

JUNGLE NAMA

At once Dokkhin Rai assumed his tiger disguise;
 trusting that the mere sight would sear the strangers' eyes;
they'd take to their heels, they'd never give battle;
 not for a moment did he think they'd test his mettle.

But fight they did, defying his earth-shaking roars;
 nor did they flinch from his fearsome, flesh-tearing claws.
Every blow he struck they answered with many more;
 they pinioned his limbs and bound his taloned forepaws.
Spasms of pain shot through him, sharpening as he fought;
 he flailed with all his strength, but the bindings held taut.

The tiger's stripes, which had danced like the flames of a fire,
 now fell still, the embers of a fading pyre.
Lying prostrate, pinned under Shah Jongoli's thigh,
 what could Dokkhin Rai think but that his end was nigh?

But he was wrong—to finish him wasn't their mission,
they had come there with a different intention.
What they wanted to end was his tyranny,
this they did by confining him to a boundary.
They drew a line, to mark a just separation,
between the forest, and the realm of the human.
To Dokkhin Rai was given the jungles of the south,
where land and water mingle, at the rivers' mouth.
No human would come there, nor could he go outside,
he would live a life of plenty, reigning with pride.

Thus did Bon Bibi create a dispensation,
that brought peace to the beings of the Sundarban;
every creature had a place, every want was met,
all needs were balanced, like the lines of a couplet.



But in this fleeting world, nothing is forever,
desire is potent, and greed hard to conquer.
The sprouting of avarice begins in the spring,
when bees are busy and flowers are blossoming.