

# Upon Waking Up On My Birthday



Above Picture: Me, at about the age of two, with my mother, Aruna Kaul Karihaloo, in Srinagar, Kashmir.

I woke up on my birthday to find out when the guruji will arrive,  
To perform the pooja invoking the Gods for my well being.  
I waited for the refreshing rub of a new shirt  
And the gastronomical seduction of tahar and charvan.  
The dignifying touch of a tilak was missing,  
So was the mysterious bond of a narivan.  
All of these are now interesting relics in the museum of time.  
Most of us did not understand then,  
And even now, what these sanctified trappings were for.  
But we felt we were being connected to something larger than us,  
Something within us but beyond the ordinary reach.  
Every age has its rituals but birthdays will always have the same message:  
To celebrate life and to feel its miracle.

Translation of Hindi words:

guruji: priest

pooja: religious ceremony

tahar: salted yellow rice, which must be served with yogurt after the ceremony

charvan: goat or lamb liver cooked as a hot, spicy curry

tilak: a vermilion paste mark on the forehead, between the eyes.

Bears high religious connections

Narivan: a red and white twisted cotton thread tied on the wrist by the priest after the ceremony. Religious connection