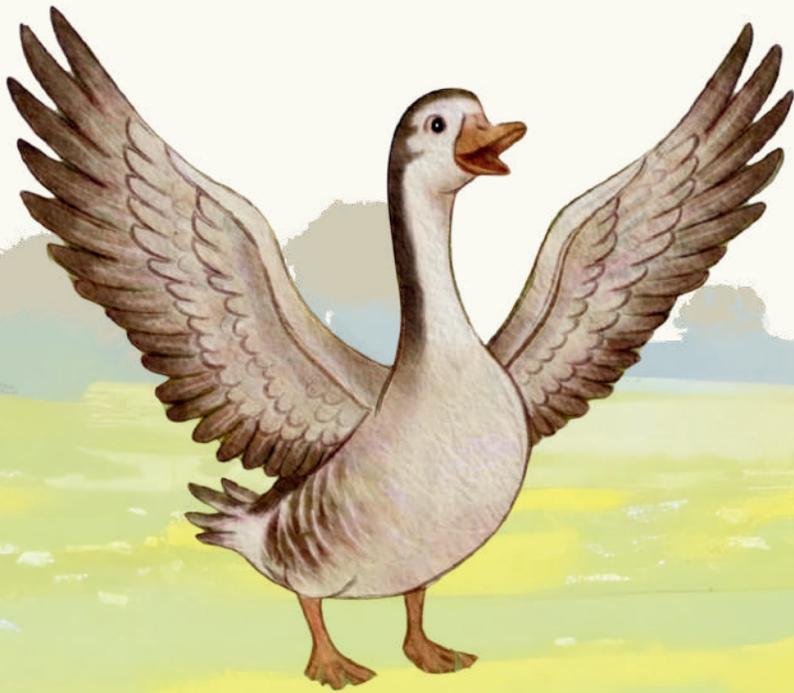


SELENGE

THE LITTLE GOOSE AND HER FIRST MIGRATION



STORY - RAMESH KUMAR SELVARAJ
ILLUSTRATIONS - NIVEDITHA R K





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THE LAKE OF WHITE WINGS

A lake in the steppe landscape shone like a silver mirror in the heart of Central Asia.

Green mountains stood tall around it, and the water rippled whenever the wind whispered across its surface.

Selenge, a young bar-headed goose with two neat black stripes on her head, lived here with her big, happy family.

She loved swimming in the lake, nibbling the soft green grasses, and watching the blue sky reflected in the water.



But there was someone else Selenge enjoyed watching just as much: a friendly girl named Tuya.

Tuya came every day with her father to graze their cattle, sheep and goats. Her favourite was a little calf who trotted behind her like a best friend.

Whenever Tuya waved at Selenge, Selenge flapped her wings in return.

Their friendship was waiting to bloom.



A FRIENDSHIP BEGINS

One bright morning, Tuya and Selenge found themselves close enough to meet.

Tuya stepped forward slowly. Selenge stood bravely still.

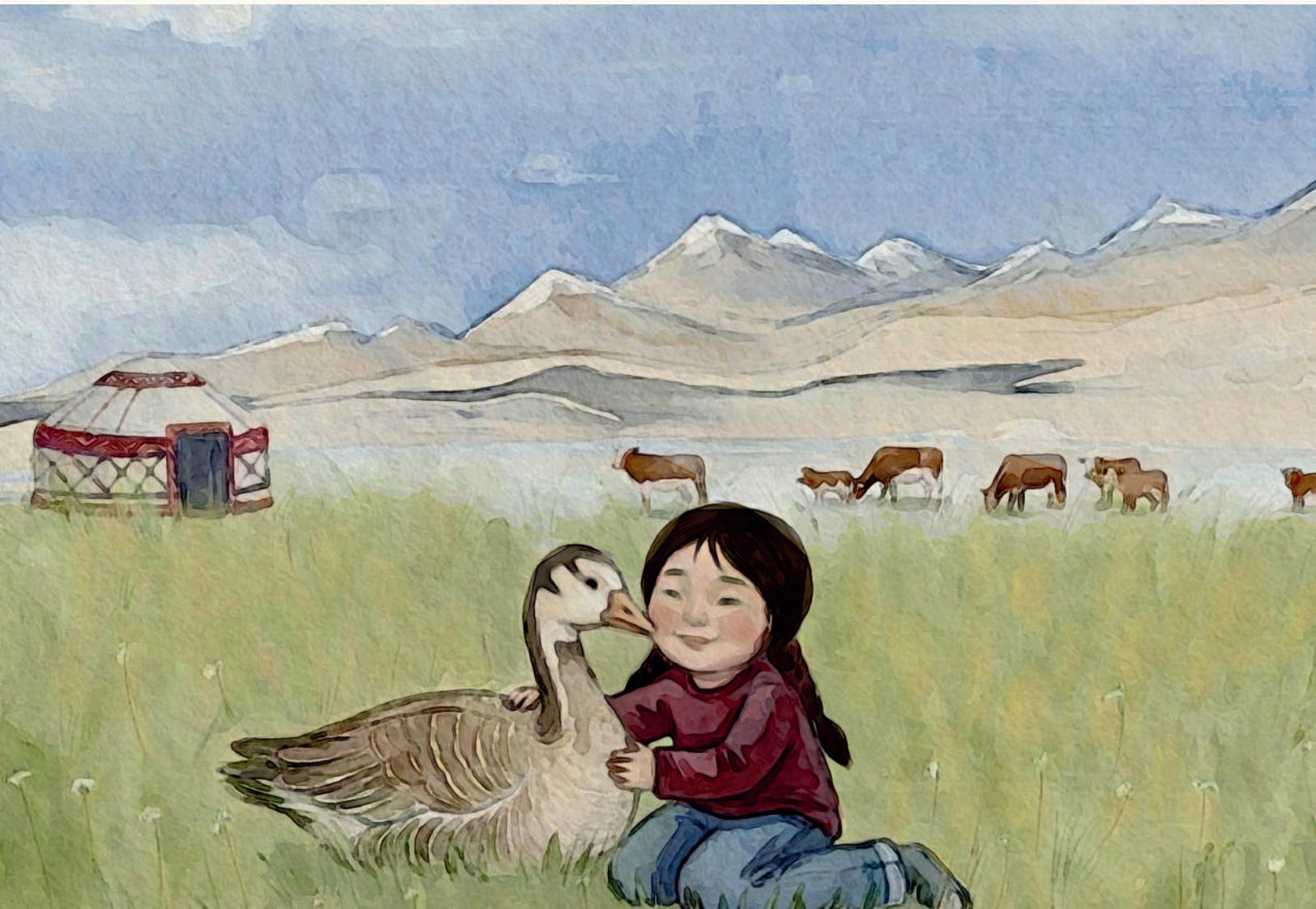


Tuya touched Selenge's soft, lined head with gentle fingers.
"I love these stripes," Tuya said with a smile.

Selenge honked.

"Thank you! I like you too - and your cute calf."

From that day, Tuya and Selenge played together every afternoon by the lake, racing through the grass or splashing in shallow water. Their laughter echoed across the meadows.



THE COLD WINDS ARRIVE

As the days passed, the air grew colder. Frost sparkled on the grass. Tuya wore thicker jackets each morning.

"Selenge," Tuya said one day, "the weather is getting bad. If you want, you can stay with us. I'll keep you warm."

Selenge smiled warmly.

"My feathers keep me warm. But before the cold becomes too strong, my family must fly far south to a warmer place."

"South?" Tuya gasped. "Is that behind the big cliff we cross sometimes?"

Selenge laughed gently. "No, Tuya. Much, much farther, my father calls it India."



Tuya looked sad.
“When will you go?”

“Next week,” Selenge whispered.
But the storm arrived sooner.

The next day Tuya rushed to the lake, but Selenge and her family were gone.
Her heart tightened.

But then Selenge swooped down from the grey sky.

“We must leave today,” Selenge said softly. “Goodbye, Tuya. I’ll come back,
next year.”

Tuya hugged her for the last time and waved until Selenge disappeared into
the clouds.



INTO THE SKY OF MOUNTAINS

Selenge felt sad leaving Tuya behind, but she was also excited – this was her first great migration.

They flew over endless grasslands, rivers, and valleys. After two days, enormous white mountains blocked the horizon.

“Selenge,” her father called, “these are the Himalayas. We must cross them to reach India.”

Selenge gulped. “They are too high! I can’t do it!”

“You can,” her mother said kindly. “We are strong. Believe in your wings.”



They waited until night, then began climbing steadily into the thin, icy air.

The cold wind bit Selenge's feathers. Her wings grew tired. She wanted to give up.

At these heights, there is only about half the oxygen available to breathe. For most birds, such a journey would be impossible.

But her mother stayed beside her, whispering,
"Just a little more. I'm with you."

The moonlit sky revealed a glowing silver peak beneath them.

Selenge gasped. It felt as if she were flying above stars and touching the moon.

After crossing the mighty peaks, they glided down into warm plains.



RESTING IN THE RIVER PLAINS

After crossing the mighty Himalayas, Selenge and her flock glided into a warm, gentle land. Below them lay wide rivers, soft mudflats, and green fields – the Gangetic Plains.

They landed near a quiet bend in the river.

Selenge dipped her bill into the water and sighed happily.
“It feels so warm here!”

Her father nodded. “Yes, this is a good place for us to rest.”

Selenge looked around curiously. “Was this place always like this?”

Her father looked across the river. “There used to be more wetlands and quiet places for us to feed. Now some have changed, and the water is not as clean before.”

The flock rested by the calm river. Tomorrow, the journey would continue.



THE FOREST OF SPINNING GIANTS

As they flew farther south, they encountered something unexpected - hundreds of tall towers with giant spinning blades.

"Stay alert!" Selenge's father warned. "These are wind turbines."

The blades sliced the air with frightening speed.

Selenge dodged left, then right, wings racing.

She made it through. But one young goose behind her could not.

Selenge cried out in grief. Selenge looked back with tears in her eyes. But she had to continue her journey.



A NEW HOME IN THE SOUTH

Finally, they reached a warm lake surrounded by paddy fields, birds, and open skies.

It was beautiful.

Selenge loved the warmth, the shimmering water, and the abundance of food.

Yet, she still thought of Tuya and the Steppe.



One day, Selenge decided to explore a nearby wetland. While walking near the shore, her leg suddenly tightened.

She was caught in an abandoned fishing net.

Selenge panicked. "Help! Help!"

She struggled, but the net tightened further. Her leg began to bleed.



Just then, a young boy sprinted toward her across the field.
"Be calm, my friend. I'm here," he said softly.

Selenge stopped struggling.
The boy carefully untangled the net from Selenge's leg.

He worked slowly, gently, with steady hands.

Blood trickled down Selenge's feathers.
"Stay here. I'll be back!" the boy said and ran off.



Moments later he returned with a small white cloth,
"This will help," he murmured. He wrapped Selenge's leg neatly.

"My name is Muthu," he said finally, smiling.

Selenge bowed her head politely.

"My name is Selenge. I come from the Steppe - far, far away."

Muthu's eyes widened.

"The Steppe? Tell me everything!"



SELENGE AND MUTHU BECOME FRIENDS

From that day, Muthu visited Selenge daily and even introduced Selenge to his own cattle.

Selenge told Muthu about her full story. Muthu listened eagerly, his eyes shining with wonder.

"I've never left this village," he said. "But you make the Steppe feel so close. One day, I want to meet Tuya. I want to see the Steppe too."

"You will," Selenge said happily. "Maybe someday Tuya will come here too!"

Muthu smiled proudly whenever Selenge mentioned her. He took great care of Selenge's healing leg and made sure she felt safe and loved.



THE EARTH TURNS HOT

As months passed, summer grew harsher.
The wetlands shrank.

Fields dried and cracked under the sun.

Selenge sighed.

“It’s time for us to go, Muthu. It’s getting hot here.”

She looked toward north and said softly, “We must fly all the way back over the Himalayas again – from these plains up to the highest mountains. It will be a long and tiring climb.”



Muthu's heart tightened.

"I knew you would leave... but I hoped you would stay longer."
Selenge pressed her head gently against Muthu's arm.

"I will return next winter. And I will tell Tuya about you."
Muthu hugged her tightly.

"Fly safe, Selenge. And come back. I will wait for you - right here, by this lake."



HOME AGAIN

The journey back north was long but familiar. When Selenge finally reached the Steppe, she rushed toward the grazing meadows.

“Tuya!” she called.

Tuya turned around – and her eyes filled with joy.

“Selenge! You came back!”



She ran and hugged Selenge, the calf - now older - nuzzling beside them.

In the next few days, Selenge excitedly told her everything about her migration story, especially Muthu, the brave boy who saved her.

Tuya listened with awe.

Selenge felt warm inside.

She had two homes now, one in the Steppe and one in the warm South, and two wonderful friends waiting for her each year.



Every year, thousands of birds travel across continents, following invisible paths in the sky.

In this story, Selenge, a young bar-headed goose, begins her first great migration from the Eurasian steppes to the warm wetlands of South Asia. Guided by her family, she crosses vast landscapes - including the mighty Himalayas.

Through Selenge's journey, children discover the wonder of bird migration and why protecting wetlands, rivers, and flyways is so important.



Central Asian Conservation Network (CACN) is a regional initiative that brings together researchers, conservationists, and organisations to strengthen collaboration for biodiversity conservation across Central Asia and the Central Asian Flyway. It promotes information sharing, scientific research, and coordinated conservation action to protect migratory birds and their habitats across the region

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