**WORDS OF AN INDIAN IMMIGRANT**

Old I am,

And soon will be

Gone

My wrinkled face

And sinewy hands

These nailless toes

Are all I have

What do you know of me?

Nothing!

Well, let me tell

My story and move on

Young and adventurous

From India

I came

Knowing not what awaited me

In this strange tortured land.

You who stare at me

What do you know of this land

That was watered

By the Blood of my brothers

This land that sucked

My strength.

Every second of the day,

And swallowed my wife

While my sweat and tears

Gave life to the cane roots

Of the White Sahib.

Did you hear the bell

That always rudely awakened me

From my precious Sleep

And dragged me on

To the fields

Not heeding the cries

Of my aching body?

Toiling from early morn

To midnight

While my children

Played with the mud

That surround my

Battered logie.

These hands that shake

Uncontrollably now

Were strong then

The midday heat

Burning my bare back

The long days of rain

Never prevented me

From nurturing the Sahib;s cane

From tilling his soil.

When fever tortured

My feeble body

And my head

Spun like a top

Could I stay at home?

No! No!

The sardar’s Hackia

Would only add

To my sufferings

The Sahib’s greed

Must be appeased

His sugar must

Be made.

My sons died

Of malaria

While the sahibs drank

Their whisky

And had their pleasure

With my sisters of the weeding gang

How cheap

Can they be

These lords of the land.

They made me toil

Never looking fully

At my pitiful sight

For their’s was a vision

Of the earthly kingdom

And never looked back

These eyes have seen

The stark realities

Of plantation life

Have seen the torments

And cruelties

Of man’s injustice

To man.

Before I go

Let me point

This trembling hand

At you who stare at me

And you who look away

Unconcerned

Remember

I too,

Suffered.

**By Brahmdeo Persaud (1972)**