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RESTORING THE DIGNITY AND CREDIBILITY OF OUR DEMOCRACY

Describing the present as *The Age of Insecurity* Prof. Ronald Inglehart of Michigan University and the author of such well known books as *Cultural Evolution*, *People's Motivations are Changing*, and *Reshaping the world*, writes in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs* that 'the world is experiencing the most severe democratic setback since the rise of fascism in the 1930s.'

He says that 'the immediate cause of rising support for authoritarian, xenophobic populist movements is a reaction against immigration'. That reaction has been accentuated, according to Inglehart, by the rapid cultural change and rich countries adopting job replacing technology such as artificial intelligence. The signs are ominous as the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening alarmingly. The paradox in the words of the author is that "If there is nothing inevitable about democratic decline there is also nothing inevitable about democratic resurgence." The threat to democracy comes from two main sources – external and internal. For most democracies the internal threat is more harmful than the external one.

Gideon Rose, former Editor of *Foreign Affairs* wrote that rising authoritarianism is a threat to democracy even in advanced countries, though they have resilience enough to overcome the challenge. That has helped democracy to recover before retreat. Between 1989 and 2014 World Poll Surveys and opinion polls revealed that people preferred a reduction in the gap between the rich and the poor. Two of the wealthiest persons in the world – Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, suggested higher taxes for the very rich. "Incomes should be made more equal" is the refrain heard in public discourse and that there should be larger provision for individual incentives.

The failure of the established structures of democracy to effectively articulate the demands of the people and satisfy their legitimate aspirations and 'the uneven effects of economic development' accentuated social fragmentation and political confusion. Regional leaders, as Sunil Khilnani put it, began to grow their own 'vernacular gardens' while some religious groups started giving new and communal twists to democratic politics. Religion and caste in India have come to be used for acquiring new identities in the struggle of groups to gain access to power. Rajni Kothari wrote that "there is no ideological consensus but wholesale criminalization of politics; increasing communal orientation and highly corrupt system of governance."

The values of modern Indian state such as democracy, religious tolerance, economic development and cultural pluralism articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru have been adversely affected and according to Sunil Khilnani, "Politics and the state, once seen as the prophylactic that would invigorate the country, were now seen as the disease." The disease threatens to become malignant if the evil of corruption is not checked. Such is the spread of corruption in India of today that 'what is to be feared is not the corruption of the great but that corruption can lead to greatness'.

According to Freedom House India suffered a decline in global rankings because as an expert committee commented: "While India is a multiparty democracy, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has presided over discriminatory policies and increased violence affecting the Muslim population. The constitution guarantees civil liberties including freedom of expression and freedom of religion, but harassment of journalists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other government critics has increased significantly under Modi. Muslims, scheduled castes (Dalits), and scheduled tribes (Adivasis) remain economically and socially marginalized."

If that is the conclusion of the Freedom House experts, India must disprove it through immediate course correction both at micro and macro levels and tone up administrative efficiency. First and foremost let us remember that we gave the Constitution to ourselves seventy three years ago and it is necessary for us to put the system back on rails by restoring India's democratic status to *free* from its relegation to *partly free* category. The need of the hour is political will and efficient leadership to collectively strive to regain India's dignity and status as a stable democracy upholding the values proclaimed in the Preamble to the Constitution. As Nani Palkhivala superbly put it 'The peacock must not be replaced as the national bird by the ostrich.'

- The Editor.

True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the Centre.
It has to be worked from below by the people of every village.

- Mahatma Gandhi

THE RULES OF DETACHMENT A RECENT DEBATE IN THE US ON KEEPING THE ARMED FORCES APOLITICAL HAS RESONANCE IN INDIA

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THE EVENTS OF January 6, 2021, in Washington were the first occasion in the USA, when an orderly post-election transfer of political power faced a serious threat. The underlying political environment of divisiveness and polarisation that led to these events has created serious concerns amongst American military veterans as well as politicians. They fear that the upsurge of toxic politics that looms over America, also threatens the “non-partisan” ethic of the armed forces, considered vital for the survival of its democracy.

Unlike in India, the American ethos does not require the military to remain “apolitical”, but demands a commitment to being “non-partisan” in their professional conduct. While the former term suggests total non-involvement in politics, the latter implies that regardless of personal political inclinations, military officers, while upholding the constitution, must give the elected civilian leadership their best professional advice and execute their lawful orders.

Alarmed at the polarisation of American society, a vigilant media has been commenting on the increasing enlistment of military veterans by politicians for boosting personal/political electoral prospects. In a co-authored article in a recent issue of Foreign Affairs magazine, General Dunford, former Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), declared that maintaining a nonpartisan military is a matter of “sacred trust”; not just for military officers but also for political leaders and citizens.

Dunford points to a recent “open letter” signed by 13 former US Secretaries (ministers) of Defence and Chairmen JCS, (<https://warontherocks.com/2022/09/to-support-and-defend-principles-of-civilian-control-and-best-practices-of-civil-military-relations/>) that outlines the rules and best practices of civil-military relations. Impressing upon serving

personnel, veterans and political leaders the urgent need to counter forces that threaten the military’s nonpartisan ethos, these eminent Americans not only call upon politicians to desist from “dragging the military into partisan activity” but also urge them and the media to call out offenders who violate norms of non-partisanship.

Interestingly, the Foreign Affairs article also speculates about the risks that could be posed by a president, intent on politicising the military. It asks, whether a US President, who is also the commander-in-chief (C-in-C) and approving authority for general-rank promotions, could manipulate the process to fill senior military leadership positions with party/personal loyalists.

We need to pay heed to the ongoing discourse in America, because, despite the economic and technological chasm that separates them, there is an uncanny similarity in the challenges that currently face American and Indian democracies, spanning their political, societal and military domains. In India, too, active-duty military personnel are prohibited from engaging in any kind of political activity by Acts of Parliament and service rules. Moreover, their conduct is circumscribed by the solemn oath of allegiance to the Constitution that each serviceman swears on recruitment/commissioning. By tradition, India’s military veterans had also till a few years ago, remained aloof from overt political activity.

As a measure of insulation, India’s armed forces, despite occasional criticism, had persevered with the “seniority-cum-merit” principle for promotion from the pool of C- in-Cs to the post of chief. The rationale was, that every officer who reached the penultimate rank of C-in-C, after 35 odd years of unblemished service, having been filtered by three successive promotion boards- each with an attrition rate of 60 per cent to 70 per cent was equally fit for the chief’s job. Whatever the drawbacks of this approach, promoting the “senior-most of equals” obviated the possibility of political interference or nepotism in military promotions.

While this principle had been accepted and upheld, with some exceptions, in the past, the present government seems to have shrugged off the constraint of “seniority” and has started using an alternate definition of “merit”, has promoted military officers over the head of their seniors. Since selection

The 21st Century is about the management of all the knowledge and information we generated
and the value edition to it.

- Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

for senior military posts remains the prerogative of the government, one cannot take exception to its discarding the seniority principle. However, by doing so, it faces an inherent risk: A selectee who considers himself beholden or indebted to the political establishment, for his out-of-turn promotion, could become a political “echo chamber” rather than a source of sound and candid professional military advice.

An even greater risk of politicisation has been created by the latest rules framed for selection of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). By a Gazette of India notification, the Army, Navy and Air Force Acts have been amended to open the eligibility for CDS candidature, apart from serving and retired chiefs, to serving and retired officers of 3-star (Lt. Gen/ equivalent) rank, with an upper age limit of 62 years for all. The retirement age of CDS has been fixed at 65 years. Without going into an extensive critique of this amendment, which has needlessly expanded the CDS candidate-pool, a few salient issues deserve the attention of our decision-makers.

In almost all countries, the CDS, as the highest-ranking military officer who presides over the chiefs of staff committee, is chosen from amongst the serving chiefs. If our government wanted to enlarge its choices, it could have included recently retired chiefs in the pool. But the age limit of 62 years (at which chief’s retire), has eliminated this option. At the same time, placing serving/retired 3-star officers (some who possibly missed promotion to C-in-C rank) in the same candidate-pool as serving chiefs, not only ignores the inherent merit and vast experience-military as well as politico-strategic-of the chiefs, but also casts into doubt, the credibility of our promotion system.

Lastly, with a mixed bag of serving and retired officers to choose from, and with no methodology available for assessment of professional competence, selection will have to be on spoken reputation, political loyalty and personal preference. Such subjective and problematic criteria are an invitation to arbitrariness and politicisation.

Our apolitical and non-partisan military has remained a steadfast pillar of India’s democracy, silently underpinning the peaceful transfer of power after 17 general elections. Exposure of the military

to political influence risks their divergence from the normative constitutional framework within which they are duty-bound to function. Sustaining India’s democracy requires that our armed forces remain detached from politics, and the nation’s security demands that military leaders render unbiased professional advice to the government, without fear or favour.

(The Indian Express, January 16, 2023)

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IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION VS COLLEGIUM DEBATE, CAN THE GOVT & JUDICIARY RECONCILE?

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While SC system nominating own peers needs review, so does legislature intimidating judiciary for subaltern position.

(This is a part of our special series on the occasion of India’s 74th Republic Day.)

India is currently celebrating the 75th anniversary of August 1947 under the banner of ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ (festivities of the nectar of freedom) which began in March 2021 and this commemoration of the intrepid journey of an independent democratic nation will conclude on 15 August, 2023.

Soon after, the country will segue to the next national event — that of the Indian Republic@75 which commenced with the adoption of the Constitution on 26 January 1950. Becoming a republic with a comprehensive and visionary document as the Constitution was both onerous and exhilarating for a young nation with lofty aspirations.

However, the run-up to the 74th Republic Day has been discordant in a visible manner as evidenced in recent weeks, with the interpretation of the Indian constitution and the inviolability of its ‘Basic Structure’ being contested by the leading lights of the legislature. The judiciary has been accused of ‘hijacking’ the constitution by one sliver of legal luminaries and this relates to the in-house collegium

True devotion lies in accepting both pleasure and pain with equal-mindedness.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

system that the Supreme Court has upheld as the norm for elevation to the highest bench.

On Interpretation of the Indian Constitution

The Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar who is also the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and Om Birla—the Speaker of the Lok Sabha have differently voiced their disagreement with the prevailing interpretation of the 24 April 1973 ‘basic doctrine’ verdict of the Supreme Court in the landmark *Kesavananda Bharati* case aka Fundamental Rights case. It may be recalled that a triumphant Indira Gandhi who had led the nation towards the spectacular 1971 military victory that enabled the birth of Bangladesh, was the prime minister at the time.

The central principle that was being contested then, was the untrammelled primacy that the Congress-party-dominated Parliament wished to accord unto itself by virtue of being the elected representatives of the people.

The 13-judge bench presided at that time by Chief Justice SM Sikri delivered a narrow 7:6 verdict which declared that the ‘basic structure’ of the constitution could not be tampered with by the legislature thereby, denying the power that Parliament wanted to accord unto itself to amend the constitution.

At the time, the legendary Nani Palkhivala who argued against the government opined that Parliament ‘cannot cease to be a creature of the Constitution and become its master.’

CJI Hails ‘Basic Structure’

In a very nuanced but firm manner, the judiciary has pushed back against this overture by the Modi government to assert such primacy. Delivering the Palkhivala memorial lecture on 21 January in Mumbai, the Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud asserted that “the basic structure of our Constitution like the north star, guides and gives certain direction to the interpreters and implementers of the Constitution when the path ahead is convoluted” —and it is amply evident that the current path being traversed by the Modi government, is convoluted and bitterly contested.

The prevailing tension between the government and the higher judiciary will test the resilience of

the Indian Constitution— a majestic and inherently empathetic document which had envisioned a vibrant and harmonious institutional relationship based on the principle of checks and balances between the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Granville Austin, a US historian considered to be the foremost expert in relation to the Indian Constitution had opined that the basic structure doctrine “is fairly said to have become the bedrock of constitutional interpretation in India.” Elaborating on this issue, Chief Justice Chandrachud noted in Mumbai that “the basic structure or the philosophy of our constitution is premised on the supremacy of the constitution, rule of law, separation of powers, judicial review, secularism, federalism, freedom and the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.

Can the Pillars of Indian Democracy Stand True to the Constitution?

History reminds us that when democratic governments with strong leaders at the helm, accord unbridled power unto themselves through a supine legislature and browbeaten higher judiciary, the consequences can be very negative. Germany under Hitler in 1933, went down this path and the results were disastrous. Though not similar, the USA and its 6 January 2021 nightmare wherein a sitting President sought to overturn constitutional sanctity is more recent.

In the Indian context, the then PM Indira Gandhi smarting from the 1973 *Kesavananda* verdict used the brute majority in the parliament to introduce various amendments that allowed the government to intervene in the appointment of the Chief Justice of India by superseding certain ‘inconvenient’ justices. Consequently, Justice AN Ray who was number four in seniority (but had upheld the argument that parliament had unlimited power to amend the Constitution) became the 14th CJI on 27 April 1973 just a few days after the *Kesavananda Bharati* verdict. The principle of seniority was cast aside in a peremptory manner and the rectitude of Indian democracy was muddled.

It was in this period—the years preceding the imposition of the Emergency by PM Indira Gandhi that the ‘committed judiciary’ theory came into

Except for a few Sanskrit pieces, all of Tyagaraja’s lyrics are in Telugu, a language with inherent musicality. Soft, smooth, flowing, vowel word-endings give this language a feminine sweetness.

- William Jackson

vogue. Then Law Minister Mohan Kumaramangalam rationalised this initiative as one wherein the government was required to consider not 'just judicial integrity but the philosophy and outlook of judges in its appointments' to the highest bench. This practice was redressed when PM Morarji Desai assumed office.

While it is agreed that the existing practice of the Supreme Court collegium nominating its own peers is in need of review and improvement, the legislature intimidating the judiciary to accept a subaltern position in the constitutional edifice would be counterproductive for the credibility of Indian democracy.

The Indian Republic@75 (*samvidhan ka mahoutsav?*) in January 2025 is two years away. This may be an opportune period to objectively deliberate on the current dissonance between the different pillars of the democratic edifice and strive towards that elusive harmony which prioritises citizen welfare (*yogakshema*), even while upholding the supremacy and sanctity of the Constitution.

(Courtesy: *The Quint*, 25 January 2023)

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LAWYERS IN THE DOCK

Shri Nani Palkhivala

PERHAPS MORE UNCHARITABLE things have been said about the lawyer than about any other professional of even half the lawyer's utility to society. To begin with, the Bar has been called not so much a profession as an excuse for not having one. Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* portrayed the lawyer who took good care to seem 'busier than he was'. Maybe, the average lawyer changed much in this respect since the pilgrims set out from the Tabard Inn.

One of the commonest calumnies hurled against the lawyer is that his profession is one where success depends on trickery and chicanery. A doctor said to Sydney Smith's brother who was a lawyer, 'But admittedly your profession does not make angels of men'. 'No', came the quick rejoinder, 'your profession gives them the first chance of that'.

The lawyer's tricks of the trade and juggling with words have become proverbial, mainly through

a repetition of the charge. Dean Swift brusquely referred to lawyers as men who prove that white is black or black is white 'according as they are paid'. Tulliver, in *The Mill on the Floss*, expressed the opinion that 'the law's made to take care o' raskills'. Lawyers are supposed to have so little regard for truth even in solemn documents that Charles Reade said caustically, 'The truth will out - even in an affidavit.'

The common charge against the lawyer is that he is a parasite on society. 'A sty for fattening lawyers in on the bones of honest men,' was the comment of Thackeray on the Court of Chancery. Lord Justice Knight Bruce cynically observed in an administration suit that 'the estate will be divided in the usual way among the solicitors'. A contested case in which eminent counsel are engaged is the luxury of the rich or the refuge of despair. It often spells ruin to the average citizen. Voltaire used to say that he was ruined twice in his life-once when he lost a lawsuit and once when he won a lawsuit.

In the most famous of all soliloquies, 'the law's delay' is placed by Shakespeare among the chief ills of human life. It has also been recorded that Oliver Cromwell 'spoke somewhat against lawyers' and was pained to see 'what a tortuous ungodly jumble English law was'. Nearer our own times, Tennyson deplored the spectacle of advocates toiling for years-

Mastering the lawless science of our law,
That codeless myriad of precedent,
That wilderness of single instances,
Thro' which a few, by wit or fortune led,
May beat a pathway out to wealth and fame.'

Disraeli was equally harsh on lawyers. The chief characteristics of the legal mind', he said, 'are expounding the obvious, illustrating the self-evident, and expatiating on the commonplace'. Jeremy Bentham, a lawyer himself, is no less severe-'Ignorance of the law excuses no man except the lawyer'. Bentham was more right than would seem at the first blush. English magistrates are not expected to know, and sometimes do not know, any law. Indeed, it has been established as clear law in England that it is not defamatory of a magistrate to say that he knows no law, for there is no reason why he should.

When revolution comes in any land and the

Freedom is my birth right. So long as it is awake within me, I am not old. No weapon can dry this spirit,
no fire can burn it, no water can wet it, no wind can dry it.

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak

people take charge of their affairs at last, the first reform is always the execution of all lawyers. It is often the only reform which subsequent ages do not regret!

A balanced view would suggest that the entire legal profession should not be reviled in this fashion. Perhaps it is a natural weakness to revile that which we cannot do without. So supreme is the value of law that Napoleon said, 'I will go down to posterity not by the battles I have fought but by the Codes I have given to France'.

It is not true that law defiles, it is not true that law degrades. The legal profession has produced some of the finest and most independent characters whose names are imprinted on the scroll of history. No one can pretend that any system of law is perfect, but by its very nature it can never be.

The profession of law, said Justice McCardie, has two aspects. It may be regarded as a pursuit which yields, if success be gained, a reward of fees and emoluments. But it may also be looked upon as a vocation which offers the joy of intellectual achievement, which claims the allegiance of unswerving honour, which asks for the guardianship of high tradition, and which affords a wide field for loyal and generous service to the community.

Thackeray described a great lawyer as a man who had laboriously brought down a great intellect to the comprehension of a mean subject, and in his fierce grasp of that, resolutely excluded from his mind all higher thoughts, all better things; all the wisdom and philosophy of historians; all the thoughts of poets, all wit, fancy, and reflection; all art, love, truth altogether, so that he might master that enormous legend of law. He could not cultivate a friendship or do a charity or admire a work of genius or kindle at the sight of beauty. Love, nature and art were shut out from him'. This is a gratuitous libel on a great profession to which Thackeray had himself been apprenticed once. It depends entirely upon the individual himself whether he will allow the legal profession to narrow his mind or will regard it as an opportunity to learn comprehensively the story of human life and human nature.

As Lord Buckmaster observed, it would be more true to say the finest lawyers that, so far from having

a narrow outlook on the world, there is no horizon too large for them to gaze at. There is no learning that comes amiss to the lawyer; there is no phase of all the myriad mysteries of the human heart which may not be the subject of the case which he has to consider.

(From Nani Palkhivala *Selected Writings*)

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CARNATIC MUSIC AND BHARATA NATYAM: ANTHROPOLOGY, HISTORY AND POLITICS OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS - I

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How come that Carnatic Music is more popular in Tamil Nadu than in Andhra Pradesh in spite of the fact that a preponderant majority of its compositions is in Telugu? Or to put it in another way, how come that Sanskrit and Telugu are the predominant languages in which Carnatic Music *krithis* were composed even though most composers lived in Tamil Nadu, and Tamil Nadu is the heartland of Carnatic Music. Exploration of these questions vividly illustrates four of the main points made in my previous article *What is Culture?* First, culture as artistic expression cannot be detached from culture as way of life, or to put it in another way the social context. Socio-economic change occurs due to one or more reasons such as technological change, foreign rule, engagement with a foreign culture, and reform impulses generated within a society autonomously or in response to external impulses. Whatever be the driver of change, every major socio-economic change impacts on the form and content of artistic expressions created by members of that society. Secondly, cultural purity is an oxymoron; over centuries the different genres of an artistic expression (such as literature or music or dance) prevalent in the country and outside had influenced each other with the result that there is much that it is common among them even though each one has a distinct persona of its own; in other words, the different genres of an artistic expression prevalent in the country manifest, to use a stock phrase, unity in diversity. In this Internet Age cultural transmission and hybridisation are more frequent and common. Thirdly, internal migrations are as important

Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all – love.

- Swami Vivekananda

as migrations from outside the Indian sub-continent. Migrant groups had adapted the culture of the region to which they migrated; yet they retained some aspects of the culture from the region they had migrated from them; their culture, to use a stock phrase, is a composite culture with some cultural elements of the “host” as well as of the “home” culture, and yet subtly distinct from both cultures. Fourthly, culture, cultural policy and cultural criticism cannot be delinked from politics, of the conceptualisation of nationalism and national identity, politics of identity and political beliefs.

The following narrative covers not only Carnatic Music but also South Indian dance forms, particularly *Bharata Natyam*, for four reasons. First, music composed for dance is a very significant part of the repertoire of Carnatic Music. For hundreds of years the Devadasi community carried forward a rich tradition of music and dance, and but for them many musical compositions like *padams*, *javalis*, *thillanas*, and *varnams* would not have survived. Secondly, Carnatic Music and Bharata Natyam underwent similar changes under the impact of the very same social, economic and political forces. Thirdly, social and cultural criticism of the changes these forms underwent from the last quarter of the 19th century to the 1940s proceeded on similar lines. Fourthly, consideration of Carnatic Music and Bharata Natyam together would illustrate four of the main points made in my previous article more vividly. Fortunately, the social history and ethnology of Carnatic Music and Bharata Natyam had received in the last three decades considerable scholarly attention; consequently, there is a better understanding of the transformation they underwent under the impact of socio-economic changes as well as of the contests over the form and substance of the music and dance performances.

II

Historically, the corpus of Carnatic Music compositions of today had come into being from a confluence of three streams: (i) the classical stream which stressed as much, if not more, emphasis on *Bhakti Bhava* as on the musical aspects of a composition, and is steeped in musical theory, (ii) devotional music, an offshoot of Bhakti movement, and (iii) music composed for dance, dance dramas and musical dramas. While the classical stream

was confined to the palaces of kings and mansions of feudal magnates, the other two streams of music were popular music performed in temples and public places. Thus, in North Coastal Andhra villagers used to dance around a lamp in public places humming the compositions of Bhadrachala Ramadasu. As befitting its pan-Indian nature Bhakti movement gave rise to literature and music in different Indian languages. Thus, *Nayanars* (Saivite saints, circa 6-8th century AD) and *Alvars* (Vaishnavite saints, the most important of whom lived in the 8th century AD) composed in Tamil, *Dasas* of whom the most eminent is Purandara Dasa (circa 1484-1564) in Kannada, Annamacharya (circa 1408-1503) and Bhadrachala Ramadasu (circa 1620-80) in Telugu, *Abhangs* by Sants like Tukaram (17th century) in Marathi, Kabir (15th Century) and Meerabai (16th century) in Brij Bhasha and other languages now considered to be dialects of Hindi. The Hindu tradition recognises nine forms of Bhakti (*Navavidha Bhakti*) of which *sringara bhakti* (devotion to God through an sensual or erotic love) is very important; consequently, many works of Bhakti poets like Nammalvar, Manivachagar, Andal, Annamayya and Kshetracharya are couched in *sringara bhakti*, and the predominant *rasa* (emotional and aesthetic feel of a work of art) of such works is *sringara rasa*. It is apposite to mention that the use of erotic and love imagery is a phenomenological constant in the history of religions; every religion including Christianity and Islam (particularly Sufism) have instances of that use. Even when love figures in Bhakti works, “it is often love for the divine, and rarely veers from the straight and narrow.” The love of Radha and Gopis for Lord Krishna and *rasa leela* are important parts of the story of Krishna narrated in *Bhagavatha Purana*, and in Indian literature of which the most famous is the 12th century epic Jayadeva’s *Gita Govinda*. Critics have described *Gita Govinda* as “a parable for the human soul’s wanderings before returning eventually to its true love (God).” The *Gita Govinda* “mirrors the dilemma and drama of love affairs” and its verses (*Ashtapadi*) comprise “banter between the two lovers, often moving from the playful to the passionate.” In the music composed for Bharata Natyam like *padams* and *javalis* the *sringara rasa* is more explicit and uninhibited; while most compositions have Krishna and other Gods as the lover some *javalis* have the patron as the lover, a very

good example being “*Sakhi Prana SakhudituJesene*” (O friend, see what my soulmate has done) composed by Dharmapuri Subbarayar, a pre-eminent Javali writer of the 19th century, as “an ode” to the legendary musician Veena Dhanammal. As would be elaborated below, the *kutchery*(concert) had emerged as the predominant institution for musical performances towards the end of the 19th century, and the patrons of those concerts displayed “Victorian morality” so much so that compositions with sringara rasa were *verboten* in music concerts. The taboo was broken by the legendary musicians Brinda and Mukta; javalis and padams have come to be part of the concert repertoire after the main composition of the concert is rendered and compositions are rendered as a lighter variant of the classical tradition.

The Vijayanagara Empire is a watershed in the cultural history of South India; at its peak, the Empire spread roughly over the erstwhile Madras Presidency and the Mysore State. It is traditionally considered to be a bulwark against the expansion of Muslim rule in its territory and provided space for a remarkable cultural resurgence. It was a multilingual empire, and its rulers patronised many cultures particularly Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada Culture. Emblematic of the multilingual empire is the epic poem *Amuktyamalayada* written by Sri Krishna Devaraya, the most eminent Emperor of the Vijayanagar Empire; the author styled himself as *Kannada Rajya Rama Ramana* (Lord of the Damsel called Kannada Empire) and he wrote in Telugu about Andal’s devotion and marriage to Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam in Tamil Nadu. During the reign of the Empire nine musicological treatises collectively named *Sangitashastra Navaratna* were written; these treatises contributed seminally to the growth of the Carnatic music tradition. Eminent music composers like Sripadaraya, Vyasaraya, Purnadhara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa and Annmacharya lived during the reign. Purandara Dasa played an important role in the resurgence of Carnatic music; known as the *pitamaha* (grandfather) of Carnatic music his graded system for learning Carnatic Music is still followed today. It is said that he acquired a good knowledge of Hindustani Music from his travels in Maharashtra and that knowledge went into his significant contribution to Carnatic Music. After the fall of the Empire at the Battle of Rakshashi Tengadi (1565) the epicentre of Carnatic Music shifted to the Tanjore Kingdom which

was ruled by Nayak rulers and later Maratha rulers (1674-1855). Nayak rulers were initially governors appointed by the Empire; they became independent after the fall of the Empire, and their court language was Telugu which was one of the court languages of the Vijayanagar Empire. Like Scots being drawn to London when their King James VIII ascended the English throne as King James I, many Telugus migrated to the courts of the Nayak rulers of Tanjore; “push” as well “pull” factors played a role in that migration. After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire chaotic conditions prevailed in Andhra and migration to the Tanjore and Madurai kingdoms which were hitherto vassals of the Empire and patronised Telugu culture was an attractive proposition. Among those who so migrated were the ancestors of Tyagaraja and Shyama Sastry, two of the famous trinity of Carnatic Music. Several Kuchipudi families migrated to Tanjore and settled in Melattur where the Tanjore ruler Atchyutappa Naik granted them lands. In Melattur the Kuchipudi dance drama was transformed into the *Bhagavatha Mela*. As with Kuchipudi male dancers don feminine roles in the Bhagavatha Mela. Many Kannadigas also emigrated to the Tanjore Kingdom; among them was Govinda Diskhithar, Minister of King Raghunatha Bhupala and eminent musicologist; his son Venkatamakhin was the author of the epoch making *Chaturdandi Prakasika* which gave a systematic and scientific classification of ragas known as the *Melakartaschema*. With some modifications that schema is in vogue even now. The Maratha rulers who succeeded the Nayaks were also patrons of art and culture. Even though they had “differing food habits, different gods, differing language and different dance and music forms” Venkoji (Ekoji) the first Maratha ruler and his successors did not impose their culture. Instead, they adapted Telugu, Sanskrit and Tamil, and continued with their patronage of existing local cultural forms and traditions; at the same time, they allowed new art forms like Maharashtra’s *Keerthan* and *Abhangs*(devotional lyrics composed in praise of Panduranga Vithala of Pandharpur) and Western music to enter the musical scene. Apart from being patrons of arts and literature, some of the Nayak and Maratha rulers were composers of *kavyas*, *padams* and dance dramas and musicologists in their own right and wrote scholarly treatises on music in Telugu and Sanskrit such as *Sahaji Ragalakshanamu* by King Shahuji I

It is true that on some occasions, courts have overstepped their limits.
But, by and large, judicial activism has done a great service to society.

- Justice B.P.Jeevan Reddy

(1684-1712) and *Sangita Saramrita* by King Tulaja (1728-1736). All in all, music and dance flourished under the Maratha rule.

The classic age of Carnatic Music was the 18th and early 19th century; it was during that period that the structure and aesthetics of the Carnatic Music of today developed fully, that kriti, a format of composition which is the mainstay of modern Carnatic Music, evolved fully, and the Carnatic Music Trinity (Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Sastry) lived. The compositions of the Trinity are considered to be ideal expressions of music, and exemplars of classicism and tradition; they constituted the core of the Carnatic Music canon. Tyagaraja and Shyama Sastry composed mainly in Telugu while Dikshitar composed in Sanskrit. Tyagaraja became a legend not only for being a musical genius but also for spurning royal favours and seeking a life of austerity and devotion to God. By virtue of having a large number of disciples his compositions came to be more popular than those of Shyama Sastry and Dikshitar. His popularity was enhanced through the new art form of *Hari Katha Kalakshepam* (story telling of Hindu legends interspersed with music), an adaptation of *Keertan* of Maharashtra which made its appearance in Tamil Nadu during Maratha rule. Because of the pre-eminence of Tyagaraja as a composer a perception gained ground that Telugu was the best medium for composing Carnatic music so much so that many non-Telugu composers composed in Telugu. Another important aspect of the tradition which came into being was that music came to be appreciated for its own sake- for its melody-, and not as a vehicle for the ideas conveyed by the lyrics. It could on its own arouse different *rasas* without the assistance of the lyric; consequently, the language of the composition was not a barrier to savouring the music. That being so, the fact that the compositions of the Trinity and their musical descendants were in Sanskrit and Telugu did not matter for many listeners in Tamil Nadu which is the heartland of Carnatic Music. The cultivation of musical theory in the Tanjore Kingdom together with devotional music and the compositions of the Trinity gave “not only gave musicians an expanded repertoire for singing and a canvas for theoretical aspects of the tradition but also produced in the long run a lineage of students and disciples who traced their musical connections to

the trinity and grounded their aesthetic conceptions within a clearly demarcated repertoire that did not focus on language.” The dogmatic insistence of some musicians that the compositions of the Trinity alone constituted the Carnatic music canon and that only Telugu and Sanskrit compositions should be rendered in concerts was a contributory factor that triggered the *Tamil Isai* movement which is elaborated below. Further, the attitude that language does not matter for the appreciation of music came in for a big challenge in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in the 20th century. From a sociological perspective it is significant that vocal music was considered to be superior to instrumental music, and most of the ministers of the Tanjore Kingdom, musicologists and vocal musicians were Brahmins giving rise to the dominance of Brahmins in Carnatic vocal Music; the listeners were upper castes among whom Brahmins constituted a predominant majority. No wonder when the politics of identity surfaced in the early 20th century, Carnatic Music came to be dubbed as *pappanpaattu* (Brahmin’s music).

While the court language of the Tanjore Kingdom was Telugu and most of the composers of that period and later wrote in Sanskrit and Telugu there were a few composers who composed in Tamil. Thus, two famous musical plays- *Ramanatakam* of Arunchala Kavirayar (1711-88) and *Nandanar Charitram* of Gopalakrishna Bharati (1811-1899) were composed in Tamil. There were also composers like Marimuthu Pillay (1712-87) and Ghanam Krishna Iyer (1790-1854) who composed padams and krithis in Tamil. Similarly, Neelakanta Sivan (1839-1900) who lived in the Travancore state also composed krithis in Tamil. However, they were exceptions who prove the rule. With the emergence of the Tamil Isai movement in Tamil Nadu during the 1940s Tamil composers gained importance; so did the concept of a Tamil trinity comprising Muthu Tandavar (circa 1525-1600), Arunachala Kavirayar and Marimuthu Pillai.

As is common with cultural diffusion the compositions of the Trinity spread in Tamil Nadu first before spreading to other South Indian states. From Tanjore the reconstructed Carnatic Music theory and musical compositions of the Trinity as well as Bharata Natyam theory, performance styles and repertoire

Growth and equity should not be posed as opposing considerations. They must be woven together to give an acceptable pattern of development. Therein lies economic wisdom and economic statesmanship.

- C. Rangarajan

radiated to other centres of cultural patronage in South India. Like the rulers of Tanjore, the rulers of the Native States of Mysore and Travancore were great patrons of art and culture; Swati Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore, a contemporary of the Trinity, was a great composer himself and composed in Carnatic and Hindustani systems and in several languages including Sanskrit, all the South Indian languages, Marathi and Hindustani. The cultural dissemination accelerated after 1832 when the Tanjore Kingdom began to decline after the death of King Sarabhoji II and was annexed by East India Company in 1855. Musicians began to migrate to other centres of patronage, an example being the father of Veena Seshanna (1852-1926) who during the latter part of the reign of Chamaraja Wodeyar X (1868-1894) and later of Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV (1894-1920) was the foremost musician of the Mysore court and had the authority to screen any musician before he was allowed to perform before the Maharaja. As many of the Mysore musicians were biological or intellectual descendants of musicians who migrated from the Tanjore region they considered that they were part of a tradition which had its origins in Tamil Nadu.

In an age where music flourished largely under the royal patronage classical music in Andhra was at a disadvantage. In contrast to Kerala and Karnataka, the only Native State in Andhra was the Nizam's Dominions whose rulers did not patronise Carnatic music. Consequently, patronage was limited to a few zamindaris like Bobbili, Vizianagaram and Pithapuram with the result that the popularity of Carnatic music was rather limited. The film, *Sankarabharanam*, no doubt portrayed the tradition among many Brahmin families of Coastal Andhra of the prospective bride being asked to sing a song at *pellichupulu* (an interview by the bridegroom's family to ascertain the eligibility of the girl for being married into its family). However, to be honest learning a bit of Carnatic music as part of the preparation for marriage was not as *de rigueur* among Telugu Brahmin families as with their Tamil counterparts. The social ethos of Carnatic music in the Tamil Brahmin community is neatly captured in the posts of Tamilian Brahmin web groups. To quote one, "Till about 15 years ago, the only heathens were girls who did not sing. Formidable *maamis* (aunts) from the neighbourhood would drop in for a casual afternoon gossip session with grandmom and

on espying any hapless young girls in the vicinity, would pounce on them with the dreaded entreaty, *Orupaattupaadein* (Please sing a song). A simple three-word sentence, you would think, but in *maami*-land it is a deceptively camouflaged barometer of the girl's cultural grooming and readiness for Tambrahm society (read marriage market) and her mother's efforts in making her a fine Tamilian lady... And woe betide the girl who in shameful ignorance, takes the words at face value. When the words were uttered by a visiting neighbour, I readily accepted and joyously broke into a popular Hindi film ditty. I had finished the second paragraph when I stopped to check audience response. My mother had a strained, embarrassed smile on her face, grandmom was scowling hard, an aunt hurriedly excused herself and went inside and the venerable neighbour looked so disturbed, I thought she was on the verge of a heart attack. 'Well. That was nice, but don't you sing any *varnams* or *keerthanais*?' she finally asked, after an awkward silence. My mother hurriedly explained how in the culturally bereft North we were unable to locate a Carnatic music teacher nearby...but hopefully by this summer she would manage to do something about it. That's when I realized that the only music that was expected to pour out of your mellifluous throat were classical Karnatic songs. If you didn't know any, you simply shut up and duck out of sight of visiting *maamis*."

My mother as well as my sisters dutifully went through the ritual of learning music. My mother was genuinely interested in music and was a passionate listener of Carnatic music broadcast by the All India Radio (AIR) all her life. Her lasting regret was that she could not continue her formal general and music education, as she had to discontinue once her family fell on bad times. She would nostalgically recount her school days in her village in Palakkad, Kerala and describe how the school began with a hymn eulogising *Anjam George Chakravarthi* (King-Emperor George V). She and her fellow girl students learnt Tyagarajakrithis without any idea of their meaning, as those krithis were written in Telugu. She would burst out into laughter recalling the time when she learnt the krithi, *aparamabhakthienthogoppara* (How great is devotion to Lord Rama); the students would pronounce *goppara* as *copra* (Malayalam word for dried coconut) and wonder what Lord Rama had to

Intolerance has been the greatest enemy of our progress. Tolerance of one another's views, thoughts and beliefs is the only remedy that we can possibly adopt.

- Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

do with dried coconut. It was only after marriage and moving to Andhra that she realised the true meaning of the krithi. True to the saying that if educate a girl you educate a whole family the musical education imparted to Tambrahm girls resulted in widespread music literacy. While Brahmin girls were imparted music education boys were not except in families of musicians; however, a taste of music came to even boys with mother's milk. The gender disparity in formal learning of music explains why at the annual Tyagaraja Aradhanotsavasin Thiruvaiyaru women outnumber men among the non-professionals who join the collective rendering of the *Pancharatnakrithis*. The high level of musical literacy, in turn, creates demand for music concerts; that explains why Madras is the Carnatic Music capital of the world. Upper caste Tamilian expatriates have come to incorporate Carnatic Music as a marker of their identity and organise *Tyagaraja Aradhanotsavams*, some of which like the Cleveland Festival (in Ohio, USA) have acquired name and fame. Paradoxically, while knowledge of Carnatic music was an important part of the marriage eligibility test, after marriage wives were expected to practice cooking and not music. There was a delightful Tamil film song of my boyhood days *sankatamanasamailevittusangeetham pada poren* which expresses the intention of a young lady to give up the arduous drudgery of cooking and instead take to singing. Ironically, upper caste, particularly Brahmin, women were not expected to be performers; performance was reserved for male musicians. It took quite some time for to break the social taboo against performing in public. How, technology helped women to break that social taboo is described below.

III

Turning to cultural purity and cultural synthesis Indian tradition traces the lineage of Indian classical music to the *Sama Veda* which is generally dated around 1000 BC. Thus, in his krithi *Nadam Tanumanusham* Tyagraja described music to be the essence of Sama Veda and the musical notes as emerging from the five heads of Lord Siva. Musicologists believe that Carnatic and Hindustani music- the two genres of Indian classical music-share common musical texts such as Bharata's *Natya Sastra*, Matanga's *Brihaddeshi* and Sarangadeva's *Sangita*

Ratnakara, that it was only after the Afghan-Turkish invasion in the 12th century they began to separate and that unlike in South India, Indian classical music in Northern India began to be influenced by Persian music. There was also a misconception not based on facts that Carnatic music continued to be pristine pure. Though they separated Carnatic music and Hindustani music were not separated by an iron curtain and cultural intercourse between the two systems of music and musicians of the two systems continued. It was but natural that Hindustani music found an abode in the court of the Tanjore Maratha rulers. Ramadas Sawmi (a kirtankar from Maharashtra), Morkar Bava and Meruswami did much to popularise Hindustani music in the Tanjore kingdom. Abhangs were popularised by Sarabhoji II; they and other compositions praising Panduranga Vithala became staple items of the *Bhajana Sampradaya* in Tamil Nadu. Muthuswami Dikshitar spent many areas in Kasi and having imbibed Hindustani Music introduced many Hindustani ragas in Carnatic Music. Conversely, quite a few ragas were exported from Carnatic music to Hindustani music, examples being Hamsadhwani (*Vatapi Ganapathim* Bhaje is set in this raga) and Kirwani. Cultural synthesis between the two systems of music occurred in Travancore also. Maharaja Swathi Thirunal had in his court a great exponent of Harikatha and Hindustani Music Meruswami (who migrated from Tanjore), and Syed Sulaiman, a Pathan, whose special ability was in playing *Swarabath*. The Maharaja organised a troupe of Hindustani artistes in the palace; the troupe had three dancers and a Hindustani musical exponent, Allaudin from Mysore. In Travancore, *Tarana*, a dance form of Kathak, was transformed into *Thillana*, a staple item of Bharatanatyam. The Maharaja composed the famous *Dhanasree Thillana Geethadhunikku* in Hindi. The Mysore rulers also patronised Hindustani music Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan, Abdul Karim Khan and Barkatulla Khan were frequent visitors to the Mysore court. While in Mysore Hindustani musicians would visit the well-known Carnatic music composer Mysore Vasudevacharya and have extensive discussions with him. Vasudevacharya had "an open mind to music" as he believed that 'all music came from the same source'. He composed in several Hindustani ragas, "would sing ragas like Mand, Bihag and Bhoop in the Hindustani style and if you were to close your eyes and listen to him, you couldn't tell if you were listening

Politics is the reconciliation of effects; and as most of us are concerned with effects, the external has assumed dominant significance.

- J. Krishnamurti

to him or a Gawai!” An unintended consequence of the patronage of Hindustani music by Mysore rulers was the transformation of the Hubli-Dharwad region of North Karnataka into a major catchment area of Hindustani music even though previously Hindustani music was hardly known in that area. Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, founder of the Kirana Gharana and court singer of the Baroda state, was often invited by the Maharaja of Mysore to sing at his court during the Dasara festival. Abdul Karim Khan settled in Bombay after his peregrinations usually stopped at Dharwad on his way to Mysore, and stayed with his brother who lived in Dharwad. He began teaching music to Sawai Gandharva and others, thus creating a wave of interest in Hindustani music in the region. They, in turn, taught many more. Many ustadhs came to Dharwad for long visits. Hindustani music also became popular because of the Parsi musical drama which influenced Kannada *natyasangita* (dance music), a new genre developed by Kannada theatre artists under the influence of the Parsi theatre. In turn, the touring Dharwad drama companies triggered the development of Telugu musical plays like *Kurukshetram* in whose performance many Hindustani ragas are used. Over time, Hubli-Dharwad region emerged as a major centre of Hindustani Music producing several renowned Hindustani Music maestros like Sawai Gandharva, Kumar Gandharva, Basavraj Rajguru, Gangubai Hangal, Mallikarjun Mansoor, and Bhimsen Joshi; musicians came to believe that the audience in that region were among the most discerning listeners in the country. Abdul Karim Khan was widely travelled and became a connoisseur of Carnatic music. Ambabai, Ganagubai Hangal’s mother, was a noted Carnatic singer and Gangubai herself started learning Carnatic music first. When in Dharwar Abdul Karim Khan would often drop in to listen to Ambabai. In fact, Gangubai remembered how on one occasion he had remarked: “I feel I am in Tanjore.” He frequently visited Chennai and was greatly influenced by Veena Dhanammal. He “released 78 rpm records of his rendition of some well-known Carnatic songs and his version of *Ramani Samanam Evaru* (Kharaharapriyaram) is on YouTube.” He died near Chennai while travelling by train to a southern destination.

(to be concluded)

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A SPARK FROM BHAGAVAD VISHAYAM

Dr. (Mrs.) Prema Nandakumar

The Alvars of Tamil Nadu (6th to 9th centuries) experienced the Divine all the time and hence their poems keep to the present tense when speaking to fellow-aspirants. But, we are nowhere near them in time or tapasya and hence we do not seem to talk the same language! It is here that the Manipravala commentators perform a tremendous feat of careful exposition so that the words in the Divya Prabhandham become comprehensible to us.

I was not aware of these commentaries written in manipravala (a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit) till I began to listen to Telugu discourses in Visakhapatnam. In particular, I was captivated by the lectures of Sri Sribhashyam Appalacharyulu on Andal. I came to know then of this precious heritage from the commentators on Divyaprabandham beginning with Tirukurukai Piran Pillan’s first commentary on the Tiruvaimoli of Nammalvar. I then entered a fascinating world which has great commentators like Periyavachan Pillai. My library now includes a large number of these purchased from shops, scholars and vendors spreading on the roadside old books.. Truly a treasury of gems! The adventure drew me further even into Jainism when I discovered the tremendous commentary of Nachinarkiniyar on the epic, Jeevaka Chintamani. I have never been graverled for want of matter when I have to write an article, detailed essay or a book thanks to these commentators who flourished between 12th and 16th centuries

Here is a verse from Nammalvar who says:

*“Watch the immensely beautiful world
And understand that all is the Lord’s;
Firming up your confidence about it
Enter this divine creation to be immersed.”*

(Tiruvaimoli, 1-2-7)

What does this mean? Earlier the Alvar had asked us to remain attached to the Lord. But if the Lord commands this immensely rich creation, how can we attach ourselves to him? It is all very well to say “remain attached to him”. But is this possible? Would he care, this Lord of the innumerable worlds who is all “sampath” (prosperity)? And he is not only

Non-violence was never the Indian establishment’s ruling ideology, not in 1961 or 1962, not in 1947.

- Rajmohan Gandhi

the Lord of this Manifested World but also commands the transcendent realms. Do I dare to go to Him and seek His friendship and love?

But whence comes this inferiority complex, asks Tirukurukai Piran Pillan. He may be the Lord of all creation and the heavens. At the same time, he is *mine!* So we need not be worried about his superior position. Just enter his presence amidst all the glory. Remember that for all his ‘paratva’ he is extremely ‘saulabhya’, easy of approach.

The “Eedu” commentary puts forward a brilliant simile. “The piece of straw fallen in the sea is unconscious when the waves, equally unconscious of what is being done, tosses it to and fro till it reaches the shore. In the same manner, will not the waves of the Lord’s prosperity (aiswarya taranga) toss this aspirant? Recognising the prosperity to be that of our creator, we can be part of it. What is needed here is “communion.”

In the same breath the commentator places before us another simile. “A merchant went abroad to earn money, leaving at home his wife who was pregnant. In due course she had a son. When he grew up, he took up the family profession and went abroad. Both of them happened to return at about the same time in a wayside building. Since it was too small, they came almost to blows to decide upon who had a right to stay there. Fortunately one who knew both happened to be there, and he informed them: ‘This is your father’, and ‘this is your son’. They felt unhappy for having remained strangers all these days, placed their merchandise together, with the father as the guardian and the son as his dependent.”

Instilling in this manner self-confidence in his hearers, the commentator says further that a Prince might be attracted by a grove with fruit-lined trees but might be afraid to enter it. Once he is told that the grove belongs to his father the king, he would enter the same garden with confidence, assuring himself, “this is mine”. Hence we must always remember that the Lord is ours and so this world which is charged with God’s grandeur is also ours. Indeed, realize that we are part of the Lord’s glory and never outside it. Aren’t the living beings inside an ocean go about as if the sea belongs to them? Do they care to come outside? If they do, can they live?

Vedanta Desika’s Srimad Rahasyatrayasara also begins with such a parable. There we have a little prince who is lost in the woods when the king had gone out on a hunt. The prince is found by a hunter who brings him up. He follows the speech and customs of the tribe and grows up to be one among them. Away from his luxuries he is entitled to by birth, he is quite happy with his present condition, little knowing that he would have to suffer lower births in the future. Fortunately for him some good men note the signs of royalty in the prince and rescue him with love. They tell him of the baseness of the earlier profession, and bring him to the palace and restore him to his rightful position. After they explain to him how he belongs to a noble state and should gain all that is good in life, he comes to the right path. We are also like the prince who has been lost in the woods. When our Alvars and Acharyas inform us of our great heritage, should we then remain strangers to it? Isavasyamidam sarvam, and the ‘sarvam’ includes us!

The Eedu concludes with a quote from Swetswatara Upanishad, “samanam vriksham parishasvajathe”, which insinuates that the Lord actually enjoys to watch us enjoy his creation. Do we need any more encouragement to belong to the Lord?

“Two winged birds cling about a common tree, comrades, yoke-fellows; and one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not, but watches.” (Tr. Sri Aurobindo)

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JUDICIAL OVER REACH OR EXECUTIVE UNDER REACH

Prof. R.Venkata Rao

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The Separation of Powers propounded by Montesquieu envisages separation with mutual checks and balances among the three organs of the State—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The legislature makes law, the executive enforces law and the judiciary applies law where it is clear and makes law clear where it is not clear through interpretation. More often than not, laws are not very clear.

The interaction between political process and judicial process has given birth to different schools of

The mango is, of course, the king of fruits, though in recent years our export policies have made it more the fruit of kings – or, of Middle Eastern Sheikhs, to be precise.

- Shashi Tharoor

thought as regards the responsibility of the judges and at the risk of over simplification, these schools may be classified into two—school of activism and school of self restraint.

The proponents of the self restraint espouse the claim that the doctrine of separation of powers has envisaged a system of mutual checks and balances and not of mutual encroachment. They opine that the judiciary should leave policy making to the initiative of others. “Problems of policy are for politicians and not for judges to decide,” says Justice Frankfurter who enunciated the doctrine of “political thicket”. The basic changes needed in a society are to be left to the political processes and should not be undertaken by judges who, as they should be, because of their office are beyond the reach of political considerations. The judiciary should not be political “after the fashion of legislature or the executive”. The approach of the judiciary should be “to go slow as not to offend anyone”. They argue further that activism is constitutionally unwarranted. In drafting the constitution, the framers had not intended that Court should initiate changes in basic policy, the legislative power had been vested in other organ. They say activism is morally insupportable as judges are not elected by the people. Nor is the Court directly responsible to the electorate in the same sense as the Parliament. Activism in the long run is self defeating, it opens up the dangerous question of judicial legitimacy and subjects the Court to attack which can weaken the whole fabric of respect for the Court and for the rule of law. The Court must not presume to be a “Legislation and Constitution making body enacting into law its own predilection”. They feel that judicial prestige would be endangered and judicial image would be damaged if judges become entangled in debates over public policies. The continued acceptance of judicial authority, it is argued, depends on the maintenance of a mystique of judicial aloofness and non involvement in political matters.

On the other hand , the proponents of judicial activism, which can be defined as the shaping of the basic law through bold Court initiatives, opine that the Court should provide the moral leadership and clarify the values and ideals for a country that had shown itself to be really in need of such guidance.

They feel that the Court should willingly play an “affirmative role”. Instead of restricting itself to exercising a negative check on actions improperly taken by the government, the Court should assume the more positive role telling the government what it must do. They insist that the activist judge is goal oriented. His interest in achieving the ‘right’ result in the controversies that come before him is stronger than his interests in the process by which the Court arrives at the result. His tests for the rightness of a decision are whether it is politically and morally acceptable and whether its effects will be beneficial to society. Since he views law as one form of social control, he will be more creative in developing new legal doctrines to support his conclusions about public policy and more willing to overrule precedents that stand in the way of desired results. He is less hesitant to challenges to political breaches and less fearful of becoming involved in controversy.

The activists claim that Judiciary should share with political organs of the government an active and creative role. It should stand ready to bring about the needed basic changes in society, which for one reason or the other have failed or lagged in their accomplishment by other means. The logic is like this. Judges are relatively immune to political pressure. People link the idea of justice with that of the judge. Other governmental agencies may more readily and more freely yield to the pressure of numbers, the so called demand of the majority. Not so the judge. He, knowing that nothing can disturb his position, does not hesitate, promptly to lay judgment.

Ideals and justice can be best preserved by the judiciary when the legislature is tempted to take away these ideals in an euphoria. Justice Sutherland observed: “If the provisions of the Constitution be not upheld when they pinch as well as they confront, they may well, be abandoned”.

The criticism that judicial activism is a paradox in a democratic society as the judges are nominated and not elected is decried on the ground that judicial activism would prevent the government from profiting from its lawless behaviour. They say judicial review is an essential component of the free government, an attempt by the Democracy to cover its own bet. Judicial review is not an interloper and a fear of

The rose is more than a blushing apology for the thorn.

- Rabindranath Tagore

popular majorities lies at the very basis of the whole system of judicial review.

In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control governed and in next place oblige it to control itself. Hence they say the Court should not lead an isolated ivory tower existence refusing to enter the 'Political thicket. The case for an active intervention becomes more pronounced where the sacrosanct freedoms are to be protected.

By actively protecting the freedoms, the Court saves democratic government from destroying itself by excess of its own power by providing the disgruntled individuals a peaceful forum in which they can air their grievances and perhaps win vindication. The Court, remembering that those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable, domesticates revolution through judicial review. Changes can be accomplished without the subversion of the Constitution and the Supreme Court through judicial review can prevent the subversion of the Constitution.

Looking at the activism of the Supreme Court of India, the former Chief Justice of India Justice A.M.Ahmedi observed that it is not the Supreme Court which has become active but the common man who has become active. He expressed the belief that activism would be only a temporary phenomenon and that the executive and legislature would sooner than later perform their constitutionally ordained function.

The judiciary has been harping on the theme of making strong the long arm of law whereas the executive and the legislature have been debunking the judiciary on the ground that the excessive and hyper activist tenor of the judiciary has been making the long arm of law a wrong arm thus upsetting the delicate apple cart of separation of powers.

As Justice Warren states: "the Supreme Court standing alone cannot ensure justice for all citizens. Such a goal will be accomplished only if all elements of a legal system, the law makers, the practising attorney, legal scholars and judges work in harmony to apply principle which are fundamental to freedom".

The roles of three organs of the State are

complementary and never conflicting. Each should not try to clip the wings of the other organs. Let us all, including judiciary, not forget that independence entails greater accountability.

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A CLASH OF CULTURES AND A HISTORY OF IDEAS

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A Clash of Cultures and a History of Ideas

Ramin Jahanbegloo is a philosopher of Iranian origin, a pacifist Gandhi would have approved of, and a free thinker Tagore would have embraced. He endured a short but unnerving spell of solitary confinement, as an enemy of the state, in an Iranian prison in 2006, before returning to peripatetic security outside his country of birth. Jahanbegloo now heads the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Peace Studies at the Jindal Global Law School in India.

I met him briefly nearly a decade back in Budapest, following his spirited defence of 'Democracy and Non-violence,' in a talk at the Central European University in September 2007, delivered with high passion and deep feeling. In the years since, I had lost track of him until now, when his small and profound, yet dense-as-rye-bread work, *The Decline of Civilization*, landed on my desk.

Jahanbegloo's book is a short but very detailed account of how the term civilisation emerged and evolved from early Greek times. He gives us a grand tour of the term and the intellectual effort that went into refining it, deploying Eliot and Pound as well as Kant, Hegel, Gramsci and Freud among several others, to buttress his points. He also devotes a full chapter to 'decivilising' – which he defines as a state of 'thoughtless existence,' degrading humanity by robbing it of its self-esteem, and divesting individuals of their capacity for empathy as a tool for the recognition of the 'Other'.

Civilisation as it evolved in the West, Jahanbegloo tells us, innocuously referred to "advancements in comfort, increased material possessions and

Older geopolitical risks are colliding with complex new challenges.

- Richard Haass

personal luxuries, improved educational techniques, cultivation of the arts and sciences, and the expansion of commerce and industry.” But it also was from the start “employed as a normative concept to compare the greatness of one nation or one continent with the failure and backwardness of others.”

It is of particular relevance that the West, which came to dominate the modern world, economically and politically, considered itself ‘superiorly’ civilised compared to the rest. An assumed air of pre-eminence backed by overwhelming force, gave it the heft as well as the audacity to attempt to ‘civilise’ the rest of the world which it considered savage and primitive. This contributed greatly to generating the specious moral justification for the West’s violent imperial ways across the world.

Surprisingly, the duplicity that went with imperialism was widely recognised early on in the West itself, thanks to the likes of Edmund Burke who took on Warren Hastings and General John Burgoyne who went after Clive, for gross abuse of authority and spectacular corruption in India. There were the writers too. The protagonist in Mario Vargas Llosa’s *Storyteller*, Saul Zuratas, is indignant at the ethnologists, accusing them of taking off from where the missionaries had left off, spearheading the efforts to “wipe out the Indians”. Then there is Joseph Conrad who exposed the West’s “imperial mission” in all its ugliness in *Heart of Darkness*, “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.”

Jahanbegloo would have done well to also highlight that civilisations can reform and become more humane and more inclusive. Across western societies, there were movements that sought to eliminate the most egregious wrongs that were perpetrated on unfortunate people unable to resist western resolve and power. Here it is useful to recall Burke’s fervent plea to the British, to be “the refuge of afflicted nations,” and to “stand a sacred temple, for the perpetual residence of an inviolable justice.” The abolition of the slave trade was the result of deep disquiet of an obvious cruelty practised on a mass scale and the U.S. civil war, as we all know, was famously fought on Lincoln’s stand

that “this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.”

Jahanbegloo’s short work doubles up as a tribute to two of modern India’s most famous figures, Gandhi and Tagore. He feels that their more inclusive and spiritual understanding of civilisation distinguishes it from its western variant. As he elaborates, “from the Gandhian philosophical standpoint, civilisation is not only a matter of economic or technological progress or a process towards the creation of a modern state, but an opportunity to enter a bigger dimension that transcends the predominant characteristics of modern civilisation like power, ego, greed and authority.”

Tagore believed that India needed the West as much as the West required India and asserted that, “we must accept truth when it comes from the West and not hesitate to render it our tribute of admiration.” However, as Jahanbegloo brings out, Tagore was no uncritical admirer of the West, clearly aware, “that in spite of its boasted love of freedom, it has produced worse forms of slavery than ever was current in earlier societies.”

Jahanbegloo is particularly scathing in criticising the ‘us/them binary,’ stating that, in *The Clash of Civilisations* Samuel Huntington talks about how Islam is shown ‘as the threatening Other.’ This is a point that Romila Thapar concurs with in her introduction: “The Islamic world has been described as the source of international terror, forgetting the terror that has been created by other agencies of superior civilisations both in the past and the present.” On this, we can agree with Thapar and Jahanbegloo, but only up to a point.

We do need to take a much more forthright stand on the kind of terrorism that is blighting the world in the name of Islam, destroying the very ‘capacity for empathy’ which Jahanbegloo correctly insists is, “one of the fundamental pillars of human civilisation characterised by its aptitude for rational thought.”

Jahanbegloo’s failure to bring the greatest contemporary Indian philosopher, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, into the discussion sticks out. While standing for an inclusive definition of civilisation, Radhakrishnan was no less critical of the direction western civilisation had taken, “acting on the maxim, spare the slave and smash the rebel.” As a work of original enquiry and deep scholarship the book is

worth reading. That it even has one of the best takes on Gandhi's Hind Swaraj, makes it well worth owning too.

(From '*INDIA ON MY MIND* Reflections on Politics, Democracy & History')

* * *

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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The word 'Democracy' is related to the people and often said to be a Government of the people, by the people and for the people. The governance runs on the will of the people in a way. Democracy amply provides decision-making opportunity and equal rights to all its citizens.

The constraints in a democracy are generally classified as political, social and economic. These include corruption, inefficiency, illiteracy, poverty etc. In addition, the people who should understand the principles of democracy, its noble objectives along with their responsibility in nation building limit themselves only to elect their representatives, that too influenced by caste, creed, race and religion. The decision-making power and participatory opportunity should be better utilized by people for a vibrant democracy. This deficiency is often faced and experienced by all administrators and is a major challenge in the field.

India is endowed with reasonable natural resources – land, water and favourable climate. But the size of our population poses many challenges. The limited resources reaching the disadvantaged people and those living in remote areas remains a major challenge. We use the expression 'beneficiary' in administrative parlance to denote the one who receives a benefit under a policy on a scheme from the Government as per one's eligibility. The limited resources compel us to follow some selection process. At the village level, this is done in a Grama Sabha in the presence of villagers under the chairmanship of the Sarpanch of the Grama Panchayat. The village level functionaries facilitate such selection (process). But this eligibility list is often questioned as the villagers

are not literate, Sarpanch has political preferences and the village level functionaries are mean in attitude and influenced by local factors often as they hail from the same village. The Grama Sabha, more often than not, fails to understand the repercussions of such defective selective process. There is lack of fairness and genuineness.

We are all aware of the famous words of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister, that "of every rupee spent by the government, only 15 paise reach the intended beneficiary". This can be attributed to faulty delivery mechanisms (through administrative machinery) as seen in Public Distribution System (PDS), Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) or Mid-day Meal Scheme. The discrepancy in the quantities, poor quality of the ration, improper maintenance of equipment, poor storage methods, pilferages along the distribution chain and corrupt practices result in dilution of the noble cause of improvement of the nutritional status of people below the poverty line.

In order to reach the target group, alternative methods like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was introduced but this method did not yield the required results as it was time-consuming and constrained by cumbersome process. The formation and growth of Self Help Groups (SHG) addressed the challenge of foundation or deepening of democracy to some extent initially. They were trained on the lines of democratic decentralization and decision-making. But over a period of time, their focus drifted towards mobilization of loans through bank linkage and circulation of money. They were also polarized and politicized.

Voting or exercising the franchise is vital in a democracy. This is undertaken by an independent Election Commission (EC). When Bhutan first conducted elections to its 'National Council' in 2007, its EC requested for (deputation of) an Observer Team from India. I was part of the three-member team deputed by the Indian E.C. It was amazing to see the excellent work carried out by the E.C of Bhutan in the preparation of citizen ID cards, laminated electoral photo identity cards, electoral rolls all with colour photographs in a very short time. Besides their commitment, the size of their small population allowed them to accomplish the task. In a huge

Alcohol doesn't just affect the liver or brain, it affects almost every organ.

- Katherine Latham

country like India this becomes difficult. In addition, periodic revision of electoral rolls makes it arduous.

The bedrock of a vibrant democracy is the existence of checks and balances. Sometimes these come as hindrances from administrative point of view. For example – the right to move the court of law may hamper a development programme. When the Department of Endowment, Andhra Pradesh made an attempt in 2016 to resolve a 150 year old case to benefit an Endowment Institution which had large extent of donated land on records, it was marred by vested interests through litigation and adverse publicity. Ultimately the institution was deprived of its endowment, perhaps forever.

In order to fully reap the benefits of democracy, citizens should realize that it is their rule and hence exhibit fair, genuine and participatory role for a vibrant democracy that facilitates effective and nimble administration.

* * *

HEROINES AS LIBERATORS - I

Prof. Manoj Das

Inaugural address at the National Seminar on Women in the Epics by Researchers' Association at Cuttack, in April 2015. Courtesy: The Critical Endeavour.

It is my firm conviction that in the entire range of the world's great literature, there are no stronger and more astounding women characters than the three heroines we meet in the epics of India. They are Savitri, Sita and Draupadi. I continue on the presumption that most of you know the outlines of the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, so that these characters can be fully appreciated.

However, one theoretical issue must be brought to focus to begin with. Sri Aurobindo, in one of his early aphorisms, said:

There are four very great events in history: the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindavan, and the colloquy with Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his cross

humanised Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity. Yet it is said that none of these events ever happened.

Sri Aurobindo is not saying that these were the four greatest events, but very great events. There must have been other great events too. But in the 1st decade of the 20th century some newfangled interpreters of history had found it quite fashionable to brand these aforesaid events as fiction.

Let us pass hurried glances at these events and their role in the growth of civilisation.

The great Hellenic culture came out of Homer's epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, composed on the basis of the Trojan War. But for that war the small kingdoms of Greece would not have become united; there would not be any distinct Greek culture. For centuries it was thought that the Trojan War was a poetic invention; but later excavations established that the Trojan War was as factual as the existence of the city of Troy.

...the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion (for before there was only meditation and worship)...

When Krishna was born, as you know, he would have been killed by Kamsa; hence overnight the infant was transported to Brindavan across the river Yamuna. As time passed he grew up into a lovely friend of the cowherd boys and the object of supreme affection for the damsels of the locality. According to mythology these boys and girls were no ordinary beings but liberated souls - free from the cycle of birth and death - who deliberately took birth in order to enjoy the physical contact with Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu. It is this relationship between these youths of Brindavan and Krishna that resulted in the development of the Devotional way of approaching the Divine, the *Bhakti Yoga*.

...Christ from his cross humanised Europe.

The epoch-making gospels of Christ became a living force because they were inextricably associated with the suffering Jesus went through culminating in his Crucifixion. His message along with the memory of that terrible event gradually sank into the consciousness of Europe and reformed it to a great extent, eliminating barbarity and inspiring humanism.

China's rise does not warrant isolating Beijing or curbing cooperation.

- Olaf Scholz

...the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity.

Kurukshetra is the battlefield where Krishna gave the message of the Gita to Arjuna. Significantly, Sri Aurobindo says “*will yet liberate humanity*”. That means the Gita has not yet been fully realised. Its teaching has not been fully activated in our life till this day. That explains why one of the major works of Sri Aurobindo is his “*Essays on the Gita*”. When we absorb the message of the Gita fully, we will be liberated from our awfully confused state of unconsciousness.

... Yet it is said that none of these four events ever happened.

Sarcastically Sri Aurobindo is implying that they did of course happen! They might not have happened as they are described in legends and literature, but essentially they were factual.

When we look into the epic past, the grand old mythical era, sometimes we wonder, was there a time when human and supernatural beings intermixed? I would not call that an infrarational age, but a pre-rational age. As the human mind grew and the rational faculty developed, the sense of reasoning dominated the race; for the sake of spiral evolutionary progress Nature probably withdrew some of the great opportunities that were available earlier. Mind had to realise its full potentiality, reasoning had to build up. But a pre-rational age was there. Mystics believe that there was a time when human beings and supernatural ones, divinities and semi-divinities, interacted among themselves. May I refer to an ancient legend:

Probably the world’s first work of dramaturgy was authored by Bharata Muni, after whom the classical dance Bharat Natyam is named. This great master, Bharata Muni, who lived maybe 3000 to 3500 years ago, was obviously a dramatist as well as a director. He wrote a play for which he could easily find right kind of actors for the male roles, but when it came to the role of the heroine who must project the appearance and character of Goddess Lakshmi, he could find no suitable female artiste even though that was an era when ladies did act in plays. Bharata Muni requested Urvashie, the celestial nymph, the most enchanting of all the wonderful members of that genre of demi-divinities, to condescend to come

down and take up the role of the heroine. She obliged him and acted along with human artistes.

I referred to this possibility of the divinities and semi-divinities palpably mixing with the humans because otherwise we cannot explain, we can’t understand the implications, the beauty, and the splendid wisdom that remain embedded in many of the great myths - not only Indian, but Graeco-Roman and Egyptian too.

All of you know that there are two great powers at work in the world Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha is the Divine proper, undiluted, always awake and conscious divinity - the Supreme Lord, Yogeshwara. Prakriti is the projection of that Divinity constituting the phenomenal creation, but forgetful of its origin. Thus we have Nature consisting of forests, rivers, mountains, earth etc. and we have human Nature consisting of the three modes, sattwa, rajas and tamas; we have mind- and countless manifestations of life - all completely oblivious of their origin.

But deep within Prakriti, this manifestation of Godhead that has completely forgotten itself, there remains the Shakti. That principle of Divinity, apparently asleep, goes on working and, in the course of time we who are subject to Prakriti’s rule, wake up to our real truth, wake up to our inner self, and then the Shakti begins to act as the Divine Mother. Purusha is aloof, he has given freedom to Prakriti to do whatever she likes. But the Shakti, the spirit of Prakriti, the hidden Godhead in Prakriti, has a very very difficult task. On one hand, freedom has been given to Prakriti to do as she likes; on the other hand, the ultimate goal must not be forgotten. The entire Prakriti has to be one day transformed into its original nature that is Divine. Hence Shakti, the kinetic principle hidden in Prakriti, has to manifest again and again as powerful characters, to liberate the entire Prakriti from the clutches of darkness and ignorance into which the creation had plunged. She has her free will, yet she is intricately involved in nature.

The Earliest Feminist

The first instance we come across of this action of Shakti, probably the most primeval of the myths of India, known as DakshaYagna, goes back to the dawn of humanity. According to the Indian tradition, the first demigodly monarch whose daughters brought forth

humanity, was known as Daksha. Konkhal, adjacent to Haridwar, was the capital of his domain. He had a hundred daughters, married to the gods, and some married to Rishis the early Rishis seem to have been supernatural emanations - but human beings were yet to come into being. Daksha's youngest daughter was Sati. Daksha had decided to marry her off to one of the godheads. But she would not agree. She had resolved to marry Lord Shiva. Her father would not consent to this. That is the earliest instance of conflict between the powerful paternal authority and the free-will of the child. How could Daksha reconcile to his most prized daughter marrying a candidate who had no citadel of his own, who lived almost like a vagrant without even proper clothes, donning only a piece of tiger-skin? All he had for ornaments was a serpent and he lived in the open on the top of Mount Kailas. How could the proud father let his daughter share such a life-style?

Nevertheless, Sati married Shiva. And Daksha decided that he would never even look at the face of this daughter!

Some time passed. One day Daksha organised a great *Yajna*: a sacred fire rite. As you know, *Yajna* was a double-edged institution. The real *Yajna* is human aspiration, the spirit of sacrifice, flames of devotion moving upward, flames of prayer but everything psychological has a physical corollary. On the surface of our life, on the earth, *Yajna* is the fire rite, the great purifier, flames rising upward. Daksha, with the help of expert priests, convened such an event. His 99 daughters and sons-in-law had been invited, but not Sati and Shiva.

The holy mischief-maker, Devarishi Narada - a Deva who had chosen to be a Rishi - happened to visit the abode of Shiva - I don't think it was just a courtesy call - and feigning surprise, asked Sati, "How is it that you are here - instead of being at at your parents' place? Don't you know that your father is performing a great *Yajna* and all your sisters and brothers-in-law are gathered there?"

"Of course I will be there before long!" exclaimed Sati. Narada departed and Sati informed her husband of her intention to proceed to Daksha's palace. But Shiva warned Sati against taking such a step. "Don't, please don't do it! Uninvited, you should

not go anywhere." There was a dialogue between the two, but to cut short the story, Sati said with the force of finality an utterance that became an unwritten law in Indian tradition - "At no point of time, during the day or at night, a daughter's entry into her parents' house can be forbidden!"

So Sati went to attend the ceremony. Well, I see her as the first feminist in mythic history! She stuck to her will against her father's and married Shiva. Now she stuck to her will against Shiva's.

But she is still the Divinity involved in ignorant Nature. The moment Daksha sees her he bursts into a tirade, a volley of accusations against Shiva. "Father, please stop but he would not. Sati cannot bear it. She jumps into the sacrificial fire.

The news reaches Shiva. Agitated, Shiva throws his trident to the ground and a host of supernatural beings spring up. They rush to Daksha's place and create havoc. The whole *Yajna* is destroyed. But that is a different story - I won't go into that. Distraught, Shiva takes up the dead body of Sati and carrying it on his shoulder starts moving all over the land. Vishnu with his *Sudarshana Chakra*, the celestial whirling wheel, symbolic of the entire creation, revolving time, *Kala*, the great revolving disc, cut into pieces the lifeless body of Sati. Wherever a piece of it fell, there sprang up a Shakti temple. Throughout the whole subcontinent, from the Himalayas to KanyaKumari, these were the places sanctified in a remote past, absorbing the physical Relics of Sati.

The great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, as Sri Aurobindo explains in his *Foundations of Indian Culture*, are projections of the Vedic truth, the eternal strife that went on between the Devas and the Asuras, the Titanic Consciousness and the Divine Consciousness. Now we come to three women characters and their roles in this formidable conflict that continues to this day under various guises. They are Savitri, Sita and Draupadi.

Of the three, Savitri is senior-most. In the VanaParva of the Mahabharata a renowned Rishi, Markandeya, is in a conversation with Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava. Obseves Yudhisthira, "Have you ever known any woman comparable for her strength of character and determination, to Draupadi?" Says

The line between the wisdom of crowds and the danger of mobs is thin.

- Amy Zegart

Markandeya, “Yes, I know of one - Savitri - the daughter of Aswapati, the King of Madra.”

Where is Madra? Madra is modern Afghanistan. And Salwa, the kingdom of Prince Satyavan’s father Dyumatsena, was where spreads now the deserts of Rajasthan.

Savitri: Love versus Death

Fight against death had been a pristine preoccupation of man since the awakening of his consciousness. The Samudra Manthan, the churning of the ocean, was the first effort in that direction. There was no human being at that time. It was the fight between the Devas and the Asuras to discover the elixir of immortality, Amrita. It was discovered, but it was denied to the Asuras who represented all the negative traits of consciousness - traits that were opposed to any progress of consciousness which was the goal of the evolution of life upon the earth.

In other words, victory over death and progress of consciousness were closely linked.

Nachiketa receiving the knowledge of immortality of the soul from the god of Death, Markandeya deferring his own death by growing one in his consciousness with the immortal. Consciousness of Lord Shiva when his moment of death arrived were significant episodes in the direction of conquest of death. But the role of love in this process was first revealed in the myth of Ruru and Pramodvara. The two were in love and were about to marry when Pramodvara suddenly died of snake-bite. Ruru managed to enter the netherworld, locate her soul and come to an understanding with the god of Death that Pramodvara should resurrect by sharing half of his own remaining span of life.

That was an achievement, but not a victory over death. It was in the episode of Savitri that the promise of that victory is unmistakably pronounced. Princess Savitri - *Kanyatejaswini* (the luminous maiden) – chose to marry Prince Satyavan of Shalwa, who lived in a forest with his exiled parents, despite the great sage Narada revealing to her the fact that the prince was to die after a year.

Sharing her husband’s humble life in his sylvan world, the princess awaited the fateful moment,

unknown to others, but silently preparing herself to face it.

The day arrived. As usual Satyavan set out for the interior of the forest to collect some wood. That day Savitri accompanied him. Suddenly the prince felt giddy and lay down with his head resting on Savitri’s lap - and his spirit quietly slipped out of his body as the princess looked on.

Savitri was no ordinary mortal. Her occult vision revealed to her the god of Death present on the spot. As the god began to walk carrying with him the soul of Satyavan, Savitri followed him. The compassionate god asked her to return home, accepting her husband’s death as an unalterable reality. When Savitri continued to follow him, the god offered her boon after boon so that she would feel happy and do his bidding. Savitri obtained boons for the restoration of her blind father-in-law’s vision as well as his kingdom - and when Yama had grown quite impatient also the boon of mothering worthy children while remaining faithful to her husband.

It was a bit too late by the time Yama realized his faux pas. He had been outwitted.

He had to restore Satyavan to life in order to render his last boon practical.

The great truth that lay dormant beneath this myth of immeasurable antiquity was traced by Sri Aurobindo and chosen as the theme of his epic, *Savitri*, reasserting the inexhaustible potentiality of Indian literature. Savitri outwitting the god of Death was only the contour of the story. It was, in fact, the victory of the power of Love – made immensely puissant by her silent Yoga- over the laws of fate. Sri Aurobindo’s epic implies that if an individual’s pure love could radically alter the destiny of another individual, an advent of Divine Love could one day surely forestall the arbitrary sway of death over the destiny of mankind.

*For in the march of all-fulfilling Time
The hour must come of the Transcendent’s will:
All turns and winds towards his predestined
ends*

*In Nature’s fixed inevitable course
Decreed since the beginning of the worlds*

It is hard for any single country to go up against an economic behemoth such as China.

- Victor Cha

*In the deep essence of created things:
Even there shall come as a high crown of all
The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.*
Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri* (Book XI; Canto:1)

(*Miracles and other Essays* Edited by Supriyo
Bhattacharya 2018)

(To be concluded)

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A SPRIG OF BASIL

Dr. (Ms) Ahana Lakshmi

Environmental Consultant

Climate change continues to be a hot topic, not the least because 2022 has been listed as the sixth-hottest year on record, making the last eight years the eight hottest years in history. It is universally agreed that transformative action needs to be taken at all levels for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

There is now increasing focus on climate change-relevant decisions (CCRDs), defined as decisions leading to actions that have consequences for climate change, particularly through mitigation and adaptation. This is attributed to the fact that there has been a broadening in the actors concerned about climate change and the many cogs in the wheel that contribute to climate action ranging from research to policy to implementation and advocacy.

But is it easy to make such decisions? When you look at project proposals regarding climate change adaptation or mitigation, there is usually a component for a decision support system. Such tools are believed to help in the process of rational decision making and become especially important when decisions may be questioned because of the uncertainties involved. It is then easier to shove the blame on the tool saying that the decision was taken based on what the tool suggested. However, as summarized by Siders and Pierce, 2021, adaptation is an example of the classic ‘wicked’ problem with numerous actors, multiple problem definitions, extensive uncertainties and contested goals. And decision support tools may not be the be all and end all of climate change adaptation.

Even under normal circumstances, decision support tools are often time and resource intensive

requiring up-to-date inputs. A classic example is regarding implementation of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification in India. The definition of the area under the CRZ hinges on the demarcation of the high tide line, which has been uniformly demarcated based on the shoreline of 2011, a dozen years ago! Considering the extent of erosion that is taking place along the Indian coast, and it is quite rapid in some hotspots like Uppada in Andhra Pradesh and pockets of Gujarat and West Bengal, would using the 2011 shoreline as baseline be meaningful with respect to climate change adaptation actions set in the future in many locations? Won’t local current data be more meaningful for rapid action?

If one looks at the national or state action plans for climate change, they generally sound good with lofty ideals of transformational planning and adopting integrated strategies. But when you look for transformational projects and activities, do you find them?

Many decades ago, a feminist writer and novelist wrote a series of letters purported to be from famous women in our epics to their mothers. There is one written by Damayanti bemoaning the fact that Nala’s cooking knowledge made him comment adversely on even the most carefully prepared special dish. In that letter, Damayanti also expresses her concern for the cantankerous great aunt who appeared to be plaguing her mother and asks her to send the lady to visit her for after all there would be plenty to do in a palace. The great aunt comes and soon all is shanti in the dining room. Nala makes no more adverse comments. Why? The great aunt has taken over and makes a casserole every day, transforming left overs from Damayanti’s kitchen into unique delectable wholesome combinations of her own, decorating the dish with a fragrant sprig of basil before serving it. Try as he might, Nala is unable to find that unique thing which makes each day’s dish different though apparently made from the same ingredients.

Most state climate action plans remind one of such a casserole, being but an aggregate of projects drawn from different line departments and are like random pieces of a jigsaw puzzle shaken together, with no clarity about the whole picture. Merely renaming as climate-smart agriculture or climate-

Shankara’s ambition as a thinker was to provide a unified, coherent reading of the great plurality and diversity of the Hindu scriptures.

- Jonardon Ganeri

smart homes is not going to make a climate action plan transformative. Fundamentally, CCRD will have to be well thought of with context appropriate actions keeping in mind long term consequences so that the end effect is holistic. Actions must be planned and executed in tandem, even when the components used are the same and the constituencies are well known. Then, decorating with a sprig of basil may effect the kind of transformative change that we need today to combat climate change.

* * *

Book Review:

THE FORKS IN THE ROAD

My Days at RBI and Beyond

C. RANGARAJAN

(Penguin Random House India, Gurugram,
Haryana, 2022, pp 346 Rs. 699)

Dedicated to "Dr. Manmohan Singh whose vision and courage opened up new vistas and opportunities for India"

This is a welcome publication by one of our respected economists who has, with meticulous care, brought out interesting and informative facts about economic reforms that enabled India to come out of a critical, if not desperate, situation thirty years ago. Mr. Rangarajan who began his career as an academic engaged in teaching and research emerged as an able administrator as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Known and admired for his knowledge of banking transactions and currency assets and administrative abilities, Rangarajan always maintained a low profile despite initiating bold reforms. His book contains three parts and seventeen chapters and is studded with a number of tables and statistical data. The fifteen chapters that follow the introduction deal with interesting developments and government policies since independence, besides monetary matters and banking affairs. Thomas Carlyle famously described economics as a 'dismal science'. Economics is, without doubt, an important subject even if it is a little tiring subject for serious study and research.

Rangarajan became the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and also the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. Unostentatious in

both public and private life he earned the respect of many in the banking sector and public life as well.

I crave the indulgence of the reader for quoting the distinguished author's own words at many places instead of summarising his views on different subjects.

"The narration begins in 1982. I had spent nearly three decades prior to this in academia both as a student and a teacher in India and abroad", writes Rangarajan.

'The reforms of 1991, as far as RBI was concerned, related to three important areas - monetary policy tools and environment, banking systems and exchange rate management, and foreign exchange controls. These again are delineated in detail in various chapters. Taken together, the reforms completely modified the role and structure of RBI. RBI acquired new tools such as open market operations (OMOs), which were not possible as long as interest rates were not market-determined.'

'From the governorship of RBI, I moved to become governor of Andhra Pradesh. During this period, I held additional responsibility as the governor of Odisha for nearly two years and that of Tamil Nadu for six months. While the position of governor of a state is largely ceremonial, one also has to be a keen 'night watchman'. Perhaps there have been only two governors of RBI who went on to become governor of states!'

'India went to IMF in 1981 to tide over the BOP crisis. Similarly, a decade later in 1991, it went to IMF for the same reason. What are the differences? In 1981, thanks to the foresight of people like M. Narasimham, I.G. Patel and others, India approached IMF well ahead of time and much before the problem had become acute.'

There is a link between aggregate demand and BOP. If the aggregate demand exceeds availability, it spills over into current account deficit. The fiscal performance during this period deteriorated sharply. Up to 1970-80, the Central government had a revenue surplus. By 1988-89, it had turned out to be a deficit of 2.45 per cent of GDP. The net fiscal deficit of the Centre was 4.89 percent of GDP. The fiscal deficit of the Centre and states taken together rose to 9.06 per cent of GDP. 1990-91 was perhaps one of the

'Sanskrit' means 'perfectly made'. It is a language of extraordinary precision.

- Sunil Khilnani

worst years that the Indian economy had to face. The deteriorating BOP situation got worse because of certain global developments.

‘In the absence of a stable government, the role of RBI and the governor became more important. Governor Venkitaramanan was described by an economic daily as a lone (loan) ranger. He and I went to the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) to find out if our gold could be effectively used.’

‘The initiative to pledge gold was taken by RBI. It, of course, needed the permission of the government, which was given. It was a bold decision by a government which at that time was only a caretaker government led by Chandra Shekhar. It showed great wisdom and courage. That was the starting point.’

‘The decision to make the downward adjustment was a bold decision. It required a lot of courage. But devaluation has been done in the past also. What was in fact bolder was the ushering in of reforms in general and particularly in the external sector.’

The author explains how ‘the Reserve Bank, under the Statute, is charged with the responsibility of regulating “the issue of bank notes and the keeping of reserves with a view to securing monetary stability in India.” As matters now stand, with an automatic expansion of currency at the will of Government, the Bank in my judgement, is not really in a position to discharge its responsibility’.

‘Autonomy in any case is not unrestrained. In a democratic set-up it can always be subject to policy directives either from the Government or the legislature. In the Indian context, perhaps the first step should be to move away from the system in which the deficits that are incurred by the Central Government automatically get financed by the Reserve Bank through the issue of ad hoc treasury bills. This is distinct from the question of setting limits on the Government’s borrowing,’ observes Rangarajan.

‘It has also been agreed with the Reserve Bank that the net issue of ad hoc Treasury Bills should not exceed Rs.9000 crore for more than ten continuous working days at any time during the year. If this happens, the Reserve Bank will automatically sell Treasury Bills in the market to reduce the level of ad hoc Treasury Bills. This is a historic step which will in due course contribute to a significant improvement in fiscal and monetary discipline, and give the Reserve Bank greater scope for effective monetary management.’

The last three chapters titled ‘*Interacting with the Political System*’, ‘*Advice to Government*’ and ‘*Some Ruminations*’ are particularly important and interesting too. This is an eminently readable work by one of our most distinguished policy makers and administrators who played a major role in the transformation of India’s economy and the monetary system.

A. Prasanna Kumar

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