Classic Poetry Series

Ghulam Rasool Santosh

- 2 poems -

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Ghulam Rasool Santosh (1929 - 10 March 1997)

Ghulam Rasool Santosh (Kashmiri: □□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ (Devanagari), □□□ □□□□ □□□□□ (Nastaleeq)) was a prominent Kashmiri Indian painter and poet. He was best known for his themes inspired by Kashmir Shaivism.

Early Life

He was born Ghulam Rasool in a Kashmiri Muslim family of modest means in the Chinkral Mohalla neighborhood of old Srinagar. He dropped out of school after his father's death and took up odd jobs like writing, painting signboards, weaving silk and whitewashing walls. In 1954 he won a scholarship to study fine arts under a celebrated Indian painter, N. S. Bendre in the city of Baroda, in the state of Gujarat, in western India.

Around the same time he did what was considered unusual and unacceptable in conservative Kashmiri society - he married his childhood sweetheart, Santosh, who was a Kashmiri Pandit, and also assumed her name.

Career

In the early 1960s, Santosh studied Tantric (mystical) art and Kashmir Shaivism. In 1964 he adopted this style to create some of the best examples of modern Tantric paintings. His paintings are known for the vibrancy of colors, neat lines, spiritual energy and sensuousness.

Santosh also wrote plays, poetry and essays in Kashmiri. He was also an authority on Kashmiri Shaivism, and was one of the very few people who could read and write the ancient, and almost-extinct, Kashmiri script called Sharda.

"K a s h m i r S h a i v i s m has penetrated to that depth of living thought where diverse currents of human wisdom unite in a luminous synthesis." - Rabindranath Tagore (9 May 1861 - 7 August 1941) Nobel Prize in Literature (1913).

Death

He died on March 10, 1997 in New Delhi, India. He was survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

Awards

He is a recipient of the Lalit Kala Akademi award and the honour of Padma

Shree. He received the Sahitya Akademi award (1979) for his collections of poems, Besoakh Ruh. In 1985, he received the Kalhana award.

Black Light...

Black light of the dead
In the middle of it, I alone of a kind.

Ghulam Rasool Santosh

Poem

It is said
When there was nothing
That, indeed, was everything.
Around there was that eye as well
Where dreams of beginning
And the end, lay asleep
Lost within manifold dreams.
That world of half sleep
Terrain of doubt between yes and no.
Vision that, tired, returns
The eye, as wide awake yet somnolent looking,
Does not cry, nor smile
There was no rival in love
No love rite either
Neither heart nor beloved.
The illusion of Brahma broke
And the eye blinked
That which was not
Started happening all at once
The footfalls of silence became 'alaap'
From the rhythm of breath
Issued the incantation of 'Shakti'
The even 'answer' of ambrosial 'ni'
Kameshwari, Kalavati 'ragini' awoke
The golden warp-and-weft of 'vani' was illuminated
The chain of time tightened moment to moment
That, which was nothing, became visible
The eye sees the light of day
Night is a dark fire, burning
The fire went out and a voice hailed --
Silence is that feeling of the unheard
Unseen truth :
Call it dream
And you are the emperor of dreams
Call it mirror
You the fair visage
Call it a musical scale
You are the voice
Call it time
You are the moment
Call it the beginning
Then you are the end
You, the 'you' connected with the 'I'.

I go :
You will also return there someday
Where there is nothing
The nothing that is
Everything.

[Translated by Shanti Veer Kaul]

Ghulam Rasool Santosh