

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