

ISSN: 2278-9529



GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

January 2016 Vol. 5. Issue I

www.galaxyimrj.com

Editor-In-Chief- Dr. Vishwanath Bite

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Refugees

A.P.Govindankutty

Struggling to keep pace
With those walking in front
The young mother, a widow,
Her man killed in the resistance,
Her meagre possessions
On her head, in a cardboard box,
Bread and water in a bag
Hanging from her right shoulder,
Younger child, a girl of two summers,
Sleeping on the left shoulder,
Elder, a boy of four years,
Keeping step with her,
Holding her right hand,
Not able to answer the child
Where they were going,
How far they had to go,
Her mind sagging with fear
Of the child's tender legs
Losing strength
As the road lengthened
Before them,
Just pulled on with the rest of the village,
Taking care not to lose them from sight,
For in this wide world,
They were the only ones she knew.

Not knowing where to go,
What to expect or endure,
The villages were moving,
For it meant certain death
If they chose to remain
Where they were born,
Brought up and buried their dead.

Village after village headed to the sea-shore,
A cease-less flow of humanity,
Each looking forward
To squeeze into a boat
To the other continent,
Where, if at all they reach there,
Without meeting death in the sea,

What held in store,
They never knew.

With what little they had
They were living in peace,
When the invading horde
Descended on hem
Driving them from their land,
The land the super-power
Sought to dig up
For metals and hydrocarbon,
But was refused mining rights
By the chiefs of the tribes,
For, their faith didn't permit
Digging the earth
For extracting wealth.

That the invading horde
Acted for the super-power,
The people had no way to know,
Nor that the host countries
On the other continent
Were paid by the same power
For taking in the refugees,
If ever they landed there
Without perishing in the sea.