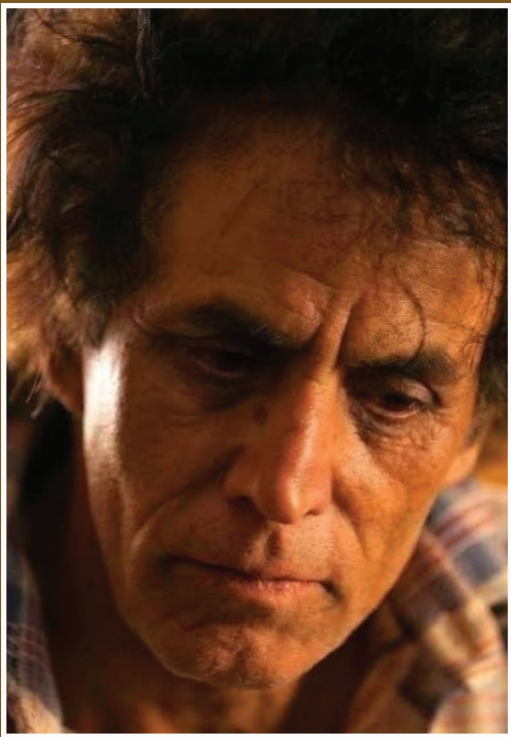


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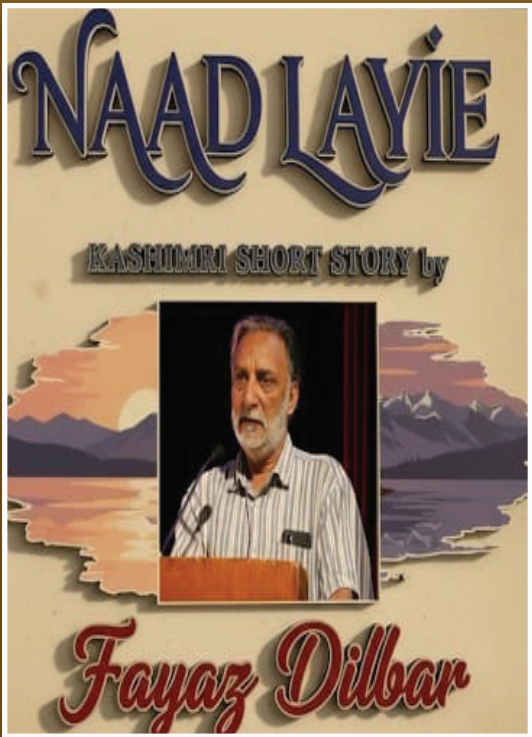
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NAAD LAYIE

Translated Version of Fayaz Dilbar's Kashmiri Short Story By Mushtaque B Barq



Mushtaq B Barq

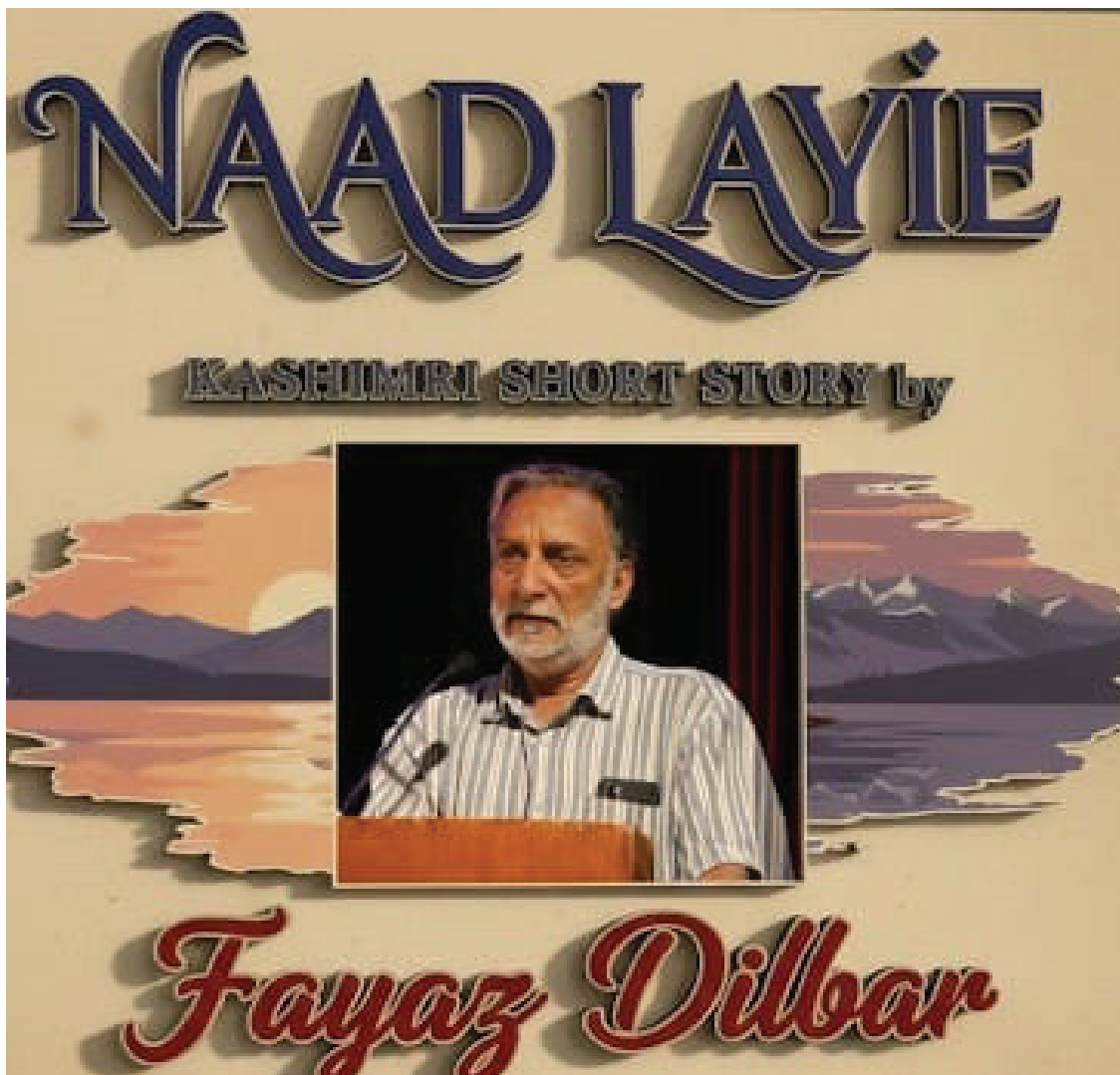
Subsequent to the marrow freezing chill, the massive snowfall followed for many days as a result a relentless congealed state pushed one and all to stay indoors for the dread of death.

The unified city had instantly turned into an ice land and in the midst of this rigorousness; Saja Masa broke her sleep too early unlike her schedule and through ajarred window repeatedly scanned the whole iciness. The life emerged as the traceless track to her; the entire city seemed shrouded in comforters. Had it been an ordinary day, she too like others would have been in the lap of coziness, but it was 2nd December, the International Human Rights Day. On the private calendar of Saja Masa this specific date was the most auspicious day for the possible reason affectionately known to her.

Keeping in view Saja Masa took the memorable photograph of Yousef who went missing some eighteen years ago at the age of seventeen to be fixed by previously prepared glue on the cardboard. To hold the placard, she jointed an extended wooden stick at its end after stabbing a nail. She draped herself in a tattered burqa, locked the house and headed towards Pratab Park.

Her watchful steps on the frozen tracks would encourage her to exchange a fleeting look at the photograph of Yousuf and yet as need cropped up she turned the placard upside down to use the stick as support in the effective disguise of her lost son. She would envision her feeble hand on the mighty shoulder of her son powerfully aiding her to walk carefully over the slippery and iced up tracks slowly.

On the odd occasions when she inevitably encountered with any pedestrian, she would hide the placard as if carrying a weapon under her burqa. Her feet in the plastic boots had lost the sensation for the reason being constantly chafing against the frozen sheets of snow, but despite numbness, her toes witnessed a burning sensation, no, not at all the burning sensation but a feeling like pain and blazing consciousness that would wrench her heart. With might underlined by innocent hands resembling the minute supple hands of Yousuf in his infancy, she would caress her anxious face to feel the emotional warmth and unusual delicacy of Shahtoosh.



Advancing menacingly towards the gate of Pratab Park the hands of Yousuf had infused much love through Saja Masa's hands that were enough to melt the icicles of her eyes to witness a cascade down her cheeks. Pratab Park was already flooded with men, women and children holding placards carrying the photos of their missing members to summon their own Yousufs.

Saja Masa joined the group and was frequently raising her placard bearing the picture of Yousuf to register her moans and sobs through soliloquies. Behind these protestors, a cluster of armed forces including Ram Nayak who was on duty had seized Saja Masa's Yousuf some eighteen years ago.

The echo of protesters was rising to the heavens, and one of the women on the right side of Saja Masa knuckled her gently and meekly asked, "Did you pay a visit to Papa 2 again, heard that some old record is in evidence."

Without any possible response, Saja Masa heaved a protracted sigh. Wiped the necessary salt of her right eye by her left palm and with all her might tried her best, to stir her numbed toes — an abortive endeavor that broke her down and

wailed "Where should I seek you Oh my son!"

The wail of Saja Masa triggered one and all and it agitated the troops standing at the back of the protestors and their hold on the guns was noticeable. Ram Nayak came forward and started to scan photos of missing persons fixed on the placards and he was lost in the ether when he spotted the photo of Yousuf, perchance recognized him.

He experienced a jolt as if he walked over a living wire; the effect of it subtly altered the unique topography of his face. He took hold of his AK47 and turned his head away. But after a while, his eyes kept playing hide and seek to monitor Saja Masa and the photo of Yousuf.

Between the wails of Saja Masa and Ram Nayak's half-hearted attempts, the photojournalists clicked plentifully. In this bone-breaking chill TV reporters were seen issuing columns of vapours from their mouths and in the meanwhile, an English lady from Human Rights appeared on the scene. A memorandum was handed over to her amidst the camera clicks and with it, the peaceful protest concluded.

All the protesters left the Park.

They took extra care to move gently because it was too slippery to walk. The armed men too followed the suit as Saja Masa was well ahead of them by pressing hard her plastic boots to ensure safety.

She stopped stirring her numb toes and the troop marched ahead but no one paid heed to the placard that Saja Masa was carting under her burqa save Ram Nayak who was the last one in the troop to ensure safety by walking carefully over the slippery footpath.

With every step, he would imagine falling and to keep his spirit high he was in the heart of his hearts reciting Hanuman Chalisa. Saja Masa was moving slowly towards him and was glaring at his helmet trying to peep down its shell to discover something.

In the meantime, Ram Nayak suffered a fall and his AK47 slipped from his grip and Saja Masa instinctively but loudly uttered: Bismillah, let God ensure your safety.

After that Saja Masa sealed her mouth and heaved a sigh, stirred her head and whispered impressively, "I thought" what she thought is still a mystery even to Saja Masa herself.

The Inner Contest: Godliness, the Belly, and the Moral Drift of Man.....



Akram Siddiqui
siddiquireyan@gmail.com

“Why do you busy yourself with the branches?”

Hold fast to the root, for the root is the source of life."

(Shams-e-Tabrizi)

Kashmiri Sufi memory recalls Sheikh Nur-ud-Din Nurani (Nund Rishi)RA , the moral sentinel of the Valley, who, in seasons of abundance, chose restraint over indulgence. When a disciple once asked why he denied the body what Providence had made plentiful, the saint replied with quiet gravity: "I do not fear hunger; I fear the moment when the belly begins to command." It was neither ascetic exhibition nor contempt for sustenance, but a lucid diagnosis of the human condition; is not a settled fact but a sustained occurrence.

Man does not merely exist; he is perpetually kept in existence. At every instant, an unseen sanction holds his elements in concord, his consciousness in wakefulness, his moral faculty in readiness. The Qur'an intimates this profound dependence in a verse both intimate and austere: "When I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit." This breathing, often recited yet rarely contemplated with due sobriety, is not to be construed in corporeal or incarnationist terms. God is indivisible, incomparable, exalted beyond form, location, and partition. What is conferred upon man is not the Divine Essence, but a life-sustaining, order-conferring energy, proceeding by command. God remains the fountainhead; man remains the contingent recipient.

Existence, therefore, is not ownership. It is entrusted coherence.

So long as this sustaining endowment abides, the human being persists as a unified moral organism, body held together, mind alert, conscience operative. When it is recalled, life recedes, coherence unravels, and matter resumes its long obedience to dust. This law does not govern animate beings alone. Even what we designate as inanimate subsists only by cohesion. Stones retain their obstinate form because unseen forces bind their atoms; when those forces slacken, pulverisation follows. The Qur'an states this ontological dependence with crystalline clarity: "Indeed, Allah holds the heavens and the earth lest they cease to exist." Noth-



ing stands by itself; everything stands by being upheld.

Within this borrowed coherence, man is not rendered morally inert. He is endowed with awareness, inclination, and choice. It is here, in the interior of the human being, that the essential drama unfolds, not in distant heavens, but within the precincts of the self. Man becomes the site of an unremitting contest, a tug of war that neither sleeps nor concludes. On one side stands godliness, the subtle gravitational pull toward restraint, veracity, justice, mercy, and remembrance. On the other stands the belly, not merely the anatomical stomach, but the entire dominion of appetite, consumption, and unrefined desire.

The belly is man's earliest claimant. Hunger announces itself before reason ripens, before moral grammar is acquired, before faith is consciously affirmed. Through eating, energy is generated; through energy, action becomes possible. This energy is morally neutral, innocent of intention. Yet it is never directionless. It demands governance. What determines its moral fate is not its quantity, but its commander.

When godliness presides, energy is transmuted. It refines itself into patience under provocation, generosity amid scarcity, humility in authority, and restraint where indulgence is within reach. When the belly ascends to command, the same energy degenerates. It spills into excess, sharpens lust, inflames anger, bloats ego, and dulls the moral nerve. Sin, in this reading, is not the eruption of a novel evil

substance; it is the misappropriation of a pre-existing force.

This understanding rescues morality from mystification and situates it squarely within responsibility. Man does not err because godliness absconds; he errs because he demotes it. He places it behind the belly, behind appetite, behind immediacy. The Qur'an diagnoses this inversion with unsettling candour: "Have you seen the one who takes his desire as his god?" Desire becomes a false deity not because it creates, but because it commands allegiance. Whatever commands obedience assumes lordship.

Islamic spiritual wisdom has long apprehended this hierarchy. The Prophet Muḥammad warned that no vessel a human fills is worse than his stomach, not because nourishment is sinful, but because excess enfeebls discernment and emboldens the lower self. Fasting, therefore, is not an exercise in deprivation; it is an act of moral recalibration. It restores proportion, humbles appetite, and reinstates godliness at the helm.

Imam al-Ghazali, that meticulous anatomist of the inner life, identifies excessive consumption as the seedbed of innumerable spiritual maladies. An overburdened stomach, he observes, excites desire, burdens the heart, and veils the intellect. What begins as indulgence matures into heedlessness. Junayd of Baghdad, speaking from the sobriety of lived realization rather than theory, rendered the same truth with ascetic precision when he said that the path to God is obstructed by the stomach

and the passions. These pronouncements do not arise from bodily contempt, but from psychological and spiritual lucidity.

The Qur'an itself does not anathematize enjoyment; it censures excess. "Eat and drink, but do not commit excess." Excess is not merely physical; it is existential. It marks the threshold where consumption ceases to sustain life and begins to dominate it. Beyond that threshold, remembrance wanes, accountability erodes, and sin loses its sting.

Moral failure, then, is seldom abrupt. It is incremental, almost courteous. Appetite is indulged slightly beyond necessity; desire is justified slightly beyond reason; ego is indulged slightly beyond humility. Gradually, the belly ascends the hierarchy, and godliness is relegated, not repudiated, not denied, merely postponed. The tragedy is not outright rebellion against God, but forgetfulness of order.

Ibn A'illah al-Iskandari distilled this quiet catastrophe into a single aphorism when he observed that the root of disobedience lies in satisfaction with the self, while the root of obedience lies in dissatisfaction with it. Satisfaction with the self is not serenity; it is complacency with imbalance. Dissatisfaction, in this sense, is not despair, it is vigilance.

Even death, viewed through this lens, appears less as annihilation than as disclosure. When the sustaining energy is withdrawn, the illusion of autonomy collapses. What returns to God is not flesh, appetite, or ego, but the entrusted force that was never possessed. The Qur'an addresses the tranquil soul at that moment, summoning it to return, not as something lost, but as something completed.

Thus human life unfolds as a continuous contest. The belly supplies energy; godliness supplies direction. Energy without direction degrades; direction without energy remains unrealized. Whichever is enthroned determines the moral and spiritual trajectory of man. To err is human; to persist in error is to resist reordering. Redemption lies not in negating the body, but in restoring hierarchy, allowing the higher to govern the lower.

When godliness leads, the same energy that once fueled excess becomes a means of ascent. Appetite, restored to its rightful station, ceases to tyrannize. The soul regains lucidity, the intellect resumes command, and life recovers its moral cadence. In that restoration lies the quiet dignity of a life lived in alignment—not against desire, but above it.

“I am the slave of Love and free
from both worlds:

A drop I was, Love made me an
endless sea”

Hafiz-e-Shirazi

Ghazal



Steffen Horstmann

In the Dark
Be near me when night laments or
sings ...
—Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Orpheus dreamt he heard the
notes of a lyre played in the dark,
As Eurydice's body of mist began
to fade in the dark.

The breeze sighing through olive
trees was a song of sorrow, His sweat
Was droplets of blood absorbing
moonlight, where He prayed in the
dark.

As we strolled streets polished
black by rain, we heard the wind's
melody—

When a dancer's winged shadow
leapt through a colonnade in the
dark.

Dear Isolde, was it a tear or the
chilled kiss of a snowflake

Melting on your cheek, as you watched Tristan's figure fade in the dark?

I was transfixed with a comet's
light on the sea, when she appeared
As the surf's ghost formed of
swirling foam, a mermaid in the
dark.

Our mere voices provoked the
wraiths who moved like smoke
around us,

To be seen by the light of sparks
our fire sprayed in the dark.

My Angel, you appear to me only
to vanish in mist, where moonlight
Shines like silver flames within
the waterfall's cascade in the dark.

Sea gales wailed through the night
in a storm's aftermath, far lightning
pulsed

As we danced with the shadows of
Narra trees that swayed in the dark.

Roses had been strewn through
the catacombs, shadows of candle
flames

Widened slowly, became phantoms we ran to evade in the dark.

A nightingale sang as you rose
from the basin pool, glistening
In starlit mist, the fabric in which
you were arrayed in the dark.

(Steffen Horstmann's poems and book reviews have appeared in publications throughout the world, including Baltimore Review, Free State Review, Louisiana Literature, San Antonio Review, Texas Poetry Journal and Tiferet. He has published two books of ghazals, Jalsaghar (2016) and Ujjain (2017), and has recently completed a new book of poems, Ellora.)

Self-Made Character



Sushant Thapa

Let them weave
Stories and plots.
You don't belong
To your downfall,
The scheme by them.
One life is all yours.
One life is your whole time.
You are for the convictions
Of one sweet symphony
In a band of disharmony.
Take away the glitters,
You shine like a bare sun.
The days tell you
About the cold nights,
You lose no self-control,
You need no clappings
To know the music of
Your own soul.
You would ink your passion
And let the world turn away
Remember: life is one
And all yours.
Be the player
Of your game.
Let them choose theirs.

(Sushant Thapa has published Nine books of English poetry and one short story collection. He is a lecturer of English by profession in Biratnagar, Nepal. He holds an M.A. in English from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

A City That Stole My Dawn



Sandeep Sharma

I miss the birds.
Every morning for years, their chatter
slipped through my window like hot tea—
sparrows arguing, a lone mynah calling
my name
a daily baptism before my eyes opened.
It was my alarm clock, my prayer, my
promise that the day would be gentle.
Now? Nothing.
The jungle outside my childhood home is
gone, replaced by towers that block the sun.
I wake to a dog barking at shadows, my
feet hitting cold concrete instead of soft
grass.
There's no space to walk, no stream to
listen to, no rooster to announce the dawn.
My pen used to dance at morning—words
spilled like drizzle.
Today it's dry. Silent.
My chest carries a storm no one sees:
thunder in my ribs, thundering behind
my eyes,
tears that fall inside where no one hears.
This city is a tomb of glass and concrete.
I'm buried alive in it—
grinding my teeth,
waiting for one small bird
to sing me back to life.

(The poet is the Bureau Chief of Eastern Chronicle- an English daily published from Guwahati, Assam)

To the Weeping Willow



Mairooh Rashid

Last night,
 fraught
 with cold and the stillness
 of the dark,
 and I trembling
 with fright,
 managed to peep
 through the blinds
 into the lawns,
 bitten
 by the bitter autumn breeze.
 I saw
 your delicate branches
 hanging
 in remorse,
 the way my head does
 in shame.
 I wasted my time,
 all my life;
 what was your guilt?

(Professor Majrooh Rashid is a trilingual poet, critic, and academic. His profound and multifaceted contributions to the world of Contemporary Literature is reflected in his extensive publications in Kashmiri, Urdu, and English. He formerly served as the Head of the Kashmiri Department at the University of Kashmir and Director Habba Khatoon Centre for Kashmiri Language and Literature Islamic University (IUST)

Wingbeats



Elisabetta Bonaparte

I have seen dreams
crumble in memory
like rough-hewn stones
under the scorch of an arid
sun,
rivers run dry
whose surging waters once
roared,
wild and abundant
with thoughts never concealed,
wind and storm hit
against the mightiest peaks
until even the deepest roots
of principles are torn away
And yet,
stubbornly, still lutters
that wingbeat within the chest-
a surviving frenzy
to catch life by surprise.

(Elisabetta Bonaparte is an Italian poet, writer, lawyer, and teacher. She has won numerous national and international literary awards, including first prizes, medals, plaques, and special honours. Her work has been widely published in literary anthologies and in national and international journals, both in print and online)

Noor Shah's Writings: Perspectives from Litterateurs and Critics



Dr. Basharat Khan
chogalwriter76@gmail.com

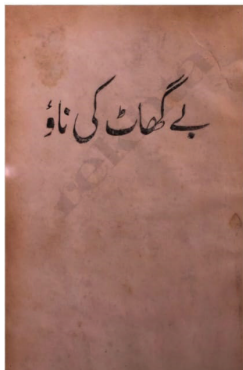
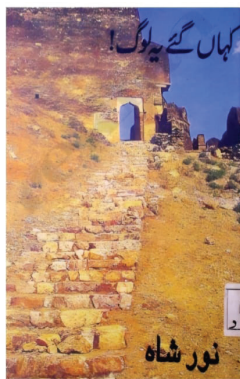
Among the distinguished contemporary fiction writers of Kashmir, Noor Shah stands out as a figure of considerable importance. For nearly a decade, he has devoted himself to the art of storytelling, consistently crafting works that resonate with readers. His short stories have garnered acclaim for their depth and originality, securing him a notable position in the literary landscape. The recognition of his work extends beyond regional boundaries, earning praise at the national level for its innovation and narrative prowess.

This article seeks to provide an overview of Noor Shah's contributions through the insights of several renowned fiction writers and critics. These perspectives will elucidate the impact of Noor Shah's work on the literary community, highlighting his unique voice and the significance of his narratives in the broader context of contemporary literature.

Noor Muhammad Shah, widely known by his pen name Noor Shah, was born in Dalgate Drogran, Srinagar, on July 19, 1936. He is a remarkable blend of literary brilliance and dedicated public service. His writing, much like the gentle yet steadfast flow of the Jhelum River, has left an indelible mark on the art of storytelling.

With a Bachelor's degree as his formal education, Noor Shah embarked on a distinguished career in government, holding key positions such as Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Rural Development and Director of Science and Technology. However, it was his deep-seated passion for literature that truly defined him. As a committed advocate for Urdu, he played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting the language, notably as President of the Jammu and Kashmir Urdu Academy and through his editorial work with various prestigious publications.

Noor Shah's literary output, comprising novels, short stories, and radio dramas, showcases his profound understanding of human nature. His works, including *Veeranay ke Phool* and *Neeli Jheel*, *Kaale Saaye*, resonate far beyond Kashmir's borders, exploring universal themes of love, loss, and existential reflection. Translated into multiple



languages, his stories have carried the essence of his homeland to a global audience.

Dr. Fareed Parbati praises Noor Shah's literary contributions:

"In my view, Noor Shah distinguishes himself among contemporary Urdu writers with his vibrant and engaging work, marked by keen observations and an engaging narrative style. His short stories demonstrate artistic precision and evolution, adhering to the fundamental objectives of literary creation. He excels in portraying harsh realities of life, eroded values, and personal conflicts with exceptional storytelling skill. His plots, drawn from everyday life, are presented with remarkable creativity and coherence, often achieving a level of refinement that resembles poetic prose."

Professor Quddus Javid as well known critic and scholar comments:

"In narratology, a story must fulfill its narrative role independently of its stylistic attributes: whether romantic, realist, straightforward, or symbolic. This principle is particularly relevant for writers who embody their narratives, using their stories to experience and reflect upon life and time. Today, short stories and novels hold a significant place in social discourse. Noor Shah's extensive fifty-year career, blending romanticism with realism, exemplifies this notion. While he might not recall the exact number of his stories, his contributions, including early works for *Bazicha-e-Sukhan*, hold significant artistic value beyond mere stylistic exercises."

Professor Shakeel U Rehman observes:

"Noor Shah's writing is celebrated for its masterful integration of theme and technique. It offers a profound exploration of romanticism, skillfully connecting characters with their environments to create lasting impressions. His nuanced portrayal of sensuality and values is particularly evident in stories like "Khushboo Ka Safar" and "Aakhri Din Ki Talash," which provide deep insights into female psychology. Furthermore, his engagement with tragedies of life is powerfully demonstrated in stories such as "Woh Ek Shakhs Tha" and "Zameen Khulegi Zuban," where he captures the depth of human experience with exceptional sensitivity and depth."

Professor Hamidi Kashmiri lauds Noor Shah as a distinguished fiction writer, whose works, such as the notable collection "Be-Samar Sach," showcase a distinctive creative vision. Despite a period of seclusion, he maintained his productivity, underscoring his dedication to literary innovation and personal expression in the face of changing narrative techniques.

Mohammad Yousuf Taing describes Noor Shah as an exceptional Urdu short story writer, celebrated for his fluid and engaging narrative style. M Y Taing praises his skill in creating vivid, nuanced portraits of real people, capturing their essence with remarkable precision. He lauds Noor Shah's work as both illuminating and enriching, acknowledging the wide admiration he has earned throughout his career.

Deepak Budki remarks:

"Noor Shah's literary journey, spanning over fifty years, reflects his deep engagement with human experiences and societal upheavals. His early works, characterized by romantic and aesthetic ideals, captivated readers with their idealism. However, the political turbulence in Kashmir led him to adopt a more realistic portrayal of suffering. His works, including 'Kahan Gaye Woh Log' blend personal recollections with literary critique, balancing romanticism with realism. His efforts in preserving Kashmiri literary traditions are both significant and enduring."

Dr. Reyaz Tawheedi notes:

"Noor Shah's collection "Kashmir Kahani" offers a poignant portrayal of the Kashmiri people's suffering through decades of conflict. Stories such as "Yehi Sach Hai" and "Udaan" vividly capture the omnipresence of death and loss in the region. Characters like Salman, who symbolize the tragic fate of many lost to violence, reflect the painful reality of countless Disappearances. His evocative imagery and portrayal of human suffering honor the resilience of people, establishing him as a major contemporary voice in Urdu literature."

The JK Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages has published a special August 2024 issue of *Sheeraza Urdu*, dedicated to Noor Shah. This edition highlights his substantial impact on Urdu literature, featuring in-depth analyses by veteran writers and critics.

Salim Salik editor Sheeraza Urdu remarks:

The history of Urdu short stories in Jammu and Kashmir spans nearly a century. Despite this, the contributions have often been overlooked by the broader literary world. Claims that Jammu and Kashmir has not produced significant writers are inaccurate and diminish serious discourse. The works of prominent figures like Prem Nath Pargesi, Prem Nath Dar, Thakur Panchhi, Pushkar Nath, Umar Majid, and Noor Shah refute these claims. Recognizing their contributions is essential.

This Special Sheeraza Number celebrates Noor Shah, whose 65-year career blends romanticism with realism. His extensive oeuvre includes short stories, plays, and novels, alongside significant contributions to literary journalism and mentorship in Jammu and Kashmir."

Thus, it is apparent that critics and reviewers have not only praised Noor Shah's short story writing but have also affirmed his notable literary standing. His stories, which deftly combine romantic themes with a nuanced exploration of social and environmental issues, captivate readers and offer them a compelling and engaging experience.

The Price of Beauty and the Value of Choice



Dr Sona Agrawal

Arty was born with a natural luminescence. Her bright, mesmerising eyes, broad forehead and sharp features, framed by raven black hair, made her an indisputable beauty. More profound than her looks, however, was her spirit. She was the village's favorite—a girl whose cheerful voice, genuine courtesy, and sympathetic nature felt like warm sunshine. People loved her as she was the real embodiment of grace.

She possessed a gentle, artistic soul and deep aesthetic sense. A chipped vase, a line of poetry, the sunset over the arid fields—she appreciated every aspect of beauty. Yet, she found no solace in textbooks. She was not academically “intelligent,” and her education was neglected, partly due to her lack of interest, but mostly due to the suffocating environment created by her father. Her father, Mr. Thakur, the powerful Sarpanch of Khandala, and her mother, a formidable MLA, saw Arti saw her not as a cherished child, but as an extension of their political legacy or, worse, a burden. Mr. Thakur’s pride was an oppressive force; he constantly mourned the fact that his beautiful child was a girl, an entity incapable of inheriting his “feudal lordship.” His contempt for her, thinly veiled as traditional authority, was the only shadow in Arti’s otherwise bright life. This constant, psychological torment created a deep, aching wound within her—a desperate need for unconditional acceptance.

On a wintry day, Arti's mother insisted she accompany her to the busy marketplace—a routine that felt more like a parade than an outing. It was there, amidst the chaos of carts and vendors, that fate intervened. A reckless scooter swerved, and in a terrifying moment of impact, Arti was thrown. When she opened her eyes, she was pooled in blood, and cried with deep pain. There was a passerby, a figure materialized through the haze: Sunil. He was a local man, equally striking in his quiet, dependable way—handsome, kind, and possessed of a rare, grounded optimism. While the crowd stood stunned, he carefully lifted her and rushed her to the nearest hospital.

In the sterile confines of the recovery room, a relationship began to stitch itself together, much like Arti's physical wounds. Her parents, caught between their political responsibilities and their daughter's care, could not be constantly present. Sunil, whose home was nearby, stepped into the void.

He would visit in the afternoons.

He didn't fill the time with flattery; he filled it with genuine conversation. They shared their internal landscapes—their idea on life's hidden beauties, their quite hopes, and the shared, unspoken belief that the world held more beauty than bitterness.

The attraction they had felt on the day of the accident deepened into a secure, profound love. For Arti, Sunil was the first person who ever saw past the 'asset' and accepted her vulnerable, artistic core. For Sunil, Arti was the light his optimistic heart was searching for. Their dependence on each other became absolute. Their connection matured in the quiet privacy of the hospital room, becoming a mutual agitation if they missed even a single afternoon.

But the outside world had a different timeline. As Arti healed, her parents launched their plan: their search for a “suitable groom”, a political marriage. The afternoon visits with Sunil ceased, replaced by hushed calls and nervous, clandestine meetings in the sprawling estate garden. The pressure was a physical force, tightening with every day. The clock was ticking, and with every ring of the landline, Arti felt a surge of cold panic.

One evening, Mr. Thakur delivered his verdict. "We have found the perfect alliance," he announced, his voice clipped and businesslike. "The Vikrant family. Excellent land, superior connections. The boy, Vikrant, is an engineer."

He laid down the law: The Vikrant family would arrive next Sunday. Arti was to be polite, obedient, and most critically, silent. Mrs. Thakur layered this mandate with velvet gloves: "This is for your stability, beta. Your father has secured a magnificent future for you." But Arti knew the truth: her future was being leveraged for their political stability. The wound her father's rejection inflicted years ago began to bleed anew.

Driven to despair, Arti met Sunil at the abandoned temple ruins outside the village. Her face was pale with the very thought of her separation. "I can't do this," she pleaded, finally giving voice to the terror. "They are selling me. I will lose myself in that house. I will disappear." Sunil took her hands, his response was not impulsive rather his eyes conveyed a firm resolve that matched her panic. He knew the immense power of her family, but his love was now the immovable object against their force.

"We won't let you disappear," he stated. His plan was simple but reckless: allow the Sunday meeting to happen. If they pressed for engagement, they would run to his small inherited property in another state. They would be poor, but they would be free.

Arti was terrified. "My father is the Sarpanch. My mother is an MLA. They will hunt you, Sunil. They will ruin you."

Sunil held her gaze. "I am already ruined without you. I will face their wrath, Arti. I would rather face their

hatred than live knowing I let you go because I was afraid." His courage became the anchor for her own nascent will.

Sunday arrived. Arti was a mannequin in encased in heavy silk, her natural vivacity subdued into a mask of polite compliance. The Vikrant family's arrival felt less like a visit and more like an audit. Vikrant was arrogant and loud, discussing his own achievements while barely glancing at Arti. Arti kept her promises—monosyllabic, silent, and courteous.

But as the families moved to seal the deal—discussing the dowry and connections—Vikrant’s mother made a casual, crushing remark about the need for an educated wife to handle family accounts, a clear slight against Arti’s lack of a degree. Mr. Thakur swallowed this insult. This small act of humiliation for the sake of power was the catalyst. Arti finally saw her worth measured in political gain, not human value.

Just as the hands were about to shake, the doorbell rang. The servant, confused, ushered in a casually dressed young man holding a simple bouquet of marigolds. It was Sunil. He moved with a calm confidence that unsettled the room. He ignored the Thakur parents' murderous glare and the Vikrant family's stunned silence. He walked directly to Arti.

"I am sorry to interrupt this transaction," Sunil's voice was steady and strong, addressing the entire room. "But Arti is not a commodity for status or political gain. She has already chosen her partner. She is my life, and I am hers."

He extended his hand, the gesture a challenge to her entire world. "Arti," he asked, his voice softening, full of the silent history they shared in that hospital room. "I promised you freedom. Now is the time to take it. Will you come with me?"

Arti now stands at the absolute pivot point of her life. Her internal conflict is fierce: the paralyzing terror of her powerful father's inevitable, brutal revenge, coupled with the ingrained loyalty and duty to her mother mingled with the desperate, life-affirming knowledge that Sunil sees her, truly accepts her, and offers her a chance to live as her authentic self.

It was her moment to choose her soul over her security.

She slowly stood, shedding the mantle of the obedient daughter. Her hand, trembling, reached out and settled into Sunil's. The contact was an electric affirmation.

"Yes, Sunil," she said, her voice clear despite the tears that now fell, tears of sorrow for the break, and tears of fierce joy for the self she was finally claiming. "I will come with you."

Mr. Thakur's roar was a promise of destruction. "You step one inch out, and I will ruin him! I will use everything!"

Arti turned to him, her posture straight. "Father, you taught me I was a disappointment because I was a girl. You worried about your

respect. I choose my life. I choose the man who saw me when I was pooled in blood, over the family that would have sold me for power."

She and Sunil walked out, hand in hand, leaving behind the wealth, the power, and the golden cage, stepping into the blinding, uncertain freedom of the sun. Their great fight had just begun. Two years passed. The first year had been a relentless storm. Mr. Thakur, true to his word, had pursued them. Sunil lost his job, and the small inheritance in the neighboring state proved barely enough. They lived in hiding, fearing a constant, low-level hum. Yet, the struggle purified their connection; every meal they shared, every challenge they overcame, cemented the truth that they were stronger together than they ever were apart.

The second year brought peace, not because the Sarpanch forgave them, but because they found a sanctuary too small for his powerful wrath to bother with—a quiet coastal town far from Khandala's political reach.

Sunil now worked at a small mechanics shop, his hands always dirty but his heart always light. Arti, freed from the silence and the silk, channeled her artistic soul into teaching local children to paint. She was no longer just a mesmerizing beauty; she was a vibrant woman, her happiness worn openly, like a badge of courage.

One evening, sitting on their simple porch watching the sunset—a beauty she could finally appreciate without fear—Arti smiled at Sunil.

"Do you ever regret it?" he asked softly. "Losing everything for me?"

Sunil took her hand, his thumb stroking her palm. "I didn't lose everything. I lost the world my father tried to force on me. And I gained the world I always wanted."

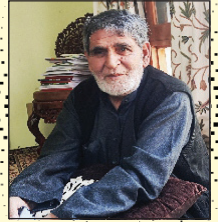
He looked into her bright, mesmerising eyes, now free of their former haunting.

"You were always valuable, Arti," he said. "Your father just put the price on the wrong thing. We chose the value of truth over the price of beauty."

The sun dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in fiery hues—a chipped vase, filled with the perfect, messy colors of a life truly lived. They sat in comfortable silence, their love a quiet, strong sovereignty, far from the gilded cage, finally home.

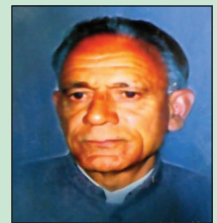
Dr. Sona Agrawal is currently working as Assistant Professor in English at Govt. P.G. College, Newai, previously taught at the Central University of Rajasthan and MSJ College. Her doctoral work focused on Tribal Literature. Her core interests include Dalit Literature, post-colonial writing, and literary theories. She has presented at national/international conferences, published academic papers, and written/edited books on marginalized writings. Additionally, she is a creative writer, publishing poems and short stories in both English and Hindi.

آپسے



محمد زمان آزرده

کہتے داس لیتے داس چھُہ باسان زن یہ انسان سُنَد
 ناوگر مچھمتا مے۔ لیتے داس چھُہ ونان تھ داس۔ تھ
 پٹھ کھور روزان چھُہ یاس کھورس قل روزان
 چھ۔ ہم چھ اصلی یہ لفظ اکھ گڈو، لکھ، یعنی کھور، اما
 یہ چھ کھور پلکھ لچ حرکت۔ مثلاً، ’’گا دچھ
 لکھ ٹھان‘‘، ’’بیس لے گری لکھ‘‘، ’’بیس گریہ
 لیتے مونڈ‘‘..... مے چھ پٹھ زن امہ ستر آسہ توہم
 تو رُمٹ لیتے ہنڈ معیہ فکر۔ ڈنی گڈو، ’’داس۔
 کانٹرس منز چھ داس یوتھ اکھ یڈکل، مائی تو
 دیو دار، یار، کایر گل دماغس منز بہ ان، تھ زن۔ تھ
 قدر اکھ مؤٹ کر کڈنہ بہ ان چھ، بسہ مکانس
 کنس پٹھ تو اونی بہ ان چھ، تھ زن یہ کر کر



عبدالاحد حاجی

ویری ناگ

یہ تاریخی حیثیت تھاون وول ناگ چھ اسلام
آباد کس شاہ آباد پر گنس اندر وزان تہ الہ پلہ
بھٹ کشپہر آباد کران۔ یہ ناگ چھ بانہاکی بالہ
دامن تل۔ آئین اکبری اندر چھ ابو الفضل
رقم طراز یہ ناگ چھ قرین اکھ جریب یعنی ساڑ
۱۵۵ فٹہ راہ دتہ ہونڈ پوز سسر متعلق چھ
خاموش۔ پیلہ زن مورخ حسن چھ ونان زبہ چھ
گز شتی مرنڈک انڈک تہ جہانگیر چھ ٹوک
جہانگیری اندر لیکھان ”یہ چھ اکھ اٹھ پسل حوض
یس راہ ہونڈ بہ گز چھ۔ یہ چھ باگر وان تہ بازو
واجبہ وتھہ ہند اگر تہ یس کروہ وادن ساراب
چھ کران۔ تیوت آب چھ اتھ ناکس وزان۔ تیمہ
کنی یہ ناگ قودتہ کہن عجائبش اندر گزرنہ
چھ یوان۔ تاریخی حوالوں کی چھ امہ ناگک پروان
ناویل گنڈ یعنی بلیہ ناگہ سُنڈ تاود تہ شول گھات
(یعنی تریشولہ ترک) تہ ومنہ یوان۔ بیتر نیبر
ؤنس دریاوس وتسا آسی ونان۔

۱۵۸۶ء اور رتہ چھ نہ ناگ پند بن ہند اکھ اہم

ہند یعنی مکا تک بار پانس پٹھ رٹھ۔ وڈی چھے داپچ
جائے آجودہنہ سلیمہ۔ سلیم چھو توہ پکی زیہ
چھ شینہ پکرتہ پھمک زل آسان، یس کنس
پٹھ داسہ بدل تراونہ پوان چھ۔ وڈی گروکو پانہ
سوچ زیہ لپتہ داس کینا گو و؟۔ یہ گو وٹھ حصہ پٹھ
پٹھ سوڑے بار روز، یا یس سوڑے بار وٹراو۔
ہندی زبانی منتر چھ ”داس“ نوکرس تہ ونان، اماپ
چھ نازک حصہ تہ آسان۔ ہرگا نوکراؤنی آسہ نس
وٹھ ”داس“ بلکہ ”داسی“۔

کاشتر زبانی منز چھ بعض لفظن پھواہ اہمیت زتم
چھ اکہ خاص تہذیبکو حصہ بنان۔ سہ زن گو و
بین ستر چھ بتی محاورہ تہ ضرب الملش یا پڑ گنڈتھ
آسان زینہد رتاو پھ بجالیہ خود زبان دانی ہند
شؤت تہ نمونہ ماننہ پوان۔ ”لہ“ ستر چھ بجالیہ
خود ستر ڈپ، محاورہ تہ پڑ پڑ گنڈتھ زہتھ کاشتر پھ
بیم رتاوان۔ سہ زن گو و اڈر چھ لہ مؤنڈ کران
تہ اڈر چھ لہ مؤنڈ کر گتھان، یاد پڑ تو اڈن چھ
لہ مؤنڈ سپان۔ اڈر چھ لہ مٹھتہ بڑ ذنبہ پکان
تہ اڈن پھ لتن ہند ماز وقن لاران۔ کانسہ پھ
لانس لہ کر مازے آسان لیکھتہ۔ اڈر چھ بین

کثیر ہندو کینہہ ناگ

تہ تھ گزرنے او مُت پوان۔ شہنشاہ اکبرس پتہ
 بیلے جہانگیر (۱۶۲۷-۱۶۰۶ء) یہ باگہ وان
 ناگ وچہ تام کو تو کیدم حکم اتھ ناگس شیر پار
 کرنے خاطر۔ تیلار امہ ناگچہ جو یہ آسہ مختلف اندو
 چھکرتھ نیان تہ آب اوس ضایع گدھان۔ بیو
 کور ملک حیدر چاڈورہ یہ کام انجام دینے خاطر
 منتخب۔ یم یہ آب سمبراونے خاطر اکھ نالہ مٹھتھ
 آب اُکسے جایہ جمع کور۔ اتھ ناگس او کینن ہند
 اٹھہ روخل سام بد کار یگری سان تعمیر کرنہ۔ سنی
 آسے یہ پوختہ چنایہ اندر اتھ جایہ مکایہ کیشہ تہ
 بناونے امہ علاؤ آہ اندر اندر دیوار بندی تہ کرنہ۔
 دیوار اندر آسے زرجن محراب بناونے۔ اُرس
 محرابس پٹھ چھ امہ ناگک سنہ (۹۷۷ھ
 بمطابق ۱۵۷۹ء)۔ جہانگیر نے فرزند شاہ جہان
 دیئت (۱۶۵۸-۱۶۲۷ء) ملک حیدر سے حکم ناگس
 بر وٹھہ کئے اکھ مار مار مند باغ ناوگ۔ تھ اندس
 تہ منزس کولہ بناؤتھ پان ژا در آہ وجود انہ۔
 بیو اتھ باغس مار منزس بر ژر کور تہ اتھ
 باغس اوس ناو "شاہ آباد باغ"۔ تھ اندر بالاد تہ
 تھ ۱۶۳۵ء یس اندر چھ تعمیر کرنہ آہ۔

اچھ بل ناگ

برنگ کوٹھار پر گنس اندریہ باگہ یو رت ناگ چھ
وقتہ کو عا ساقو آندرا کھ او کھ کھ زرنہ یوان تکناز

لے چار اناں تہ اڈن پانس لے چار یوان۔ کینہہ
چھ برس لکھ کڈتھ اندر اڈان تہ کینہہ اُتھر لے
داس پٹھ پتھ ہزاران تہ کانہہ تھو بر۔ ہزار
مولوی صاب اسی سبق شُرین و نان و "لتو ستر کڈو
رُو، جس کړو"۔ تہ یم اسی بعضے یمن لتن لورو ستر
حبیبہ اناں۔ اتھ اسی و نان "تلہ پتر شکھ کړن"۔
پتھ لے اسی کینہہ عقیدتن لے موتھمت تہ کھوان
تہ شکر کړان۔ و دو گرو و پُتن نصیب۔ کینون
چھ آسان ستمتھے۔ تہم چھ سار پنے ہند خاطر لے
داس بنان۔

بیلیہ لو کچارس منز برس ہیرم ہانکل موراو فی آسہ
 ہا گنہ پتھ کالہ، شری ز آس بآج وٹھ کران۔ اکھ
 اوس پتیس نکھس کھستہ پھہ کام کران تہ اندر یہ
 آسہ ہیس کڈن، تنجھہ آس پتہ دوشوے بآج وٹھ
 کران۔ ٹھو گرو انداز ہمبر پاوین ہند، یم چھ
 اکر ہے جلیہ روڑتھ پتین لتہ داس پتھ ہیور
 واتناواں۔ ہیور کھستہ چھ یم بڈی بڈی کارنامہ
 انجام دوان۔ نوہن دُنیاہن ہند نظار کران۔ اکثر
 چھنہ انسانس پنہن لتن پتھ روڑتھ سہ سورے
 بوڑنہ یوان، یہ سہ پتیس لتہ داس بتاوتھ و چھان
 پھ۔

مے کرے یہ کتھ ہیر ہنز، امکو ہیر پاؤ چھ
سارے ویدک تہ تہ اتھ تہ بان۔ اما۔ نیلہ یہ
انسان کاٹھ ہندلہ داس بنان چھ، سہ چھہ کاٹھ
اتھ بان۔ یہ چھہ تہ پے یس اُمس کتہ تل

رُنجھ پھڑ آسان۔ اکبر لڑکھ چھ کائنسہ نیت کائنسہ لیت
 داس بنا تھ گھر تنہر پہ پٹھنچی پنڈاوان۔ اما لگن نہ یہ
 پئے ووان رُنجھ لیت داس گھنہ پھڑ۔ بعضے پھڑ ہیت
 سپدان ز اُمس پچم ہر ہمیشہ لیت تلے تھوان،
 تھتہ نہ پتہ کائنہ بہندن پھیلکن پٹھ کھسٹھ
 اُمس برابر تھڑ۔ کائنس منڑ پھڑ ”نیت تل رُن“ تہ
 اکھ محاور۔ کم کم ولہ وپر چھ آسان یہ ڈلڑ ز تہ
 معمولی وگر پٹر و لیت رُنجھ تھو دوتہ۔ کائنسہ قرض
 دیت مُت، کائنسہ کائنہ کمزوری رُنجھ تہ کائنسہ
 کائنہ سوچھ تھڑ گھر گر گھر۔

اما چتر چھنہ کتھہ ز کاتھہ چھہ تیتھہ تہ آسان،
سُس نہ کاتھہ ہند کتھہ داس نہ۔ واراہ چھہ پنج
کوشش کران، اما لگھہ چھہ پتر جالاک کتھہ ز
انسان چھہ پئی لگان ز کتھہ بن چھہ کین چھہ
کھتھہ کاتھہ تھور پڑاوان۔ پوچھہ چھہ اٹھ اٹھ
پڑا چتر، سُس زن تہ چھہ ز ژور میور پکین
کھوت، تمس چھہ پتہ ساری شھوڑی باسان۔
یہ تام نہ اُس پکین کتھہ داس دا کتھہ دیہ، تو تام
چھہ اُس باقین چھہ تھورک کاتھہ انمان
یوان۔

خدا یس گروہ ہمیشہ ممکن زبہ گوڑھس نہ کاٹسہ
اُکس لہ داس بنن - تکیا ز اوپ پُھ پانہ تہ نجل
سپدان تہ چنٹس وتہ ہاوکس تہ ذیل کران -

☆☆

ویری ناگہ کھوٽہ زیو آب چھ وُزان - پو ز قدر
 آیس نہ تمہ آہ کرے، نہ آویہ تمہ آہ رڑھر اوہ نہ
 زن انچ اہمیت تہ ضرورت تقاضہ چھ کران - امہ
 ناگک و ہراوچھ کو کونچہ چالہ - آب مٹھس سبھاہ
 مڑ دارتہ باضمیم خاطر سبھاہ جان - اتھ ناگس چھ
 وارہین جاین فوران ہندری پانچو آب ولہ منین
 کھسان - امہ آپکی تعریف چھ ابو الفضلن
 ”آئین اکبری“ اندر کُرتہ - یہ ناگ چھ چو نہ
 بالہ دامن تل شبن ستن جان وُزان - اتھ سستی چھ
 اکھ گندھک ناگ تہ یُس الگ پانچو چھ گندھتھ -
 ثمرہ بیمار او رُتھ مریض چھ اتھ ناگس پٹھ سران
 کُرتھ شفاء یاب سپدان - امہ ناگک آب چھ آس
 پاس علاقی چہنہ خاطر فراہم یو ان کرنے تہ ہریمانہ
 آب چھ برگی ناسل منز وسان - ناگس ڈھچھ نہ اند
 چھ مرحوم بخشی غلام محمد صابن پننس دو رکھو متس
 اندرا کھلوہ وُن نہ شوہ وُن باغ تغیر کرباوتھ امہ
 ناگہ کس بجز تہ وُقارس برٹور کوز رمت - امہ
 کس آیس اندر چھ رُتھ وٹ گاڑ رچھنہ یو ان -

پہلی ناگ

دو سہر کس پہلی گامس منز اکھ عجیب ناگ۔ آب
چھس سفید تہ گڑٹ آسان۔ ملک حیدر وڈو رک
چھ تاریخ کشمیرک اند رامہ ناچ ذکر کران و دمٹ ز
”پرلہ وقیعہ آس لاکھ دھ منز قول گڈتھ اتھ تراوان
تہ بتہ اوس رنہ بہ ان“۔ پوز از چھنہ سہ تاثیر اتھ
و دمٹ۔ تہ پچھس سہ شان رو زہو۔

☆☆