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## SHELLING PIGEON PEAS - on the day after Derek Walcott spoke

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Gungo, toor, gandules  
Pulse off the tongue  
Staccato  
Exotic like some import  
But the true import  
Is not the high-yield pigeon pea  
Common in the tropics from India to Africa  
Paramaribo to Nassau

The true import is the people  
Black, brown and yellow  
Who came in waves  
Through sea water waves  
In ships slave and cargo  
Black, brown and yellow  
Compartmentalized  
Like peas in pods  
Oblate, boat-shaped  
People pods

Forming ties across bounds Jahaji bhai  
Boat brothers and then blood brothers  
Jahaji bahin sisterblood  
Finding solace in shelling peas  
Shelling the stigma of servitude  
Collecting the protein-rich  
Seed encapsulated in green  
Flavoring pots of nostalgic stew  
Christmas pelau  
Pea soup, rice n' peas

Peas shelled by these hands  
On the day after  
Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott  
Touched these same hands  
Spoke his words,  
*Development must consider poverty*

We are of poverty but we are not  
Poor of spirit  
For we are the children  
Of the black, brown and yellow people

Who came in pods  
Across blackened seas

Who sloughed off pain  
Like they sliced sugar cane  
Who sucked on salt  
Ate sada roti with oil and pepper  
Banded their bellies  
Bent their backs  
And cutlassed clear paths  
Through the burning cane  
For us all  
To find our way  
To the river cool and bright