s poems in English in three volumes.

Masterji was influenced by Lal Ded and Parmanand, and by the Indian tradition of finding the salvation of one’s soul from the fetters of this world through consciousness control, idealism, sacrifice, and abnegation. Although his life in the world was harsh but he prevailed in sticking to his mission in life.

In this poem Masterji is strongly urging people to leave this world and cross to

the “other” world, the world where materialistic success and petty actions to survive are unnecessary.

In 1998 Kashmir Overseas Association, based in U.S.A., released a C.D. album of Kashmiri religious songs, called *Mani Kamna*. The composition of its music was done by Mr. T.K. Jalali and the singers were Arti Tikun Kaul and Archana Jalali Tikun, the former U.S.-based and the latter Canada-based. The recording was done at JMD Studio, Calcutta, in March, 1998.

The song’s greatness lies in its theme. Masterji says that the right moment of going to the other shore is now. Crossing from this world to the other world is the apex of the blessedness of one’s life – there can be no doubt about that. If you do not exploit the arrival of your moment for crossing to the other shore, then you may not get another chance. People are harassed taking care of their material needs, while they neglect the heaven of their spirituality. The material world will keep on surviving on this planet, but the epitome moment of spiritual maturation – which implies leaving this world – once neglected may not return. Feel good, think good, do good in this world and you will lead a blessed life. Eternity is an extension of a life lived with good values and actions. One of the ideas that Masterji stresses in his vision of eternal bliss is that the moment of “crossing to the other shore” is now – it is not later, tomorrow, or day-after-tomorrow – it is now.

The great message of Masterji has been eminently served by T.K. Jalali’s musical composition. He has brilliantly chosen a prayer-like, sorrowful, and haunting tune, which drills into one’s heart and captures one’s mental firmament. I cannot imagine a better composition for this song. As if this was not enough gold for this song, we have a superb singing by Arti Tikun Kaul and Archana Jalali Tikun. All in all it is a splendid work of art. I have many times cried listening to it, especially, after listening to the line, *vunken che vela jaan*.

I asked Arti Ji why the song was sung as a duet. She explained that because there is so much repetition of lines in it, it was thought addition of another voice will dilute monotony due to that.

Lyrics of Tarvun Chhu Karnov

Tarvun chhu karnav, hukh dith chhu vanan,

Kanh ma sa tariv appore,

Patta taar banivna aaluch ma kariv,

Udam tariv appore.

Karinar taar chunu gari-gari banan,

Vunken che veela jaan,

Nashtur te ye saath ma raaviraviv,

Udam tariv appore.

Garveth sombran chhuv mara gamith,

Thakith te chenith paymit,

Gari roz yeti tai, kath kyuth bariv,

Tshari tariv appore.

Rit baav thaviv, rithi baviv,

Rithi kariv kaar,

Ye yeti kariv, te tathi soriv,

Sat-karme tariv appore.

Literary Translation

The ferry-boat is about to cross, boatman is saying loudly

Does anyone want to cross to the other shore?

Later crossing will be difficult, so do not be lazy,

Take courage to cross.

The ferry-boat crossing is not always available,

Now is the right time,

Do not lose this auspicious moment,

Take courage to cross.

You are trapped in household material concerns,

Tired and stressed,

Your house will survive, why worry about filling it,

Let everyone cross to the other shore.

Have good feelings, think good,

Do good things,

What you sow here, so shall you reap there,

With good work cross to the other shore.

Revision 3 Notes:

1. The poem is much longer than what Artiji and Archanaji sang as a song. They sang only four stanzas while the poem is of eleven stanzas.
2. The words on which we have been debating for a while:

Hakh, Udam, and Saree are according to the text: Hakh, Udam, and Tshari But *hakh* seems to mean in context of the poem firmness in my guess and it is not *krakh*, meaning shouting, as Nehru Sahib thought.

Udam may be Devnagri version of Sanskrit Udyama, which Kundan Sahib thinks is the underlying word, meaning effort and courage, but which Langoo Sahib thinks is Vodyam, meaning awareness, courage and leaving all fatigue behind. I believe Langoo Sahib is right, with only improvement on the understanding of the use of the word in the song I am making is that the Sanskrit word Udyama has been corrupted to Udam in Kashmiri.

There is no doubt that what is sung as *saree* in the last line of the 3rd stanza is actually *tshari*, meaning empty, which Kundan Sahib had suggested. This is supported by Sharika Leela text. There can be one more doubt that Sharika Leela text may be corrupted, and then the only authentic text can only be found in Sumran. Can anyone lay his hands on that? Let us have the above doubts put to rest. Thanks for your efforts in interpreting a great Kashmiri song.

Thanks

Even a little song-essay like this could not have been completed if I would not have been fortunate to have the contributions from the following special personalities, who were greatly beholden to Masterji's spiritual and literary aura and the dimension of this song. Along with me we discussed and debated the meaning of several old Kashmiri words. The lyrics and the literary translation of the song given here was based on the inputs of the following:

1. Dr. Ravi Kaw (US)
2. Mr. Dileep Langoo (India)
3. Mr. Triloki Nath Dhar "Kundan" (India)
4. Mr. Sunil Bali (India)
5. Mr. Hirdynath Nehru (Canada)

6. Dr.Shaykher (US)

Note

The audio file and the Word file of this article are attached.

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