

## TWO POEMS BY JIBANANDA DAS

*Translated from the Bengali by E. D. Blodgett and R. K. DasGupta*

### Banalata Sen

roads of a thousand years, i touch you, roads of earth  
and where oceans spill on dark Ceylon and night on Malay's sea  
i have gone much; often at Bimbisar's ancient heart  
i was, and farther in dark, Vidharba's hoary city;  
an old man, whom storied seas unroll yet again,  
to me brief peace she gave, girl of Natore, Banalata Sen.

o hair of night, Vidisha's ancient dark,  
Sravasti fashioned your face: with my own eyes,  
as a sailor through final seas wastes upon his wreck  
till shores of the green grass he sees of cinnamon isles,  
i behold her dark: 'where, o where have you been?'  
she cries from eyes where birds do dwell, girl of Natore, Banalata  
Sen.

when the long day is done, night, as soft sighs  
of dew, falls; from her wing the hawk brushes the sun;  
all colour of the world is out, and old sheaves  
of parchment unfold for fable when beasts are dim.  
all birds, the old dance of waves, and rivers now return —  
dark is all, and before me the face of Banalata Sen.

## 'O Star of Night'

'a star of night, say, which road is mine'?

'home', she said, her smile mute.  
'or lie down within grass and love my bright  
face, or gaze there upon the cart  
bearing its hay gold against the dark.

and after the cart the snake,  
its skin empty behind,  
a ditch and a cackle of dark.  
before the cart nothing lies  
but bliss — it moves  
where no one hears.  
it bears  
the hay gold against the dark.

all gods of golden dance lie in death  
and no death upon the cart's tongue lies'.