

# Navakanta Barua's Poem

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## **There was a river here**

I have seen flood raping the fields,  
Silt burying the children of pregnant crops  
I have heard the peaceful graveyard songs  
When the flood of the Indus gulped the cities and left as ruins.

The intense addiction to destruction, the evil audacity of greed—  
Live play of deceit and ugly adventure of sin—  
Their beauty too wove a dreamweb for me  
Because I give the dignity of dreams even to nightmares,  
That is also a captive sun particle,  
Coming out breaking the hard womb of the earth  
But deserts come,  
Gradually month by month year by year  
A lonely foxtail orchid falls off early in the hollow of a peepal tree  
Gradually wipe away like a secret disease  
All the colours of life, green, golden  
Paint a copper coloured sky  
And  
An ashen earth.  
Transforming the rills into rivers streams into rocky fields  
Build graves of trees-creepers and flowers with sand dunes  
A translucent dragonfly loses its way wandering over the sand  
In search of water.  
Thus come the deserts  
Gradually month by month year by year  
To that distant blue hamlet  
Harvesting season came early this time—  
In the month of Ahin?

Where are the flash floods of Spring this year?  
Won't white fish make the streams glisten like silver during the breeding season?

The black clouds of Ahar stayed back in the other side of the hill.

A hill is so tall! Is it taller than the clouds?  
Is it taller than love?  
Rain?  
Jowar and Bajra didn't thrive  
Dates were not plenty in the groves of mango.  
There will bloom only cactus,  
The starlight at midnight will

Disperse it's spores to snakes  
Thorns will cover up the grass  
Night wind will sprinkle dry ice  
Daylight will pour orange coloured melt iron over there.

Thereafter

The shadow of camel's neck, the shadow of the long neck will sleep like bones for the sea.

Ending like this... this romance of death...

It is the luxurious sporting of middle aged woman with  
Inexperienced adolescents.

Where there is no insatiety of regret, no anxiety of satisfaction,  
No beauty of destruction — only the defilement of decay,  
Easy acceptance of only impotence.

Do sandstorms create sculpture on the hills?  
Creates terror.

Whatever romance there is, if any

O life,

I don't want a shelter there,

I am tired of making new idols.

*Translated by* **Rashmi Rekha Bora Hazarika**

[Original Assamese poem.](#)

**Navakanta Barua** (b.1926-d.2002) was a noted Assamese poet, novelist and translator.

**Rashmi Rekha Bora Hazarika** is a versatile translator and writer, proficient in both Assamese and English, with expertise in translating to and from these languages.