

**UNDER A DIFFERENT SKY**

BY IFFAT NAWAZ



# Three speaking Mynas

*It was an overcast late spring day and two mynas were sitting on a cashew tree not too far from the sea. The branches were swaying as the waves touched the shore and sent out a gentle hello to all who resided close by. The earth vibrated with the rhythm of the wind's play of multiplying ripples.*

*The older Myna commented to the younger, "Windy day!"*

*The younger asked, "You think a storm is coming?"*

*"Not yet," said the older one, "the sky will clear in a few days, maybe a few minutes of rain and then we will be back to golden sunshine and blue skies."*

*"I wish it rained more here," the little Myna started singing a rain-drop song.*

*"But it is not the time nor the place of rain.*

*One must know the time one is passing and the space one is holding in that time." The older Myna was suddenly thoughtful.*

*The younger Myna sensed that there was a story behind this contemplative voice of the elder, she stopped singing and turned. "Tell me more," she said, spreading her claws to secure her spot on the branch.*

*The older one too spread out his wings and then closed them in, as if to capture enough of the moist-cool-breeze to make for a good self-hug and preservation, then he reminisced.*

It was a long time ago, but not a long, long time ago, that one of our ancestors who used to live in this tree had come across a young man on a windy day like this. The young man was a goat-herder, a poor fellow. Both the Myna and the herder were swaying with the whim of the wind when the King's men came, making a loud grand announcement.

"Hear ye, hear ye, our King had a dream and he is seeking a dream-interpreter. The person who can explain the dream correctly to the King will receive 10,000 gold coins." And then, the announcer explained the dream and moved forward.

The young man wistfully exclaimed, "Alas I wish I was an interpreter of dreams."

"Easy," sang a voice from the tree, it was our ancestor Myna of course. "I know the meaning of that dream. It's easy."

"You do?!" The young man jumped close. "Please tell me O handsome Myna, I can really use that 10,000 gold pieces. Look how poor I am, the only clothes I have are the ones I am wearing and just one meal a day is all I get to eat."

"Well," said the Myna, "I can tell you the meaning but you have to give me 5,000 gold coins, half the winning."

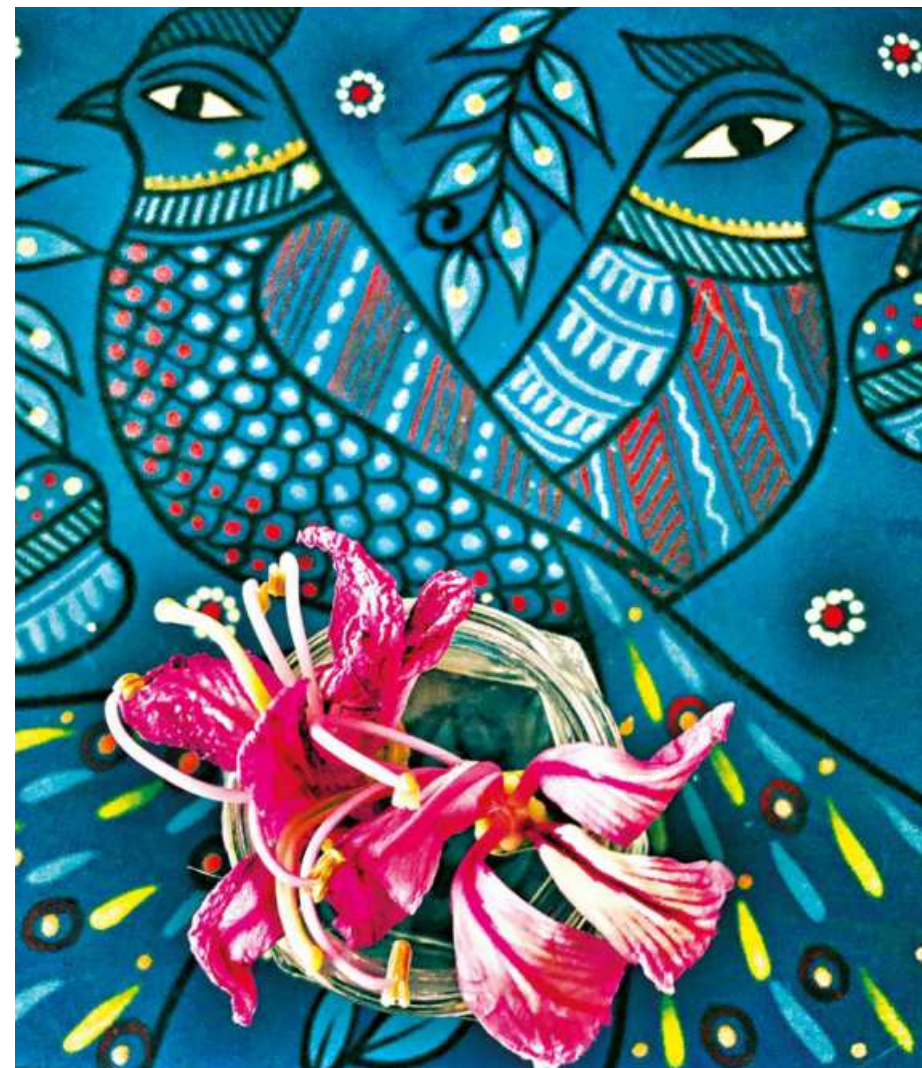
The young man didn't hesitate a moment. He said, "Deal!"

The Myna looked meditative and then he spoke, "Well as the King's men mentioned, in the dream, the king was sitting on his throne when a jackal jumped onto his lap. No matter what the king did the jackal would not get off him. Now everyone knows, a jackal stands for betrayal. The interpretation of the dream is that the King should be careful, there are traitors who are lurking around, and they could backstab him in a second." The ancestor Myna told the young man to run to the palace and tell the King the meaning immediately.

After hearing the interpretation of the dream, the King was very pleased. It sounded just right to him and he thanked the young man for his wisdom and gave him 10,000 gold coins.

As the young man was giddily returning with his beautiful turn of luck, he thought to himself, "What will a bird do with gold coins. I am not going back there, let me keep the whole amount to myself." And so, he did. And with it, he became rich and had his own establishment, he bought land, cattle and employed people to work for him. He no longer had to go near the tree where the ancestor Myna lived.

Five years went by, and one bright morning, the King's men knocked on the young man's door. The King's men said to him,



"Our king has had another dream. Come on, let's go, you have to interpret the dream for him."

The young man became very afraid. He had no talent for dream interpretation, as we know. He told the King's men, "I no longer do dream interpretations, please pardon me from this service."

"Oh yea? Either you do the interpretation, or we are putting you in prison for life. Which do you prefer?" The King's men cornered the young man who begged them to give him 24 hours-time. They left him to return the next day as the young man ran to the tree where ancestor Myna lived. All the while, worried that the Myna may not be there or even if he was, he may not help him.

The ancestor Myna was there, swinging on the branches. He saw the young man approach the tree. "You have brought my 5,000 gold coins after five years?" the ancestor Myna asked.

"No actually, I have spent it all, but the King had another dream and I am desperate for an interpretation or it may cost my life. Please dear Myna, help me! I will come and give you all the coins tomorrow after this ordeal ends."

"Okay, tell me the dream," said the reasonable Myna.

This time, in the King's dream, the king saw that he was walking through a part of the palace which was dark, and he was running from someone. There were loud and muffled cries and he saw a big mad elephant rushing his way, that's when the King woke up

the stone at our ancestor Myna, who flew away just in time to save his life. The young man went home with 20,000 gold coins.

Five years later, the King's men came again. With the same request, the King...a dream... needs interpretation. The young man again borrowed 24 hours and made it back to the cashew tree.

The Myna was about to fly away seeing the young man approach, but the young man started begging and apologising profusely. The kind Myna gave him one last chance.

This time, the dream was that, there were birds singing, and lush green trees were everywhere, the King was having heavenly desserts and honey was pouring out of fountains. The Myna said "Tell the King, it is time of harmony, peace and prosperity. Any project he starts now will be a success, he should enjoy this time along with his pupils."

Hearing the interpretation, the King gave the young man 50,000 gold coins. This time, the young man ran straight to the cashew tree, he offered it all to the Myna, "Kind Myna," the man who was not as young anymore said, "Please take the entire amount, I have wronged you in the past, please forgive me, I do not want to take any part of this prize."

The ancestor Myna exclaimed "I am a bird, what am I going to do with this money? Silly man! You take it, enjoy and help others."

The man was filled with gratitude, and asked the Myna why he was being so generous to him. "If it was anyone else, they would have really hated me by now," said the not-so-young-man.

The Myna told him, "Well see, it was not your fault that you acted the way you did. It was the time we were living in. The first time, there was betrayal in the air, so you betrayed me. The next time there was violence in the air, so you tried to kill me. And now, there is harmony and love in the air, so you are full of gratitude and goodwill. Rarely do we act out of our true nature but rather the nature that wind is spreading around, it is a collective environmental consciousness." The wise Myna smiled at the very thankful not-so-young-man, who had learnt his life's biggest lesson that day.

"So you see, little Myna," said the elder Myna, "before one acts out of character, or makes an impulsive decision, or a half-baked conclusion, they should think about the time and space they are in and judge if their actions and thoughts are triggered by the environment they are in, influenced by the messages carried in the wind, or is it coming from their true spirit, soul and heart."

The little Myna was taken by the story of her wise ancestor, and the new knowledge she acquired. She could almost hear a faint sound of an old song from the higher branch. She imagined it to be the echoing voice of the ancestor Myna, whose imprints had become a part of the cashew tree. The little Myna balanced her swaying between the rhythm of the wind and the beats of her heart as she watched a young man pass by whistling a breezy tune, and a full moon rose over the sea.

\* Just like the little Myna, this story was passed down to me from elders.

**Photo: Iffat Nawaz**