

*A Green Dove  
in Silence*

*Forty Prose Poems in Translation*

**Gauranga Mohanta**

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by Sabrina Ishrat

## The Fiery Palas Posture and Homeland

Escaping the ruthless eyesight of the bullets, we stealthily made an onward journey in the deep dark paths of the village. The veil of the cow-pulled cart engulfed the thrilled light of the last bright dreamy lamp of the village. In the depth of my frightened eyes arose the trepidation of the burnt houses of *Mritinga*<sup>1</sup>. Not only the houses of tin-wood-bamboo-straw but also the immovable friends like mango-jackfruit-*nim-nisinda*<sup>2</sup> were imprisoned in the circle of fire; the position of the kitchen could be identified by the earthen terracotta-color oven arising from the ashes of the homestead. The posture of the fiery *palas*<sup>3</sup> turned the betel-nut trees wounded and wan. A distressed entity was perplexed and stunned in the desolate marshy land of *kakorgari*<sup>4</sup> when the western sky reflected the glow of red hibiscus in the evening.

- 1 A village located in Lalmonirhat District, Bangladesh.
- 2 Nim (*Azadirachta indica*) and Nisinda (*Vitex negundo*) are medicinal plants.
- 3 A seasonal flower (*Butea monosperma*) of the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
- 4 A marshy land in the village Deuti, Lalmonirhat District of Bangladesh.

Crossing the river we had to approach the border to safeguard ourselves. The refugee attendant hid us in blithe darkness to ferry us to the open quay. The misfortune of the paralyzed, stooped co-journeymen pierced our chest until the countless refugees found shelter in the camp. They cooked rice in the open kitchen and spent the messy night with their cattle.

My father who took shelter in the tent of *Rajbari Camp* stood beside the oppressed people and we confined ourselves to the hut built in the moist courtyard of the village. Walking along the borderlines of paddy and jute fields, I glanced at the dipping of the bright colisa in the swamp, I was enchanted by the delightful flight of *bariyal*<sup>5</sup> and thought that life might remain in absolute darkness. During the war my father risked his life for the essence of the homeland and urgent news. When he disappeared, we spent gloomy period.

We used to stand in a row by the side of the road to get rationed rice-lentil-oil-fire-wood watching trucks full of armed faces of allied force and freedom fighters. We would like to believe that the darkness would be dispelled soon.

5 A place in Dinbhata, Cooch Behar, India.

6 A kind of pigeon (Columba huriyala) of yellowish-green color

As we desired to come back, catfish proliferated in our ponds; courtyard had been covered with beans' verdant tenderness. The day we returned, Pakra howled a lot at the feet of my father. Our pet dog Pakra did not get frustrated even though he saw the unexpected reign of weeds in the homestead. No one did welcome us with the warmth of heart of this pet.

Translated by Nitai Saha