

Grandma's Stories ~ दादी माँ की कहानियाँ ~ नानि हंजु कथु ~ M.K.Raina

Folk Tales of Kashmir

M.K.Raina



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Note : Main aim of this work is to bring old Classic Kashmiri literature closer to our younger generations. Stories reproduced in Kashmiri language in this series are written in Devanagari-Kashmiri Script to reach those Kashmiris who are not well versed with the Nastaliq Script. And those written in English and Hindi are meant to reach those people who can't read Kashmiri. This will be a way to reach our rich Kashmiri literature to people outside Kashmir. It may be noted here that J&K Academy's works are already published in Nastaliq Script and need not be reproduced in that script again.

- M.K.Raina



Folk Tales of Kashmir

Paradise for a Loaf of Bread

[There is a phrase in Kashmiri we often use in our conversation. It says 'tsôchívâris janath tshândún' - 'Asking paradise for a loaf of bread'. How did this phrase evolve? Today's story tells you all]

Children came running, making lot of noise to take their seats. Today Tabasheer was also there. She was Kalhan's cousin. She had come along with her mother to Kalhana's place for a night. Kalhana's mother and Tabasheer's mother were cousin sisters. Tabasheer was so excited to hear a story from Kakani Jigri.

Tabasheer introduced herself to Kakani Jigri. Kakani Jigri asked her, "Do you know what Tabasheer means?" Tabasheer replied, "Yes, I do grandma. Tabasheer is sugar of the bamboo. This name was given to me by my mother. She loved this word." Kakani Jigri knew Tabasheer's mother Urmila closely. Urmila was so fond of Kashmiri names for children.

Kakani Jigri started her story:



Dapaan, Haroon Rashid was an Arabian Caliph. He had one brother. His name was Bahlol. Bahlol was a simple man, a mendicant. He lived by begging.



One day he went to a King's palace and begged for some food. Shabbily clothed and entering the palace without permission, King asked his counselors to throw him out, and so they did. King also ridiculed him.

"This was so bad on his part. How can a king do like that." Asked Tabasheer.

"Yes, bad it was. But, he was the king. He would not care for anybody", said Kakani Jigri, "Listen, what happened then."

Next day, Bahlol went into a forest. Hungry and exhausted, he sat under a tree and rested a while. Then he collected some wooden pegs and started fixing them into the ground in a pattern. The Queen, seated on her royal carriage, passed by. On seeing Bahlol busy with something, she alighted from her carriage to meet him.



She already had the knowledge of his ill-treatment at the hands of his husband.

"Then, why had she not talked to King about it?" Asked Biloo.

"She had in fact, but the King would not listen", said Grandma. "Now listen further."

Queen asked, "O Darvesh, what are you doing?"

Bahlol replied, "Building Paradise".

Queen was amused. She said, "Will you sell this paradise to me?"

Bahlol replied, "Why not?"

Queen asked, "What is the price?"

"One loaf of bread", said Bahlol. Queen agreed. She knew Bahlol's words had no meaning. He was hungry and wanted something to eat.

Queen handed a loaf of bread to Bahlol and watched him eating it, passionately. On finishing, Bahlol collected the grounded pegs, made them into a bundle and handed it to the Queen. Queen went away, quite pleased, not because she got the paradise, but because she fed hungry Bahlol.



On reaching her palace, the Queen related Bahlol's story to her husband, the King. King had a nasty look at the bundle of wooden pegs and laughed at the wisdom of his wife. Queen did not say anything. She carried the bundle to her room and secured it on a shelf.

"Oh, what happened then? Was the King angry? Asked Kishmish.

"No, he was not. He went to sleep." Said Grandma.

King was fast asleep. He saw a dream. He was standing in front of a high stone wall with a big gate. There were guards standing in front of the gate. They would not allow him to come closer. King peeped through the small opening in the gate, from a distance. Behind the gate, he saw a spacious and beautiful garden with all kinds of fruit bearing trees and flowery plants. He also saw meandering streams inside, carrying crystal clear water and honey. Colourful birds were resting on trees and chirping. It was really a paradise.



Children did not question again. They were lost in the story.

Some distance away, under the shade of a big tree, there was a lady with royal robes and diamonds on her, sitting graciously on a throne made of gold. Near her, gorgeously dressed maids were in service and on guard. King looked with curiosity. He wanted to see who the lady was, but could not see her face. He requested guards to allow him to come a little closer. Guards agreed. As soon as he came closer to the opening, the lady looked right into his eyes with a mysterious smile on her face. The King was amazed. It was his queen only.

The King asked them, “Which place is it and how is that lady there?”

“It is the Paradise and that lady has recently purchased it”, replied the guards. King was greatly amused. He wanted to cry with joy and tell the guards that she was his queen. But no sooner than he opened his mouth, he was awake. He was still on his bed in the palace. He looked around. The queen was in deep sleep but her face had the same mysterious smile on her face as in the paradise.



Dapaan, next day, King visited the forest, his wife had told him about. Bahlol was busy, playing with wooden pegs. King came near and asked, "What are you doing Darvesh?"

Bahlol replied, "Building Paradise".

King said, "Will you sell this paradise to me?"

Bahlol replied, "Why not?"

King asked, "What is the price?"

"Seven treasures of seven kings", said Bahlol.



King was shocked. He never expected such a reply from Bahlol. He said, "But yesterday, you sold it only for a loaf of bread."

Dapaan, Bahlol looked at King's face and smiled. Bahlol said, "Yes. I sold it for a loaf only because she did not know what I was selling. She purchased it because she only wanted to feed a hungry person. You have already had a glimpse of the Paradise, that is why this price." King was speechless. He could not utter a word.

That was the end of the story. Children were feeling sleepy. They left the room.



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