

To Mihir

Original Poem: “Mihirer Uddeshe” by Shamsur Rahman

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Mihir, do you remember Jamil?

Yes, I am that Jamil,

who kept you company day and night.

They said we were *manikjorh*, bosom friends.

Together we'd go to school, playgrounds,

sometimes to fairs in the next village

and return before it was late.

Throwing dust in elders' eyes,

we'd go out to enjoy *jatra*, folk-opera,

holding each other's hand.

When we'd come home at dawn,

dews would sparkle on leaves of grass—

Do you remember, Mihir?

I, Jamil Akhter as I stand now,

I can't forget those days.

Like swans stretching their necks,

those years glide towards me.

Mihir, in front of your house

there was a *kanak chapa* tree.

Once a *swarnalata*, the golden creeper,

embraced me just like you.

To Mihir

Mohammad Shafiqul Islam

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64501/yfm4ah11>

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A tender smile on your lips,
you took me to your reading room.
Kakima, your mother, gave me
coconut *naru* and *moa*, balls of sweetmeat,
in a glittering brass bowl.
Kakima's face reminds me
of bliss scattered in a corner of the sky.
Self-oblivious Kakababu, your father,
taught me a deep lesson about life—
his generous outlook,
an unwavering sense of humanity,
and devotional love for motherland.
How can I forget him?
I don't know if he's alive,
but even if he is, he'll never know—
like Ekalavya, I'm still following
his principles in this distant land.
Mihir, I never told you—
how beautifully you'd recite
Jibanananda's poems,
I'd engrossedly listen, eventually landing

in the palace of pretty princesses.

In the forest moonlight, I could clearly see

Mrinalini Ghoshal's deadbody rising up.

Mihir! You, yes you made me

devoted to modern poetry.

Listening to your brilliant recitations,

I learnt how lyrical and mellifluous

Bangla poetry could be.

Like streams, the poetry lines

would flow on across my mind—

with rapt attention I'd keep on listening.

It's still fresh in my memory—

your melodious voice

is the voice of a virtuoso.

My pen shivers to write

the incidents that followed.

Paying the high price,

we the helpless South Asians have known

how bigotry makes people inhuman;

how one kills another, rapes women

as if they're cheap commodities;

how a brother bursts into celebration

torching another's house.

Riot is a heinous history of devastating houses;

riot is indeed the ugliest killer of humanity.

The day your sister Shefali

turned into a trodden Shiuli,

you all left the country, Mihir.

Which lamps of promise could stop

this silent migration of minorities

from our beloved land?

Bandits never lend an ear to sweet words—

their spears pierce

the hearts of amity and empathy.

Mihir, that day I noticed in your house

there are no swans to greet me

stretching their necks.

Now a cunning fox

and his family live there.

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I can't help sharing with you
that the minorities no more go
to polling stations.

Following some invisible signals,
others vote on their behalf
with great joy and pride.
How strange!
Sensing its distress,
someday they might shove the moon
to the other side of the sky.