

## Two Poems by Jibanananda Das: “Grass” and “If I Were...”

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### Grass

The Earth is illumined early this morning  
By a soft, green light – of the same shade as fresh lime leaves.  
Grass as green and fragrant as unripe pomelos  
Is being bitten off by deer!  
I, too, desire to imbibe the scent of this grass –  
Guzzle it down like gobletfuls of refreshing green wine;  
I crave to knead this grass and nuzzle its eyes with mine.  
My feathers lie entwined in the pinions of grass.  
Amidst grasses, I am born to an intimate mother grass  
And sprout – as a shoot – out of the luscious darkness of her body.

[The poem, originally titled as “Ghas”, was written in Bengali by Jibanananda Das and published in his book *Banalata Sen* in 1952.]

### If I Were...

If I were a cob  
And you a pen  
On some river bank at a horizon –  
Residing in a quiet nest

Amidst slender reeds –  
Beside a paddy field.

If so, then today, in this night of Spring,  
Having seen the moon rising behind the branches of pines,  
We would have left the odor of marshland water  
And floated along the silvery corns in the sky;  
With my feathers in your wings and your heartbeats within mine,  
With countless stars in the vast, blue sky –  
All sparkling like the golden flowers in a mustard field,  
With the Spring moon that resembles  
A golden egg –  
Rested in a feathery, green nest inside a siris forest.  
We hear a bang – maybe a gunshot,  
Followed by the slant of our plunge,  
The fervor of piston in our wings  
And the song of the north wind in our cygnine voice!

Yet another bang;  
Then, finally, our silence  
And our eternal peace.  
The pieces of death in our present life  
Would no longer remain,  
Nor would the bits of failed desires and darkness prevail  
Only if I were a cob  
And you a pen  
On some river bank at a horizon –  
Beside a paddy field...

[The poem, originally titled as “Ami Jodi Hotam”, was written in Bengali by Jibanananda Das and published in his book *Banalata Sen* in 1952.]

**About the Author:** Jibanananda Das (1899 – 1954) is a renowned Bengali poet, novelist and essayist. Although born in Barisal (presently located in Bangladesh), he settled in Kolkata after the partition of India. He is popularly known as “Ruposhi Banglar Kobi” (Poet of beautiful Bengal) due to his unique style of illustrating vivid imagery of the natural beauty of Bengal in his poetry. His notable works include *Ruposhi Bangla*, *Banalata Sen*, *Mahaprithibi* and *Shrestha Kavita*. Das received Rabindra-Memorial Award for *Banalata Sen* in 1953 at All Bengal Rabindra Literature Convention. His *Shrestha Kavita* won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1955.

**About the Translator:** Noor-E-Fatima Mosharraf Jahan is currently pursuing her Master’s degree in English Literature at North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.