

## Two Poems by Kedarnath Singh<sup>1</sup>

Translated from Hindi

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### The River

Walk slowly,  
She'll touch you;  
Run fast, she'll trail, the river.  
Take her with you,  
she'll go, anywhere you wish,  
even to the junkyard;  
leave her,  
in that dark, escaping  
the gaze of million stars  
she'll secrete, quietly,  
a whole world  
in a tiny snail.

Live where you want,  
the truth is, even on hard days  
of any season, you'll find  
a river that loves you;  
the river that isn't there  
now, in the house you live,  
will be there, somewhere  
may be  
under a mat, or a vase,  
flowing quietly,  
all by herself.

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<sup>1</sup> Kedarnath Singh (1934-) is a highly accomplished poet in Hindi. He was the recipient of the Jnanpith Award in 2013, the most prestigious literary recognition in India. His *Akaal main Saras* (Cranes in the Drought) received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1989. He has also received the Hindi Akademi Award and the coveted "Kumaran Asan" (Kerala) Award.

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When the whole town's asleep,  
glue your ears to the doors,  
and listen to how she sounds;  
somewhere around  
like the silent moaning  
of a female croc,  
she'll be heard, the river!

### When it Begins Raining

When it begins raining  
pigeons stop flying;  
filled with water, lanes rush out,  
yet, return quietly after a while.

The cattle stop grazing,  
turn towards the sound  
of a slow susurrus  
dropping from leaves—  
tsip tsip tsip, tsip...

When it begins raining  
a rich-mineral scent of lore  
kicks up from public places  
and roams freely all over the town.

When it begins raining,  
except raining, nothing  
happens anywhere, really;  
trees stand still,  
wherever they are,  
and people too.  
Only the Earth twirls  
to come face to face with  
the act of water falling.