

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

Folk Tales of Kashmir

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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

Waag Bhat

Grandma's brother's son Prithvi had come back from Canada. He was serving in the Indian embassy there and was transferred back to India. He had a son and a daughter. Son's name was Vir and daughter's Mahima. Vir was 14 years and Mahima was 10. Prithvi had a home in the same complex as that of Grandma. All of them were celebrating for being together again.

Grandma had to make some adjustments in her room to accommodate more children. She did it herself. After their dinner, children assembled in Grandma's room as usual and Grandma started thus:

"You must be all happy. Vir and Mahima are here too", said Grandma.

"Yes we are", said children in one voice.

"That is good. Let us come to the story now", said Grandma, "today's story is Waag Bhat. Listen carefully."

Dapaan, the war of Mahabharata had come to an end. Pandavas were again ruling Hastinapur. One day, the Pandava King Yudhishtara invited wise and scholarly people of his country for a feast. At the end of the feast, Yudhishtara told them, "We have won the war and we are ruling Hastinapur again. Everything is fine but tell me, why am I emotionally disturbed? Why do I feel gloomy and why have I lost interest in life?"

A wise man stood up and said to the King, "Rajan, this war has consumed so many lives. You have seen dead bodies all around. Husbands of young brides got killed. Even the streets of Hastinapur were stained red with blood. That is why you are



disturbed. In order to get yourself relieved from this pain, I advise you to perform an Ashwamedha Yagnya". His advice was accepted by the King and other wise people. It was decided to inform Bhagvan Sri Krishna too.



"What is Ashwamedha Yagnya Grandma?" Asked Kishmish

"After a war, if the king is satisfied that he is the most powerful king and no other king can stand before him, he performs the Ashwamedha Yagnya. It was used by ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty.

While discussing necessary arrangements for the Yagnya, they had to decide the name of the learned person who would read

Mantras of the Vedas, and also fix a *tsândra tårúk*. Both of them required to be highly learned and experienced. They thought, it was best left to the wisdom of Bhagvan Sri Krishna.

"What is *tsândra tårúk* Grandma?" Vir asked.

"*tsândra tårúk* is one who presides over the entire rituals of a yagnya and guides the performance. He also reads the *homa mantras*.

Bhima, one among the Pandava brothers was sent to Dwarika as an emissary to Bhagvan Sri Krishna to inform him about the Yagnya and also request him to grace the inaugural ceremony.



Bhagvan Sri Krishna said to Bhim, "There is a man more learned than me in Kashmir. His name is Waag Bhat. He lives in a village called Waaga Hom. It would be appropriate if he is requested to start the ceremony with his pious hands."

With this advice from Sri Krishna, Bhima left Dwarika.



Bhima reached Hastinapur and shared the advice Sri Krishna had given, with his brothers. They were all amazed. "Is there any other person in the country who is more qualified than those in Hastinapur?" They thought. But this was a word from Bhagvan Sri Krishna. They were all dumb.



Dapaan, Bhima started his journey to Kashmir. He reached there after some months. Enquiring about Waaga Hom, he reached the village, dead tired. As soon as he entered the village, he saw some people sitting under a Chinar tree, discussing something. He approached them and asked them about Waag Bhat's Ashram. They laughed at him. One elderly person said, "There is no Ashram here and no Waag Bhat. Yes, there is a poor person called Waagra living here. He must be busy ploughing his fields. May be, he only has mislead you." They pointed towards a hut and said, "That is his house. His wife must be there." Bhima did not say anything. He went towards the hut.



When he reached there, he saw a woman inside, pounding some grains in a mortar. He said to the woman, "*Måji*, may I know where is Waag Bhatt or Waagra?" She said, "Look there, he is ploughing his fields."

"Why did he call her *Måji*" Was she his mother? Asked Raju.

"No she was not his mother. In Kashmir, we call every woman elder to us as mother. That is *Måji*. *Måji* is a pious word for all Kashmiris."

Bhima reached near. An old man, almost nude, wearing only a rag to cover his private parts, was ploughing his land. On seeing him closely, Bhima was distressed. He said to himself, "What is the comparison between this man and the wise people of Hastinapur?" Bhima thought, Sri Krishna had definitely erred somewhere. "How can this *shikaslada* person perform a sacred puja? If he really comes there, everything will get defiled." He said to himself.

"What is *Shikaslada*? Why did he call Waag Bhat *Shikaslada*?" Mahima asked.

"*Shikaslada* is one who is unfortunate, extremely poor. One who has nothing to show". He thought Waag Bhat was one such," said Grandma.

In the meantime, Waag Bhat's wife came there carrying food for her husband. She said to Bhima, "Did you see Waag Bhat? Wait here, under this tree. He will come soon to have his meals."

A little later, Waag Bhat came there. He saw a guest standing. He did some *äli vakh* with him. Then said to him, "Where have you come from dear? What do you want from me?"

"What is *älivakh*?" Asked Kalhan.

"*älivakh* means polite greeting. When you say 'How do you do' to somebody. in Kashmiri it can be *vàray chhivû*", said Grandma.

Bhima was hesitant, whether to tell him what he had come here for, or just leave back. But he could not trash Sri Krishna's advice. He said to Waag Bhat, "*Mahra*, I am Bhima. Pandava King and my brother Yudhishtara is performing an Ashwamedha Yagnya. Sri Krishna has asked me to invite you there and to be the *Tsandra Taruk*."

Hearing these words from Bhima, Waag Bhat had a good laugh. He said to Bhima, "Looks like, you came here by mistake. I don't know who was to be invited and who is being invited. What is my qualification to perform a Yagnya as sacred as Ashwamedha? I can't even earn two square meals for me and my family." Saying this, Waag Bhat started eating food without washing his hands.

Bhima was taken aback. He started cursing himself. He thought, he has definitely reached a wrong person. This could not be the Waag Bhat he was looking for. He looked at Waag Bhat who was busy eating his food and then looked at his oxen. "Oh, what am I witnessing ?" He said to himself, surprisingly. A crow was sitting on the plough and directing the oxen. He got the message.



Waag Bhat went to his fields again. Bhima went after him and renewed his request. After great persuasion, Waag Bhat agreed to come but with a condition, "I will not eat any food at the place where human blood has been spilt. For me, you will have to make a fire place on a clean ground and prepare my food there." Bhima agreed and left for Hastinapur. In three months he reached there.

At the given time, Waag Bhat reached Hastinapur. When Sri Krishna heard about him, he came along with his friends to meet him. Sri Krishna washed Waag Bhat's feet himself and accompanied him to the Raj Darbar. Brahmins seated there, saw a person as black as a crow entering Durbar. They reacted with hate gestures. Waag Bhat was marking all this and smiling in his heart of hearts.

At last, Ashwamedha Yagnya started. Sri Krishna got Waag Bhat seated at a respectable place and himself sat near his feet. Hastinapur Brahmins were all fire. They did not like him. They started whispering with one another and talking rot about Waag Bhat.

When the occasion for starting the Yagnya came, a Brahmin present there stood up with mocking gestures and requested Waag Bhat to lit the sacred fire. Waag Bhat asked for a burning charcoal. Brahmin said to him, "So you will lit the fire with a

burning charcoal! That is no miracle. We had thought you will lit it with your Mantras." Waag Bhat said, "Has anybody ever lit any fire with Mantras?" Brahmin replied, "Doesn't *Deepak-Raag* lit fire?" Waag Bhat was mum, Brahmins were laughing.

Sri Krishna, stood up and said to Waag Bhat, "Maharaj, these people are ignorant. They don't know who you are. Kindly forgive them. Kindly start the Yagnya for my sake." Saying this, tears rolled down Sri Krishna's eyes. Waag Bhat became restless. He shouted in a rash, "Prabhu, please stop this. I will obey your orders."



Dapaan, Waag Bhat pointed his finger towards firewood in the Kund. In a flash, a big flame emerged out of it and the whole lot started burning. He pointed his finger at the walls and walls started reciting Vedas in a way as if thousands of Brahmins were doing it. Yudhishtar stood up and started fanning Waag Bhat with peacock's feathers. Other Brahmins covered their faces with contempt.

Children heard the story and went away.



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