

A photograph of a multi-story building at night. The building has several floors with balconies. In the foreground, a white laundry line is stretched across the frame, with various items of clothing hanging on it. A large tree is visible on the right side of the image. The text 'ME MIGRANT' is overlaid on the middle of the image.

ME MIGRANT

MD MUKUL HOSSINE

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Transcreated by **Cyril Wong**
Translated from Bangla with help from
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Golden Mother

Mother, o mother,
where are you?
I'm not myself anymore, mother,
come see how I live.

In the bottomless heat of this distant land,
life burns towards its end.
Come see where I am?

Uncountable pain, wails by the thousands,
I weep alone mother.
Nobody looks at me.

Tears from the corner of my eyes
whenever I think of you
but cannot reach you.

Wandering the blank desert,
so tired, I can't bear it, mother.
Call me khoka, just once.

To hear the call from you
like a swallow,
I am waiting, o mother.

Note: Khoka means 'boy' in Bengali.

Eid Abroad

Sleepless night alone and silent
Moonlight is fearless
Sun's rays cruel sometimes
Unhappy heart touched lightly by love
Hardship, sorrow and pain
Spreading night smells

Today Eid-day, Eid abroad
Lonesome heart full of agitation
I can feel deeply
Mother's eyes full of tears
I also feel
Father's deep sigh, brother's emptiness
Sister's amazing smile
Everything taken
By this life away
A life in silence

My beloved's laughter stopped
I don't know when
Loving or liking had to be given up
I've forgotten to dream
I'm becoming restrained everyday

Today Eid-day, Eid abroad
The inner mind trembles
With unabashed agony

Mother, I remember you

Too many times
Two drops leave your eyes
Eid Mubarak for you from abroad

Me Migrant

Me migrant
Live overseas
Thousand thousand miles away

Me migrant
Beyond borders
Mislaying smiles
Dawn to dusk then dawn again

Bearing sighs and a cry
Inner heart
Love, compassion, kindness
Lose their meaning
Be careful: no one here
And nobody
To see and know such pain

Me migrant
Live outdoors

Outside from you

Grandmother

My grandmother used to take my hand and lead me beneath the kadam tree
She would make me a garland of Spanish cherries around her neck.
Every morning she would wake me up

Come, precious grandchild, the puffed rice treats are almost ready
In the afternoon, when I returned home after playing outside
My grandmother would feed me until my belly was full

When night fell and the fireflies lit up, my grandmother would carry me
To see the firefly fair, how they danced about
Late at night, she would pat me
And sing me to my castle of sleep

Today, my grandmother is far away, we cannot meet anymore
She rests beneath the ground, we cannot meet anymore

No one plucks a kadam flower for me like before
The Spanish cherry tree has now died out
No one is there to wake me up in the morning
No one tells me to come quickly, the puffed rice treats are ready

I spend the afternoons with great difficulty and loneliness
I cannot fill my stomach with food when I think of my grandmother
Those fireflies at night do not seem to dance about anymore
They are no longer my friends, they fly away when I reach for them

I

Today the sky of the mind
Becomes clouded
Then rains forcefully

Someone near the border
Clapping his hands
Calling me repeatedly

Life of silent darkness
Full of single dense bodies
I don't know where I got lost

This blanket of fog
Covering my little heart
I've forgotten how to go

Walking in streets without boundaries
How I lost myself I don't know
I possess no address

Your Father

by Tessa Lim

I met your father
along Race Course road
by tree number 12
in a dormitory in Tuas
Your father is everywhere, really
perhaps
I just don't really *see* him
as much as I should

Initially wary
we sat in awkward silence
what do I say to you?
What do you say to me?
For the first time
I felt not so sure of myself
and that *I* was the one bothering him

But your father is so kind
He patiently answered all my questions
told me about life here
and life back home

He has a degree in business
he only finished high school
He has been here for 3 months
he has been here for 10 years
He has a family back home
a wife and 2 children

Slowly I realised
that your father had his own story to tell
tales of home and loved ones
dreams and aspirations

He told me how he met your mother
in the same village he grew up in
He remarked that we don't *know*
our neighbours here
when back home, you would know
your entire village

It made me realise
how alike we were
He is your father and
he is my brother
As he said
We are the same
only the colour of our skin differs

We had a meal together
He showed me his dormitory
He even bought us drinks
which we initially refused
How could we let someone “marginalised”
and “of lower status”
treat us?

Then I learnt
to set my pride aside
That graciously accepting the treat
was one of the greatest dignities
I could give to him
I also learnt
that people with “the least”
are often the most generous

I want you to know that
your father loves you very much
so much that he would
travel an ocean away
toil under the sun
endure injury and long working hours
years of homesickness
and the unshakeable feeling
of being a foreigner
not exactly well-loved by people here
though he is the silent builder
behind the scenes of my country

He calls home everyday
every night, after work
When I ask him
what he misses the most about home
his answer is you.

At Midnight

When at midnight, I wake up alone
I turn on each side as if to search for something.

Cell phone, pen, notebook and pillow –
They lie by my side with restless eagerness,
Counting the hours till I occupy myself with them.

My darling's laughter outside the door tinkering to my senses.
It rings repeatedly with immense joy.
I can smell her tousled hair,

a pinch of sensation within my dream.
My hand trembles, my sleepy emotions shudder.
I lose myself in the sea of deserted memories.

Sometimes I dream of my darling's touch.
Forgetting everything else,

I submerge myself in the heart of the Jamuna River
I lose myself as I go deeper and deeper
I embrace my darling and hold the edge of her saree

close to my heart
And I drift away in the bottomless ocean.

Late this morning I left the bed.
I looked on the wall and saw your portrait,
Your untied hair brushing by the wall.
It seems you've been in my room.

Our souls too close, rafting on dreams
I look at your abashed eye and you feel faint
Tremors in the heart covered by shame

I found myself alone on the edge of bed.
The sunlight blinks on the window frame,
I imagined, you, leaving in sunshine.

Bangladesh

My soul for you like a candle burning to its end.
Clouds pass with time leaving a wake of weariness.

As hope and memory leave me ill,
The heart demands to see you just once and only you.

Again sweet pain
From your words recalling that unending story.

Skies, winds, romance, intimacies and meditating ascetics
Keep me restless every morning and noon.

Today inside this worn-out apparel I write you finally:
You my gem, my grandest fortune, Bangladesh.

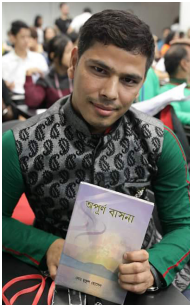
I fix you every instant everywhere
Inside my heart down to my soul.

Me migrant
Beyond borders
Mislaying smiles
Dawn to dusk then dawn again

Me Migrant represents the voice of hope and inclusiveness, of longing and dreaming, of service and heart.

A collection born of the friendship between volunteers of community clinic HealthServe and foreign construction workers, the poetry within these pages makes us see farther, think deeper, and listen.

In listening, let us cross these borders.



Md Mukul Hossine was born in Patgram, Bangladesh, and has a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences. In 2008, he arrived in Singapore and has been working in its construction sector. Mukul writes poems, novels, and short stories. He enjoys composing poetry to remember his mother back home. His novel, *Buher Simanaye Sukh (Happiness at Heart's Edge)* and his poetry collection *Apurna Vasana (Unfulfilled Desire)* have been published in Bangladesh. His other works have also appeared in anthologies. Mukul has spent many long nights writing poetry. His favourite poet is Rabindranath Tagore.

Founded in 2006, **HealthServe** is a non-profit organisation that seeks to meet the needs of the migrant workers in the community through the provision of medical care, counselling, case work, social assistance, and other support services.



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