

*A Green Dove  
in Silence*

*Forty Prose Poems in Translation*

**Gauranga Mohanta**

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## Rajbari Camp

In the enclosed field of *Rajbari*<sup>1</sup> the stinking tents could not provide the reflection of solace, the villages by the Tista could offer. The muddy byways of the camp were filthy with stagnant water and toilet dirt. Everyday wet fire woods became fit to be burnt by the heat of the earthen oven. The refugees were introduced without fail to the unpleasant taste of rationed rice-lentil.

Beside the well there remained the undeclared rubbish dump - the horrible sight of vomit and stool; the life cycles of mosquitoes, flies, maggots and earthworms were distinctly visible. Even in the camp with no rivals death waited in ambush. The itching became more unbearable than the blow of cholera and diarrhoea. There was no arrangement to perform the rituals of the dead. Lifeless bodies of the infant and the aged were wrapped in cheap, coarse mats to take them to graveyard or burning-ground.

A grave did not appear to be the ritualistic, ultimate shelter. Wrapped in coarse mats an oedema patient was thrown into the hole of five feet by two feet; in that

1 A place in Dinhatra, Cooch Behar, India.

unidentified bamboo-clumps no one from Bangladesh would come to pay homage. Life and death were synonymous in the camp. Still the refugees attentively listened to the news of *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra*<sup>2</sup>; the waves of the *Janana*<sup>3</sup> washed over skeletal waists yearning for an independent homeland.

Arrangements were made ceaselessly for an open-air opera - the voice of the *Vibek*<sup>4</sup> was glowed with the color of the morning sun. In the colorful pavilion the Bangali youth performed the stunning magic. No dark could overcast the festivity in the anxiety-free villages of Bangladesh. The musical wave of the *abol*<sup>5</sup> would be played again.

Translated by Nitai Saha

2 Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra is a radio broadcasting centre established by the Bangladesh government in exile soon after the declaration of the war of liberation. The Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, in fact, evolved from the Kalughat (Chittagong) transmission centre from where the declaration of independence was made.

3 It is known as the Janana, one of the main rivers of Bangladesh.  
4 A character of an open-air drama who acts like the chorus.  
5 A drum, usually used in a musical performance.