

SRIHARAN GANESHAN

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Naarm–Melbourne, 2018

*Milk and Tears*

On summer days  
Thin beams of sunlight caress the moist air  
Like the streams of milk from a mother's breast  
Swirling inside the mouth of the feeding baby.

The happiness of the baby unclothes the mother's breast,  
The baby sees the mother's face and is happy,  
The baby's face speaks a language of joy—  
Looking up, then feeding, then pausing to return a smile to the mother.  
To see the language between the mother and the baby is a beautiful scene.  
Nature plants happiness with the mother through the baby.

Here, I have seen babies joyously feed from their mother's breast  
However, the infant community of my fellow exiles is so unhappy.  
I wonder why  
My community has lost all of the happiness that a baby shares with its  
mother?

*Milk and Tears*

My mind returns to a scene I witnessed in my homeland.

Sri Lanka is a small Island, where the North and East are our lands.

In the North there was a church called Navali St Peters,

That church is an old church, showing its colonial age.

In 9 July 1995, the military started an operation called “forward leap.”

In the evening, the big fighter planes came spraying bombs everywhere  
65 local people died instantly and 150 people were injured.

I saw one mother

Holding her kids to her chest

Keeping them safe, as her baby drank milk from her breast.

Her eyes continued to hold a fixed image of the happiness of her baby

Nothing else moved, and after a time, I closed her eyelids.

She died understanding one truth

That her baby is safe when held by a mother’s caress

Religion is no help for the baby.

Sri Dalada Maligawa is a famous Buddhist temple in Kandy

Where a tooth of the Buddha is worshipped.

When you visit there,

The eyes of the Buddha appear to be crying.