

Rauntiyalu

Rauntiyalu is the word for ‘uplifting’
in the Garhwal Himalayas.
It is precisely this feeling
that conjures itself
as one leaves the Mandakini river
meandering mischievously towards the ocean
in unmistakable haste.
The grinding roar of the river
and the shrill symphony of the cicadas
confined within the mountains
(that rise steeply on both sides)
only reassures one of the silence within.

Ten yearning years have passed
since last I ventured afar into these mountains,
drew in ‘the scent of the damp wood-smoke,
hot cakes, dripping undergrowth
and rotting pine cones’.
Ten years through which a craving
steadily widened into an unbearable ache.
My soul, ill-nourished,
ailing from modern life
soaked up covetously all it could
the power and the vigour
vibrant in its dark ravines and misty heights.

I steadily made my steps
ascending the all so familiar terrain
towards the temple of Tungnath,
beyond the majestic oaks,
the blazing rhododendrons,
to pull in at verdant meadows
strewn by jutting rocks,
revealed only in parts by
disappearing and appearing mist.
Here above, the borders crumble
between the seen and the unseen,
the countless indissoluble feats of nature
and the ambivalence of in and out
inflicted relentlessly on the minds of modern man
with its ‘sick hurry and divided aims’.

The mountains went about their daily chores
took little notice of my return.
As if it would be the order of things
for a hungry child to return
only to leave again, nourished.
Not a wrinkle, nor a tear,
not even a complaining smile.



I stood still, mesmerised,
as the anguish swelled in me,
agonized of feeling the prodigal youth
who had cruelly sundered himself
from the protecting bosom
to throw-up at the altar of modernity.

I wept, stifled in uncontained tears
as dividing wedges crumbled within,
steadily conceding to the oneness
of all things infused with one life
to chasten and subdue.
Nothing matters as the free soul
softens to disband all strife,
readily melting into that eternal moment
without an edge into the past, nor the future,
indiscriminate of right and wrong,
between the said and the unsaid,
when the heart is unjudging
and reassuringly unjudged,
a feeling precisely what the Garhwalis
mean when they say 'rauntiyalu'.



(Lines composed at Guptkashi, Garhwal Himalayas, October 2008)