

PRIYA SARUKKAI CHABRIA

AMBAPALI WANDERS THROUGH HER GROVE ONE LAST TIME AS IF FOR THE FIRST TIME

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (Sutta on the Great Final Deliverance), which documents the last days of Guatama Buddha's life, mentions that Ambapali, the legendary royal courtesan of the ancient city of Vaishali, offered her grove to the Buddha and then "respectfully saluted him and keeping her right side to him, took her departure."

In in this grove's green cave
my body's earthen *diya*
dark as a scoop of bark

floats

lit wick
flickering

When will i trim
into a tiny flame

steady

in this quivering

Afternoon

Forest's breath hangs heavy
dreaming a cloak of rain

Sudden gust
blows insects off their path

Sudden shower
Sudden sun

From the spangling
cave of trees

parrots call
green as raw mango

*

Silent joy of trees
feeding
on a freshly dead fox

See
its fur
of stilled flame
stir
in a breeze

*

Egret footprints

race along the river bank

vanish

In the sky

a cry

Stuck

in sluiced mud

lacy white feather

stippled in sparkle

Sacred speech of soil seeps

up between toes

that remember amphibious origins:

porewater slime lotic life

*

Darshan

twinned sensitivity of seeing and being seen

descend

Grant sight

of the river's long green eyes

*

