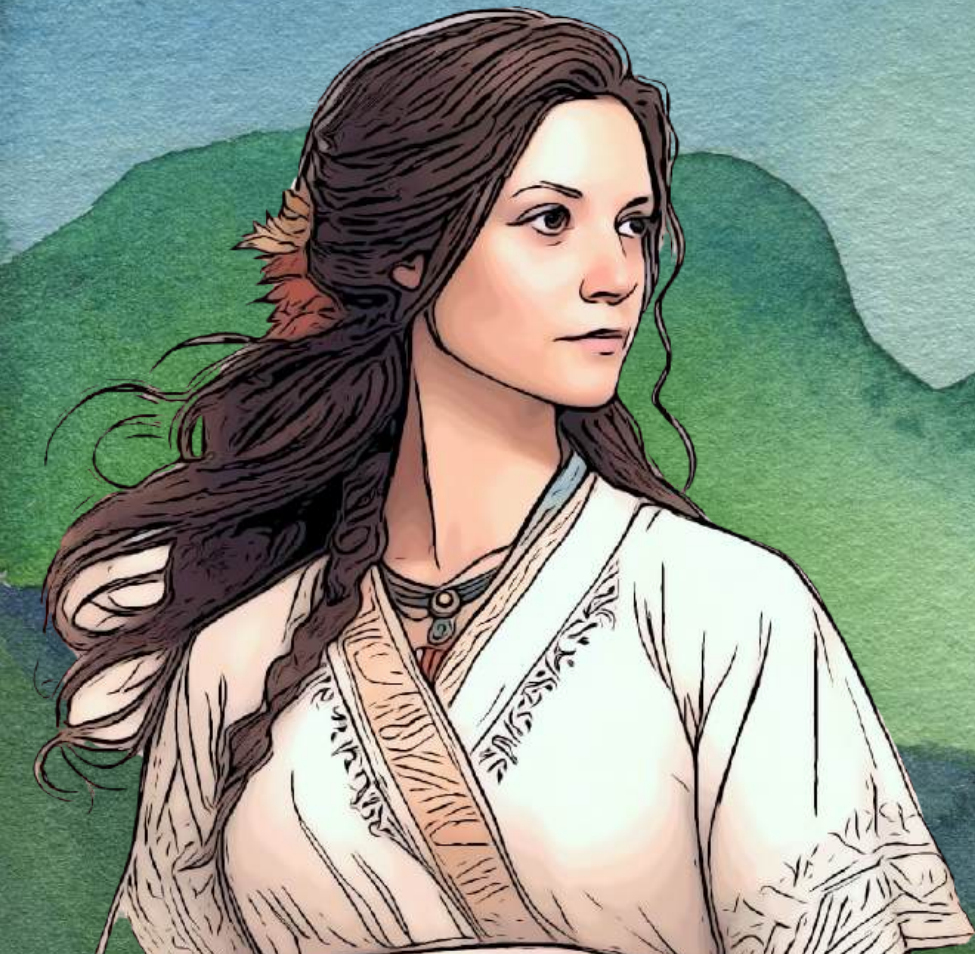


the Khasi khynnah who travelled to

the Vatican

Abdullah Rubaet Chowdhury



In the heart of Meghalaya (which translates to “abode of the clouds”) are the Khasi Hills - where the clouds seem to hug the peaks. In one of the well-guarded “Sacred Groves” of Mawphlang, I find myself entranced by the sacred whispers of a wise rudraksha tree. This whisper, a hymn, a union of the wind’s caress and rain’s soft touches, whispers a melody beyond the grasp of any familiar tune.

“Myndai”, they speak of the Time. Myndai, the Time is a ‘who’ and not a ‘what’. Like everything in the hills, time too breathes life, protecting their ‘Ancient Past’ - and the old days which were once young, days which Khasis have never seen, and yet remember. This past is ingrained in their unknown memories, communicated through hymns, stories, and traditions. A presence so clear, guarding the Khasi traditions for centuries.

For they sing ‘Phawars’ (songs) to their children and reminding them of the myth of the ‘hynñiewtrep’, the seven families who were condemned to Earth from the heavens through the golden ladder in the ‘Sohpet (Navel) Bneng (Heaven)’ peak.

To my wife and son;
a present promised few moons ago,
never realised, for our life was still raw.
a present wrapped in an eternal song,
to whisper to our own, when the night gets long.



In the hills of Kongthong, beneath skies so blue,
Lived Laru the khynnah,
a brave, wise, and true.
She learned from the elders, the forest's old song,
Oh rivers and trees, the wild oranges and betel leaves,
where spirits linger and live.

With leaves that would whisper, and roots that could walk,
Where flowers sing hymns
Of the forever tales of earth and spirits.
"To love all of nature," her mother would whisper,
"Is the old Khasi way."





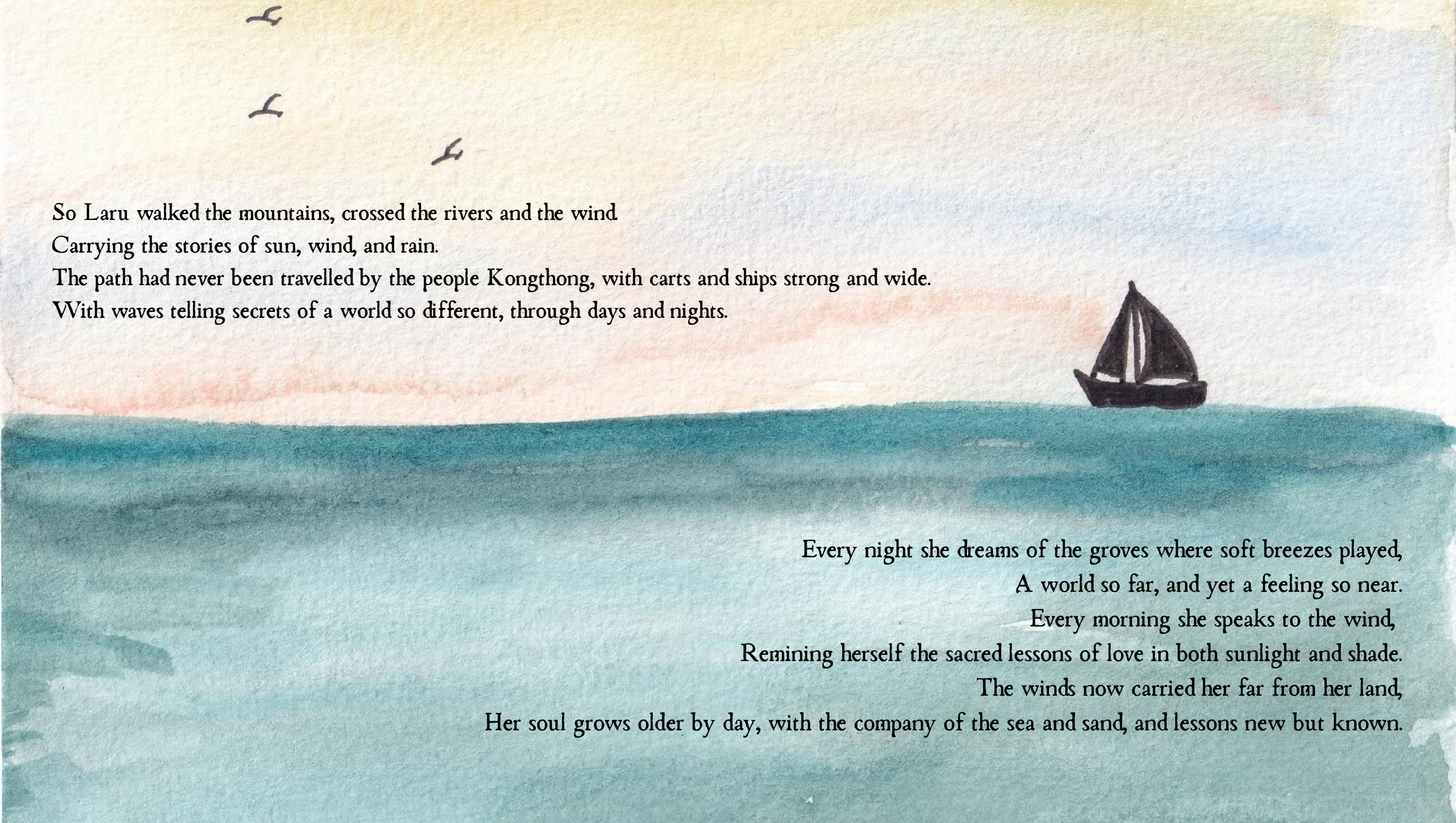
One dawn, a letter arrived in Kongthong with words from the
Vatican;

"Come share your stories, O kind people of the lands in the clouds.
Where the 'Khla' lives, a tiger angry, and yet kind, guarding the
children, day and night."

The elders all gathered, afraid of crossing the clouds.
Except for the brave young Laru.

Who knew well the teachings of earth and of light, and the voice
of 'U Blei' present in all lives; a God, a Spirit, gracious and kind

"Speak of our kinship with creatures and trees,
Of balance and kindness, for healing 'Ma-Ramew,' the great
Mother, the protector, the planet, for eternal peace."



So Laru walked the mountains, crossed the rivers and the wind
Carrying the stories of sun, wind, and rain.
The path had never been travelled by the people Kongthong, with carts and ships strong and wide.
With waves telling secrets of a world so different, through days and nights.

Every night she dreams of the groves where soft breezes played,
A world so far, and yet a feeling so near.
Every morning she speaks to the wind,
Remining herself the sacred lessons of love in both sunlight and shade.
The winds now carried her far from her land,
Her soul grows older by day, with the company of the sea and sand, and lessons new but known.

In the city of arches and marble dreams,
standing tall as the sacred trees,
Unfamiliar yet not unknown,
Here gardens still whisper of long-forgotten stories,
Laru stood before a hall of kindred hearts,
wrapped in fine white linens.

And tales from the clouds they were eager to hear.
She spoke of the forests where betel leaf sings,
Where mothers hymn for their children, caressing for the sleeping forest.
Of rivers that teach how all life should be.
"To tend and to listen, to give more than take,
To love every life - the hill, tree, and lake
This is our way,
A gift to the world that can quiet its fears."

