

## 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)*