

**To My Grandchildren:
Your Childhood and Mine
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My childhood days,
Precious and pristine time -
Time to know, time to grow,
Filled with wonder, simple play.
Days that came with pre-dawn purity,
The crimson sun greeted my eager eyes.
Walks through the fields, holding hands
Of a wise, affectionate man - our father.
Poetry and songs filled my hours,
Playing carefree, climbing trees.
Spending time on the guava-perch,
With friends like siblings,
And siblings like no other in this world.
We ran through verdant meadows,
Stopping only to pick berries,
Forgetting snakes that lurked beneath the bush.
Lush, lazy rice fields slept at the bosom of the horizon,
Clear ponds, filled with laughing children,
Splashing each other in joy;
Lotus blossoms looked on in delight.
Quiet paths hugged Oleander groves-
Fragrant with a hundred Shiuli in Autumn,
With Bakul in the tempestuous days of Baishakh,
Spread a welcoming carpet at my feet.
The mighty river, a mystery - didn't know
Where it came from, whereto it flowed.
Monsoon clouds bestowed splendor
Of dancing rain, deafening thunder, darkness
Pierced by swinging swords of lightning
And dotted with tiny, frightened lamps.
The green fans of palm groves moaned,
Trying to escape the awesome wrath in vain.

Then there were nights – gorgeous nights,
When the blue canopy of the sky

Adorned our small, peaceful abode
With millions of stars and the Milky Way.
The Orion, the Big-Little Dippers, the Cassiopeia,
Or distant visitors, a comet or meteorites
Ignited our imagination
For adventures beyond our sight.

Still, I longed to return home,
The caring harbor, the end of all journeys;
The home that gave me
The courage to face unknown -
The ever-present, unfailing shelter.



Your childhood too is time to know and grow
Filled with wonder, books and walks,
Holding hands of your loving parents, grandparents,
Patiently answering all your multitude questions.
On city streets, on hiking trails,
Not through open meadows or rice-fields.



Your berries are packed and bought.
Or did you 'pick your own' from farms?
You have seen and touched snakes,
alligators
In petting zoos, carefully – not *knowing*
To be afraid.



You too play but in parks and pumpkin patches.
Bright city lights blur the sky, don't let you see
The Milky Way, Orion the hunter, the polar star,
The Big-Little Dippers, the Cassiopeia;
Perhaps you see them, in planetariums or camp-sites.
You see the comets through telescopes.
And watch the space on television in real time or across
eons.

*But you dream of really going to the moon someday,
Donning a space suit as an astronaut,
Of taking a walk in space.*

Your seasons come and go 'round the
school-year,
In varying thickness of clothes you wear.
Not by Bakuls or Shiuli or Lotus, but by
Fall colors.
You too swim, in clear water, in
swimming pools;
Your waves are pushed by machines;
Or sometimes you swim in lakes.





But through the ages, you and I have danced in the rain,
Sang with the storm and played with butterflies.
You and I both travel far in our minds, and by plane,
And still long to come home to our safe harbor of love.
Decades apart, continents apart, you and I are children
Of this universe, spellbound at this miracle, you and me.