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MRIDULA GARG

A River called Padma

(Translated from Hindi *Ek thi Padma nadi* by the author)

There was a river called Padma
 Pubescent, enticing or immoral
 Not that she had innumerable lovers
 Two lovers were all she consorted with
 One was called Hind the other Bang
 But she kept switching from one
 To the other time and again
 It seemed she had slept with hundreds
 When she changed her paramour
 It always brought on a calamity
 Riverbanks burst into landslides
 Huts scattered like twigs
 Fish writhed on the sand
 Padma pranced and cavorted
 As fishermen saved themselves
 From the embrace of tidal waves
 Nature said she was immature
 Would stop philandering soon
 Stay forever in the embrace of one
 Padma neither stopped nor changed
 Nature lost its patience
 Told the wind to start a whirlwind
 Make Padma understand someone
 Was there to put brakes on her
 The wind threw up in a circular arch
 The swirling high waves of the sea
 Padma laughed, time to go there
 A storm is brewing in the sea here
 Soon as she turned back
 Someone grasped her back tight
 She hissed angrily release me, Bang
 That suffocating savage clinch
 Was not that of her refined lover
 Gigantic Amphan lay in wait
 Soon as the wind became a whirlwind
 It opened its jaws and swallowed it
 Endowing it with devilish strength
 Spewed it and the cataclysm began!
 Sea waves competed with mountains
 Velocity of the cyclone enough
 To spin the hills around

With one djinn like arm
Enclosing the wailing Padma
Amphan danced such a devastating *tandava*
That Lord Shiva cried out in anguish
Riverbanks of both paramours split and slid
The sea claimed the mangroves in the
Magical coastal Sundarbans
Of Hind-and Bang

The exclusive medicinal plants and trees
The unique animals, birds, reptiles
The trees of Sundari, Gangva and Nipa
The tiger, wild cat, otter, spotted deer
The alligator, python, cobra, tortoise
White cranes, eagle, hornbill, *surkhab*
All the glowing colourful kingfishers
That intoxicating flow of Padma
That palpitating evidence of life
All vanished from the face of earth
And humans...where did the humans go
The tribals cast away by the tribes
The inmates of jungles' thatched houses
The fearless fishermen in the sea
The striking earthy humans...

After decimating Sundarbans
The cyclone lessened its velocity
The high rise of waves came down
Amphan loosened its limbs and slept
Like a well fed satiated python
Till ... when ... but...till when...

BIO-NOTE

Mridula Garg (born 25 October 1938) is an Indian writer who writes in Hindi and English languages, and is a writer who has explored almost every genre in Hindi. She is credited with writing 8 novels, 4 plays, 4 collections of essays, 1 memoir of fellow writers, 1 travel account and 90 short stories. Her latest work is her debut novel in English called "The Last Email" published in December 2017. Her works display both a wry sense of humour and self-reflection. She was awarded the Vyas Samman in 2004 for her novel *Kathgulab* and Sahitya Akademi Award in 2013 for *Miljul Mann*. She received the Hellman-Hammet Grant from The Human Rights Watch, New York in 2001. She also received the Ram Manohar Lohia Samman from U.P Hindi Sansthan in 2014

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