

## Two Poems · *Mallika Sengupta*

### HOME

Get the bamboo poles ready before intercourse,  
A home must be erected.  
My son I'll carry on my back.  
The Drishadbati River flows there still—  
Silt, new vegetation.

Oh Unmoving Father—bless us so that this winter  
We don't set out again as nomads.

### RITUAL SACRIFICE

A torch blazed in that quiet night.  
On the other side of the mountain  
The sound of drums.  
As soon as it was dawn, crossing the field  
Like farmers through mud and water,  
Two children wanted to reach the riverbank.  
What's there on the riverbank? *Neem* trees,  
A sari carried off by the wind . . .

Perhaps even then, blood like red cords  
Flowed down the mountain, a few locks  
Of copper-tinted hair  
Getting lost among the water hyacinths.  
Who knows what happens in the dark?  
Unfathomable sounds  
Cease, the mountain goddess moans.  
Rock faces slam into the trees  
And tumble down to clear water flowing  
Through the foothills. And when night  
Breaks into dawn, bickerings

Over the shadows of children's faces  
Begin in the descending stream;  
Though on the mountain, forest flowers bloom  
On whose petals blood is sprinkled every night.

*Translated by Pāramitā Banerjee and  
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