

## **SUDHA COOMARASAMY**

### **To: The National Consultation on Refugee Concerns**

**From: A refugee sponsored by Christ Church Cathedral, Anglican Diocese of Montréal, Québec.**

Like the squirrel and the robin  
we built a cosy home in stages;  
What took us 20 years to build  
was burnt down in 24 hours.

We walked, we ran  
and began to live out of suitcases;  
Within assigned 6' X 10' rooms  
we paced, yearning for 'home'

Like the monkey or the Kangaroo  
I hopped from place to place;  
with my infants clutching at me,  
putting up and taking down our tents.

Addressless and adrift  
our colour became our burden;  
In borrowed life-boats we floated.  
Then at last we saw land — our new  
home.

Land of Indians, Inuits and Immigrants  
Now I am one of you.  
O Canada, the North Star, let's together  
be  
The Sanctuary of the stateless and  
rootless.

(Tamil from Sri Lanka. October 1986,  
Montréal, Québec.)

### **Statement on Canada's ODA**

We crawled in pain  
struggling to stand up.  
You flew to our assistance  
and dressed our wounded knees and  
palms.  
Now, we crawl with bandaged knees  
if we could only stand —  
there won't be anymore wounds.

We cried out in hunger  
longing to feed at least our children.

You were quick to respond  
by transporting your excess food  
supply.  
Now, with a full belly we hear  
the cry of hunger not far away.  
If we have lands or tools to till  
hunger could be forgotten for ever.

To all you donors we beseech  
do not dump your gifts and go.  
Please, rethink, remodel, reorientate  
your approach to the 'Poor' and the  
'Oppressed.'

(October 1986, Montréal, Québec. From  
an ODA recipient of Third World.)

### **Bienvenue Automne**

Warmth of the Sun warmed  
them burnt.  
Tanned and grilled we closed our eyes  
Unawares autumn crept behind us.  
Now trees are shedding leaves —  
Golden, like the dreams of youth  
or,  
like people shedding their suntanned  
skins  
we loose lustre and grow pale.  
Grow pale at the thought of future —  
flurries, snow storms, boots and shov-  
els,  
laws, legislations and rejections.  
Yet within us echoes,  
the promise of Spring and Summer sun,  
Always this little voice of hope  
springs, warms and blooms —  
hurts, heals and grows  
this year and the next  
again and again without rest  
we bloom, fade and fall  
only to bloom again —  
ready for another fall.

(Provoked by the new Immigration Bills:  
C-55 and C-84. September 1987, Mon-  
tréal, Québec.)

### **Human or Humane**

Seated on comfortable chairs  
that surround symbolic round tables  
we discuss and determine  
the fate of millions —  
who miles away seek  
to be free from oppression and  
deprivation of self determination,  
or even,  
access to basic human rights.

Using our rights as donors  
or enlightened democracies  
we seize their rights  
and schedule their lives.  
Others we measure by our values  
find they do not measure up and then,  
make their decisions for them.  
Always, 'their best interest at heart'  
we reach out or send aid  
to get rid of our self guilt.  
The race between the 'haves' and  
'have's'  
continues.

They race to treat the 'havenots'  
always with preconceived ideas of —  
the needs and goals of the marginal-  
ized.

(Reaction to the Summer Course on  
Human Rights. July 1988, Charlottetown,  
P.E.I.)

### **The Battle That's Ever On**

Many have to stay away from home  
shuttling between jobs and eating from  
paper bags,  
inorder to keep their homes.  
Mothers spend time away from their  
children  
so that they can 'spend' on them.  
Governments uphold "Motherhood,"  
Future generation and improved  
lifestyles.

Yet —  
Homeless numbers increase  
Adult-lifestyle condominiums expand,  
need for better and cheaper daycare  
increases  
while the response decreases.  
Budget spending on hi-tech advance-  
ment  
and elusive submarines expands,  
spending on low-cost housing and  
daycare shrinks.  
Where is the logic one wonders.

Election promises abound  
in housing, employment, environment  
and women's issues  
only to be abandoned  
once the votes are cast and victory's  
won.

The marginalized fight on  
armed only with hope and vision  
for better days and justice for all.

(November 1988, Scarborough, ON.)