

Poem:

# Migrating/Covid-19

- Gulzar

I had seen similar caravans in '47 too  
They are fleeing to their villages in their own country  
We had fled from our village setting out for our country  
Calling us refugees, our country had kept us  
Given us refuge  
They are stopped at the borders of their states  
There is danger in giving them refuge  
Then, too, there was a murderous Death around us  
It asked us our religion  
Now, too, there is a murderous Death around us  
But it doesn't ask us our religion or caste or name  
It simply kills!  
God knows if this Partition is great  
Or that one was greater

(Poet, writer and lyricist Gulzar knows what Partition was like. Born in Punjab's Dina (now in Pakistan) in 1934, he and his family moved to Bombay in the wake of the great migration, where he made his name in Hindi cinema.

He also extensively wrote about the scarring event in *Footprints On Zero Line*, a collection of fiction, non-fiction and poems, and in a novel called *Two*.

Now, as the Covid-19 pandemic and the humanitarian crisis of labourers trying to get home in lockdown continues, he has done what he does best – write about it.

Through the lockdown, Gulzar has written and recorded a number of poems documenting different aspects of the pandemic, but while many have been messages of hope and solidarity, his latest is perhaps his most searing.

He draws a parallel between the mass exodus of workers from the cities to their homes and Partition, which is the largest mass migration of humans in history. The translation is by Rakhshanda Jalil.)