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(GAYATRI VIDYA PARISHAD)

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The month of August conjures up stirring memories, especially in the minds of those who were privileged to see or hear over the radio through commentary, the historic events such as the hoisting of the national flag and the midnight *tryst with destiny* speech of free India's first Prime Minister in the national capital.

We Indians may not have adequately displayed our capacity for hard work necessary for rapid progress and sustainable development. May be the accusation is justified that we are long on promise and short on performance. But our capacity to put up with hardship seems boundless as evidenced by the suffering of millions of people living below the poverty line and the abiding faith of more number of poor and helpless people in the democratic system despite being let down by it badly for decades. As it is rightly asserted the poor and suffering classes have kept democracy alive in India for six decades and four years.

The term civil society is not easy to define as it is shrouded in ambiguity, even controversy, in this era of globalization. Public discourse today centers round civil society's relationship with the State. Such is the heat generated by debates and discussions in both print and electronic media that people are almost vertically divided with each side claiming superiority over the other through its protagonists making claims and counter claims round the clock.

The state, as the great Aristotle defined, originates in the bare needs of life and continues in existence for the sake of good life. Defining 'good life' is again fraught with risk. The UN General Assembly struggled for long hours to define 'good life' while discussing the draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Charter in 1948. For that matter the Indian National Congress of those halcyon times found it difficult to define the term 'gentleman' during a lively discussion at one of its sessions

in the 1920s. That apart the main function of the democratic state is to ensure good life for all its citizens, guaranteeing freedom, equality and justice. But as the state exercises power which is generally coercive in nature it can easily get away with abuse of power overtly and covertly. Power, explained a renowned political scientist, is a value chasing other values. Not only does power tend to corrupt but it also pampers hubris and pomp, bordering on lavishness and vulgarity. On the other hand 'civil society is characterized by voluntary associations distinct from the economy and the state'. Central to civil society are 'Rule of Law and autonomous administration of justice.' Civil society generates consent and trust which strengthen the foundations of democracy. That is why it is universally accepted that a robust civil society makes democracy work. A culture of trust is necessary for the stability and success of democracy as de Tocqueville famously elucidated. Both state and civil society are expected to strive for the creation of 'a politically constituted moral authority' to borrow again the words of the immortal Aristotle. Philosophers and thinkers from ancient to modern times unequivocally asserted that state and society are expected "to generate civility, social cohesion and morality."

We must accept that India today is neither a vibrant democracy nor a great society. But that should not dampen our spirits. India has strength enough to overcome the present moral and political crisis. We can do no better than to recall the words of advice given by the Father of the Nation to the Bengal ministers led by Prafulla Ghosh who called on him on August 15, 1947. "Be humble; be forbearing. Now you will be tested through and through. Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourself be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages."

- The Editor

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. - Mahatma Gandhi

Prof. M.N. Sastri's book on
World Demographic Trends

'World Demographic Trends' a compilation of Prof. MN Sastri's articles published in the Bulletin of the Centre for Policy Studies from April 2, 2008 to June 2, 2011 ranging from *Ageing* to *Youth Quake* and *Migrations* to *Media* will be released at a function on August 4, 2011 at the Visakhapatnam Public Library. His articles published in the CPS Bulletin from 1997 to 2007 on Energy and Environment were brought out in a book form under the title '*The Profligate Civilisation*' on his 83rd birthday in August 2007 at Visakhapatnam when Dr. & Mrs. Sastri were felicitated by the Centre for Policy Studies. The book release function on August 4, 2011 on the eve of Prof. Sastri's 87th Birthday will be presided over by President of Gayatri Vidya Parishad Mr. D.V. Subba Rao. Dr.E.A.S. Sarma, IAS Retd., Founder-Convener, Forum for Better Visakha, will release the book while Mr. Ajeya Kallam, IAS, Chairman, Visakhapatnam Port Trust will release the CPS August bulletin. Dr. PVGD Prasad Reddy, Rector, Andhra University where Prof.Sastri had worked as Prof. & Head of the Department of Chemistry, will receive the first copy. Mr.J.Sreenivasa Raju, CEO Geomardy will receive the first Bulletin copy.

A Grateful Offering...

"The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man," wrote Thomas Robert Malthus in 1798 in his famous work *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. An Anglican clergyman and scholar of repute Malthus made the gloomy forecast that population growth would be the biggest hurdle in the way of human progress. From half a billion in the 17th century global population rose to one billion at the end of the 19th century thanks to many factors such as industrial revolution and agricultural development.

Despite two horrendous wars, the First and Second World War that took a heavy toll of human life, the growth of world population in the twentieth century was steep, especially after the second world war, registering a near seven fold increase. Interestingly the seven billionth child will be born on October 31, 2011 in India which is poised

to become the world's most populous country in a few decades.

Demography has become a fascinating subject for study and research. The coming decades will witness unprecedented shifts and changes, upturns and downturns in many countries because of demographic changes resulting in huge deficits in some and dividends in others.

On this complex and extremely important subject Prof M.N. Sastri has contributed twenty informative and thought-provoking articles for the Bulletin of Centre for Policy Studies, published in all the issues from April 2, 2008 to June 2,2011. The themes covered, ranging from *Ageing Population* to *Youthquake*, from *Media* to *Migrations* and the depth of scholarship bear testimony to the 86 year old Prof M.N.Sastri's intellectual sharpness and rigorous academic discipline. His life and work will continue to inspire not only those engaged in teaching and research but all those concerned about human wellbeing and world progress.

On his 83rd birthday on August 5,2007 twenty nine articles on energy and environment he had contributed for the CPS Bulletin from 1997 to 2007 were brought out in book form titled *The Profligate Civilisation* and released at a function in Visakhapatnam when Prof Sastri and his noble wife Mrs Sarala Sastri were felicitated. Four years after that memorable occasion CPS is now privileged to release *World Demographic Trends*, a collection of the twenty articles of Prof Sastri published in CPS Bulletin since then, on the eve of his 87th birthday. Fifty one valuable articles in all from Prof Sastri's prolific pen that have enriched the quality of the Bulletin of Centre for Policy Studies during the last fifteen years! Not easy to adequately thank him for his outstanding contribution and unfailing support for our modest effort to generate healthy debate on issues of contemporary relevance. Offering our profound gratitude to the eminent scholar-scientist I humbly invoke the grace of Lord Almighty on Prof M.N.Sastri, Smt Sarala Sastri and their family for their good health and long life. Our thanks are due to Prof M.S. Rama Murthy for taking care of proof - correction and to the ever-dependable Shri M.K.Kumar of Sathyam Offset Imprints and his able assistant Smt Kiranmayi for bringing out the book in time.

★ ★ ★ - A.Prasanna Kumar

Civil servants need to be neutral not only in form but in substance, though this is a principle generally forgotten or ignored. - T.S. Krishna Murthy

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND THEIR STUDY

- **Dr R.Vaidyanatha Ayyar** I.A. S. (Retd)
Former Secretary (HRD) to Govt., of India
& Former Professor of Management Studies IIM Bangalore

For this brilliant article, highly useful for teachers and students in particular, Centre for Policy Studies offers its grateful thanks to the ever-generous scholar-administrator Dr.R.Vaidyanatha Ayyar.

1. What are IPRs?

Intellectual property refers broadly to the creations of the human mind. Intellectual property rights (IPRs) protect the interests of creators by giving them property rights over their creations. IPRs protect (1) literary, artistic, and scientific works, (2) performances of performing artists, phonograms, broadcasts and telecasts, (3) inventions in all fields of human endeavour, (4) industrial designs, and (5) trademarks, and commercial names and designations. IPRs include patents, copyright and related rights, trademarks, and geographical indicators.

A distinction has to be drawn between patents and copyright on the one hand, and trademarks and geographical indicators on the other. Patents and copyright are designed to promote creative endeavour of individuals and organisations. Copyright covers among others literary works, visual art (paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs, and films), performing arts (music, dance and drama), and computer software. Patents cover technical inventions such as new processes and new products. In contrast to patents and copyright, trademarks and geographical indicators have little to do with creativity; they are termed intellectual property rights more as a matter of convention than of conceptual coherence. They are identifiers which help the consumers to identify the source of origin of a commodity, a particular firm in the case of trademarks, and a particular region in the case of geographical indicators. Trademarks encourage their owners to maintain and improve the quality of the products sold under the trademark in order to meet consumer expectations; they reward the manufacturer who consistently produces high-quality goods. They save buyers of products, particularly consumers, a great deal of time and effort required to

make repeated inquiries about products susceptible to quality or taste variations. Or to use economic jargon, trademarks contribute to distributional efficiency by reducing the transaction costs buyers would have to incur in ascertaining the quality of products they buy. Well-known examples of geographical indicators are names like Darjeeling tea, Kanjeevaram silk, Swiss Chocolate and Champagne; such names are associated throughout the world with products of a certain nature and quality. The concept of geographical indicators gained currency when in 1994 they were incorporated for the first time in an international treaty, that treaty being TRIPs (Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights). Another distinction between trademarks and geographical indicators on the one hand, and of patents and copyright on the other is that the former can be granted in perpetuity while the protection under copyright and patents is for a fixed duration at the end of which the knowledge or information protected falls into public domain and can be accessed by anyone without restriction. In what follows, the term IPR is limited to patents and copyright.

Patent is an exclusive right granted by the State to an inventor for a fixed period, known as term of protection. During that term, an inventor is protected from unauthorized use of his invention. The invention could be a new product or a new process for manufacturing a new product or a known product. A patent granted for a new product is called product patent and that for a new process a process patent. An inventor can use his invention himself or license others subject to the stipulated terms and conditions including the payment of a royalty. Over the last few decades, the scope of patents has been expanding so much so that 'everything under the sun made by man' is now patentable; processes which can be patented now include those applied in the service industries eg., business operations, and computer algorithms. Innovation is the commercialization of an invention. It can be product innovation that commercializes a new product, or process innovation that commercializes a new process. It is technical invention and innovation that drives competitiveness of firms as well as international competitiveness of nations; in the era of globalisation and economic interdependence fostering international competitiveness is a major task of governments all over the world. While patents are essential for fostering innovation, they are not without

social and economic costs. In the short run, if market conditions permit, a firm holding a patent can use the market power it acquired through patent protection to restrict production based on his patent, or charge a price far in excess of the cost of production plus amortization of the cost of his invention plus a reasonable rate of return on the capital invested for the manufacture. Patent laws seek to curb the exercise of market power by stipulating that the patent-holder 'works' his patent, that is to say use the patent to manufacture goods or services for sale to the public. Should he fail to supply the public the goods or services in reasonable quantities or at reasonable price, government can authorise the use of invention by third parties and stipulate the royalty to be paid. Similarly, government can also make use of the invention in public interest without the permission of the patent-holder, and pay royalty for such use. In principle, patents might also inhibit technological advancement as the invented knowledge is the private property of the patent-holder during the validity period of a patent. To prevent this from happening, patent laws exclude from the scope of patents (1) discoveries of materials or substances already existing in nature, (2) abstract ideas like scientific theories or mathematical methods, and (3) methods of treatment for humans or animals, or diagnostic methods practiced on humans or animals excepting the medicines and other products used in such treatments. The laws also permit the use of the patented products solely for purposes of scientific research and experiment. Patent law also requires disclosure of the invention in a manner sufficiently clear for the invention to be carried out by a person skilled in the art. In spite of the possible misuse of patents, the rationale for patents lies in the fact that in the long run society would be better off by promoting inventions which create new products and new processes. The trade-off between the short-run possible loss and the long-run gain is at the centre of a long-standing and rather acrimonious debate on patents. Economists are deeply divided as to whether in fact the market conditions actually permit patent-holders to impose welfare losses on the society. Whatever, patents are like democracy. It has been said that democracy is neither perfect nor all-wise; the justification for democracy lies in the fact that it is the worst form of government except all those other

forms that have been tried from time to time. Likewise, it has been said that it is almost impossible to conceive of any social institution so faulty in so many respects but yet patents survive because there seems to be nothing better. To generalise, in human affairs, the choice is rarely between good and evil but between or among imperfect alternatives, or as Galbraith put it between the disastrous and the unpalatable.

The objective underlying copyright is similar to that underlying patents: patents are designed to foster technical invention and innovation, and copyright literary and artistic creativity. Copyright confer an exclusive right on the right-holder to authorise the reproduction (copying in popular parlance) of a work, or its publication and distribution, or its performance and broadcasting, or its transformation through acts like translation, adaptation, and modification. In spite of sharing a similar objective, copyright differ significantly from patents in terms of both substance and procedure. The crux of patent right is protection of the concrete, novel and useful idea underlying the technical invention and of the investment undertaken to commercialise the idea; in contrast, copyright do not protect ideas but expression of ideas. The distinction between ideas and expression is best captured by an anecdote which captures the puzzlement of the ever logical and rational Paul Dirac at fellow physicist Oppenheimer reading Dante in the original Italian: 'How can one do both physics and poetry? In physics we try to explain in simple terms something that nobody knew before. In poetry, it is the exact opposite.' Functionality in art is determined by the artist's own vision and perception and not by external standards, not even those of fellow artists. Philosophy, it is said, gives awkward answers to perennial questions; likewise an artist expresses his sensual experiences and his viewpoints on the perennial questions in language, music or visual forms. The originality of and creativity in art and literature lie in visualization and expression, or in simple terms order and arrangement; they do not necessarily lie in the ideas or theme. Shakespeare's grandeur lies in his expression and not in the stories of his plays, which he borrowed from elsewhere. Same is true of Kalidasa's Kumarasambhavam and Abhijnana Sakuntalam. In fact,

Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and black marketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the necessary goods of life. - Dr. Radhakrishnan

it has been claimed that the whole oeuvre of world's drama revolves around seventy odd plots. The plot of star-crossed lovers is common across cultures, as Romeo and Juliet, Heer Ranjha and Laila Majnu would vouch. Therefore, by protecting expression and not ideas, copyright protects what is distinctive in art and literature.

Another distinctive feature of copyright is fair use which allows copyrighted material to be used without the authorization of the copyright owner, for limited purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, research and so on. In view of the fact that copyright does not protect ideas, its term of protection generally sixty years is far longer than that of patents which is twenty years from the filing of the date of application. Access to previous works is critical to creativity of all kinds as well as to advancement of all knowledge. Newton could see further than those before him because he stood on the shoulders of the giants before him, and Einstein in turn stood on the shoulders of Newton, Maxwell, Planck and Lorenz. Art and literature are no different. The romantic image of an inspired writer notwithstanding, there is indeed an element of truth in the contention of Northrop Frye that 'poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of others'. Music and visual arts draw inspiration from previous works. No visual artist, however avant-garde, ignores tradition and escapes influence of his peers, past or contemporary; at the very least, tradition is the point of departure, the status quo against which he revolts. Aesthetically, serious art collectors and critics see contemporary art-making as a process evolving out of a historical context, so their valuation of a purchase depends on the likely stylistic evolution of the artist and, indeed, of the school or movement in which he works. The trinity of exclusion of ideas, limited term and fair use ensure that the wellsprings of creativity and scholarship are not fenced off by copyright as private property.

Yet another distinctive feature of copyright is that copyright is acquired automatically and does not require any formality; in contrast the acquisition of a patent right necessitates going through an elaborate procedure involving the filing of a patent application, proving that the invention is novel, non-obvious, and has utility, and rebutting opposition to the grant of the patent claimed.

Developed in response to the invention of the

printing press, the framework of copyright stood the test of time. The framework could assimilate many new technologies of artistic creation and dissemination such as photography, cinematography, radio and television broadcasting, audio and video recording, and reprography. Wherever necessary, specifically tailored rules were drafted within the copyright framework to take note of the distinctive features of the technology or to adapt the new technology to the doctrinal demands of the copyright system in vogue. The framework was found partly efficacious to protect works not usually linked with artistic and literary activity, such as databases, encyclopaedias, and other compilations of facts (works of fact), and architectural drawings and computer software (works of function). The framework is now in the process of adjusting to the technological revolution triggered by digital technologies. These technologies pose a mighty challenge to copyright by making protection in the digital medium almost impossible. Thus scanning erases the distinction between ideas and expression, and between text, voice and image. Once digitalized Beethoven's symphonies, Shakespeare's sonnets, and Satyajit Ray's Pather Panchali are all one, just numeric strings of 'one's and 'zero's. Digitalisation erases the distinction between the genius and mediocre. The works of Keats and a poetaster, of Beethoven and a humdrum music composer, and of Ravi Verma and the street corner portrait painter, all are reduced to numerical strings distinguishable only by the length and the sequence of 'one's and 'zero's of the numerical string. Further, once digitalised and put on the Internet, any work can be downloaded in the privacy of home to make a perfect copy, which can also be shared with, that is to say transmitted simultaneously to, millions across the globe. A seemingly unending stream of technologies like compression formats, file sharing techniques, peer-to-peer networks continuously enhance the facility, fidelity and ubiquity of digital transmission and reception. The gales of creative destruction unleashed by digital technologies are sweeping national and global economic, social and cultural landscapes and also political landscapes if one takes note of the recent developments in the Arab world. An author of a literary or artistic work can now reach his audience directly without the intermediation of a publisher or distributor. Digital technologies have thus knocked down the distinction between an author and a

publisher, between a consumer and a distributor, and between access to, reproduction, distribution and communication of a work. Established industries like print journalism and music industry have been receiving hard knocks, and forced to drastically alter their business models, and new industries are springing up. Digital technologies pose a quintessential dilemma for the policymaker. Without protecting the numerical string neither ideas nor expression can be protected in the digital environment; however, its protection could only be at the cost of upsetting the elegant elements of copyright that together provide balanced protection.

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WILL THE SPARROW EVER RETURN ?

- Dr. E.A.S.Sarma, IAS (Retd.)

(From his latest work with the author's kind permission)

Dr. E.A.S.Sarma was a member of the Indian Administrative Service from 1965 to 2000. He opted for voluntary retirement from the government in 2000. He was Principal, Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Hyderabad from 2001 to 2004. He is presently the Convener of Forum for Better Visakha (FBV), an unregistered civil society forum set up in 2004. The Forum is engaged in promoting Right to Information Act, 2005 in the State. It is also involved in an election watch campaign and promotion of good governance in the offices of the State Government and the local authorities. FBV has been active in articulating the interests of the tribals, the fishing communities and the disadvantaged sections of the people living in the rural and the urban areas. For the last seven years, FBV has been associated closely with civil society movements in AP and elsewhere against projects that deprive the people's livelihoods, violate the laws and damage the environment.

Where has the sparrow disappeared?

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight

.....

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!

- *The Sparrow's Nest* by William Wordsworth

I spent my childhood in a small town called Srikakulam, on the east coast, midway between Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Madras (now Chennai). It was originally a part of the ancient *Kalinga*, I was told. In the modern times it was a part of the erstwhile *Madras Presidency* to begin with and later, a part of the present day *Andhra Pradesh* (AP).

Srikakulam was a sleepy little town; amazingly, with a composite culture. We were regulars at the *dargah*, in our own backyard, where we were assured of fistfuls of beaten rice and *jaggery*. The big mosque in the town was equally fascinating as it had a thickly wooded ground all around it, where we could play hide and seek. The shrub growth there had quite a few snakes and we would hide behind the mosque's pillars and watch them slither and slide. In fact, the field snakes were a common sight wherever there was greenery in the town. The main attraction at the famous Sun temple of Arasavilli, a couple of miles away, was the turtles, which we fed with bananas. My house was set in a large orchard, with rare fruit bearing trees lovingly nurtured by my grandfather. There were all kinds of flowering and fruiting trees, brought from different parts of the country. A shallow well with a manually operated irrigation facility, known locally as *yetham*, provided water to the garden. As children, to my grandmother's utter chagrin, we would wallow in the cool water. We would watch the birds quench their thirst and the occasional snake put its head out. Scared, we would streak past our garden. On the auspicious day of *Nagulachavithi*, a snake festival popular in the south, the local people used to visit our garden to propitiate the snakes by offering milk and eggs at a few mounds where the snakes were supposed to take shelter. Those were the halcyon days, when towns like Srikakulam were less congested, with farmlands interspersing the urban patches and with the people living in harmony with the nature. Greenery was the rule and the larger brick and cement structures were the exception. Building activity used to be not as active as it is these days. Real estate greed was conspicuous by its near absence.

It was as if the people valued their peace more than anything else. Changes, if they disturbed their lives were actively shunned. I still remember the story that my parents told me then. Our town had no direct rail

To the Upanishads India owes almost all the brighter sides of her life and culture. Their thinkers were undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease. - Swami Ranganathananda

connection. The nearest railway station was Dusi, about 6 kilometers away. The other railway station nearby was Amadalavalasa, 10 kilometers away. The latter was more easily accessible by a bus service that was both frequent and convenient. Those days, the railways still largely used steam locomotives that deposited hard lumps of coke all along the track and belched out dark smoke with a typical unpleasant smell. Srikakulam became the administrative headquarters of the newly formed district in 1950 and it gained importance overnight. Someone proposed that the town should have its own railway station and it should be connected to the main line between Calcutta and Madras. Many local residents seemed to have vehemently opposed the proposal, fearing that proximity to the rail track would pollute the surroundings and increase the prices of vegetables! I am not sure whether this story was an exaggerated version of how the residents feared any change from the status quo of a peaceful and quiet life they were leading. Ironically, the town has expanded since then to take both Dusi and Amadalavalasa into its urban reach!

When I look back on my childhood in Srikakulam, what strikes me most is the memory of how much in harmony with nature our lives were. One slice of memory that leaps back to me strongly is the presence of innumerable house sparrows in the house. Ours was a sprawling two storied house, with tiled roofs and long verandahs. There were enough places for the house sparrows to nest, roost, breed, hatch their eggs and tenderly look after their young ones. They seemed to proliferate overnight. They were voracious eaters of grain, weed, insects, worms and even butterflies. They were busybodies of a sort. They went into frenzied activity during the breeding season; the house would be littered with grass and twigs; their eggs would sometimes fall to the ground and mess up the flooring. Undeterred, they would make their nests at all the impossible places. They were the torment of my mother, and my grandmother, who constantly chased them away since they made a nuisance of themselves. They found the house sparrows a noisy, petulant and defiant lot.

The sparrows, along with their elder brothers the crows, marauded everything that they came across; be it the *dalls* spread on mats to dry or the paddy before being packed off to the mills to be dehusked. As a little boy, I

was fascinated by their activity and watched them closely. They would peck at their own reflection in the mirror; they would come close to me, but not close enough, to feed on the grain that I offered them. They were particularly excited when the paddy came home; as the grain was measured to the singsong rhythm of the count, the sparrows would literally dance around, fearlessly.

These sparrows seemed to zoom in and zoom out in sizeable flocks. They were indeed a gregarious lot. When they came into the house, or when they flocked out together, they made a ruckus of noise. In a way, they added a sense of vibrant activity to the surroundings. Like the immortal *Schrödinger's cat*, the sparrows seemed to be inside the house and outside, at the same time! In the afternoon heat of the summers, when the household took its siesta, the tick tock of my grand father's clock and the chirping of the sparrows spelt peace and tranquility in the house. A professional bird watcher told me that the scientific name for a house sparrow was "passer domesticus". I always wondered why the scientists made it so difficult by giving the flora and the fauna such tongue twisting, incomprehensible names! The house sparrows were different from the smaller and more slender tree sparrows. The house sparrows took the human beings in the house for granted and treated the house as theirs. No wonder that the Savaras, a *tribe* in *Orissa* and AP have immortalised the sparrow in their folk art. The sparrow is the central figure in the wall paintings of the Savaras.

The universal appearance of the free-wheeling sparrow in the villages and the towns of south India inspired the great poet, Subramanya Bharathi to describe the bird as the symbol of freedom. The poet, who composed inspiring poems that spurred the people into action during the eventful days of the freedom movement, must have envied the unfettered way in which the sparrow led its life. Today, six decades later, the sparrows seem to have receded into nowhere. I no longer see their nests nor hear their incessant chirp. Of course, in the towns and the cities, the old tiled roofs have given place to concrete slabs that are not welcoming to the sparrow to build its nest. The city is denuded of its greenery. Thousands of trees are cut down every year in the name of new construction activity and widening of the streets. Tree planting has become yet another token component

of a myriad government schemes that exist for the ubiquitous contractor and not for the people at large. While *crores* of rupees of the tax payers' money are spent ostensibly for creating an illusory "green belt" in and around the cities and the towns, there is hardly any evidence of the newly planted trees providing a breathing place for the people or the much needed shade from the scorching sun anywhere. Instead of relying more on the kind of tree growth that the nature provides on its own, the municipalities seem to be more intent on planting outlandish trees along the streets and covering the road dividers with modern lawns, both in need of constant watering. Since most cities and towns face a serious water shortage, such artificial greenery can rarely survive.

There are no longer enough twigs or grass for the sparrow to build its nest and rear its young ones. Even in the backyard gardens which have shrunk in size, the use of pesticides has robbed the sparrow of its insect and worm feed. The air in the cities and the towns is filled with toxic pollutants released every minute by industrial units and vehicular traffic. It is not as though the sparrow has receded into the vast rural hinterland. Even there, concrete structures are fast replacing the traditional roofed buildings. Pesticides have seeped far and deep into the farm lands, the water sources, the rural terrain and everything else associated with agriculture. Polluting industry that is the mascot of modernism in India has filled all that nature has given us, the land, the air, the surface water bodies and even the ground water aquifers, with chemicals that have rendered living unsustainable. I am told that even the combustion of the apparently benign "unleaded" petrol releases a toxic chemical, methyl nitrite which kills the small insects that form the major source of diet for the sparrow! The sparrow has perhaps joined the ever increasing numbers of the species that are fast becoming extinct. "Butterflies are sensitive indicators," Sir David Attenborough, an avid environmentalist himself, said. "They decline when habitats are destroyed and when man harms the environment." When butterflies are less, so is fruit production, as it is the butterflies that facilitate cross pollination that is necessary for sustaining it. Man seems to be in a self-destructive campaign, for no reason or rhyme. One could replace the butterflies in David Attenborough's statement with sparrows. The decline in

the population of the sparrows is perhaps yet another indicator of the impending ecological crisis we face today. Our ecology is a delicately balanced system, with each of its component species supporting the others. There are two important lessons one could perhaps draw from this. In ecology, no single species is more important than the other. Each is crucial for the collective survival of the total system of which it is a component. Once the ecological system starts breaking up, it could become a chain reaction of self destruction. Every day's delay in countering this process will render the corrective action that much more traumatic and expensive. The burden of ecological degradation will fall first on the poor who depend heavily for their living on the commons that the nature has bestowed. In the long run, of course, the burden has to be borne by each and every one of us.

Does the rapid disappearance of sparrows and butterflies represent a whisper from the nature that we are on the path of decline? Is anyone listening to this? Is there a way to reverse this trend?

Will the Sparrow ever return?

So birds of peace and hope and love
Come fluttering earthward from above,
To settle on life's window-sills,
And ease our load of earthly ills;

- The Sparrow by Paul Laurence Dunbar

The load of the earthly ills is difficult to measure but its after effects are easy to experience.

Global Footprint Network's 2010 report based on 2007 data provides an approximate idea of the ecological footprint for India. The human demand on the Indian ecosystem is roughly 1.8 times of what the Indian system can sustain, compared to the corresponding figure of 1.4 for the planet earth! We are certainly going down the path of ecological decline.

What is more worrisome is the decline in the biodiversity because the planet's future will depend critically on how balanced its ecosystem is. WWF's Living Planet Report for 2010 has computed the Living Planet Index for the planet as a whole, by taking into account the trends in the case of 7,953 populations and 2,544 species. The study found that the biodiversity of the planet

has declined by 30% between 1970 and 2007. One should not be surprised if the corresponding index, if prepared for India, would be equally worrisome, if not more. As the years go by, the rate of decline is sure to accelerate, as a result of our increasing ecological profligacy. The planet as a whole and of course we, as a part of it, are sliding down into an unfathomable abyss. Should this not wake us up and spur us into action? For once, can we think globally and act locally? Is there a global view among those that are in a position to influence the opinion where it matters? I recently came across a report on how a vast stretch of land, quite rich in biodiversity, was being acquired for a project and how a person, highly qualified in advanced technology, who was pushing the project against intense public opposition, tried to defend it by saying that the people should not unnecessarily worry about the loss of biodiversity, as his organization would replace it with much “better biodiversity”! The educated elite who are more at ease with the concrete jungles in which they live have not tried to understand how delicately balanced is the ecology that sustains life on the planet and how a tiny missing link or an intrusive toxic pollutant can quickly destroy the balance and take us to the precipice from where it is not easy to come back.

Come to think of it, it is the humble “illiterate” villager whose life is inextricably interwoven with the nature around him that has a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the forces that pose a threat to it. The more fortunate urbanites should learn a lesson or two on biodiversity from their less fortunate rural cousins. Coming back to Vizag where the wetlands and the mangroves have mostly disappeared, where the hills are being depleted rapidly, where the water bodies are being destroyed, where the greenery is being denuded and where the sea is being mercilessly polluted, is it not ironic that the citizens remain unperturbed and indifferent to the impending disaster, both global and local?

People who inhabit these urban agglomerations are fortunate to have the best educational facilities and a wide ranging access to the vast knowledge portals of the world through the ubiquitous internet. While they may be preoccupied with their professions and their urban worries, they should perhaps play a decisive role in turning the tide of ecological decline and become the

harbingers of the much needed change in the paradigm of development, a change that will usher in ecological regeneration based on people’s participation in shaping the course of development. Coming back to the house sparrow, I came across an interesting story about how this unique bird spread its kith and kin all over the world. Some people say that the species originated around the Mediterranean Sea and moved into different parts of Europe. It is not clear whether the house sparrows found in India had their origin in the

Mediterranean or they are the original residents of India. Its migration across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States took place hardly one hundred and sixty years ago. When the green inch worms were decimating the greenery in New York’s Central Park, someone thought that the antidote to the pest was the house sparrow which lived on a similar worm in Europe. The first eight pairs brought to the city failed to survive the colder climate of New York. Later, a few more were introduced in the city and they survived, adapted themselves to the climate, even multiplied and spread across the continent. They fed themselves with the grain that spilled from the horses’ feed. Many sparrow-friendly people helped them nest in artificial nests. In the Netherlands where the sparrow ruled the roost a century ago is now put on the endangered list to be carefully protected! The disappearing house sparrow in India is but one delicate link in the ecological chain. There may be many other similar links that have either disappeared already or will soon disappear. These missing links symbolize the impending doom. Can we regenerate the ecology to save our ecosystem? Will the sparrow ever return?

It was the civil society of Orissa that came to the rescue of the dwindling numbers of Olive Ridges along the State’s coast line. During the nineties, the villagers formed themselves into Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee (RSTPC) to save the Olive Ridges. The same committee has now extended its helping hand to the house sparrow.

“Sparrows have again become part of daily life at the village. They can be seen perching on heads of children and elders; they are regular visitors at the local grocery shop to get their quota of grains” says a report that appeared in the Hindu on February 19, 2011. The

lesson that can be drawn from this is that ecological restoration is squarely in the hands of the people. If there is a will, there is a way. I hope what I have described in this book will move the civil society at large to appreciate the true meaning of development, the inseparable association between the livelihoods of the people and the ecology that surrounds them and the central role in democracies that public consultation processes should play. Mahadevi Verma, the great Hindi writer, in her story, Goraiya, hoped that one day the sparrow would return and enrich our lives.

Let us hope it does!

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Imprints OF Some Tender Palms

- Prof. Manoj Das

(A seer among scholars the venerable Prof Manoj Das who lives in Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville and teaches at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education has graciously permitted the publication of this essay from his book My Little India.)

More than 30 years had passed since I had last seen the short and smartly suited man I stumbled across inside the small aircraft above Jaipur now heading towards Jodhpur. But Prof. V.V. John's features and witty smiles were unforgettable. Educationist and Indo-Anglian writer of excellent belles-lettres - later a member of the Minority Commission, he was, in an earlier phase of his career the Principal of Balasore College when I was a schoolboy and his appearing in a charity fancy football match as an English lady scoring goals against the team led by 'her husband', a dandily-dressed District Collector, one Mr. Dave, at once came alive in my memory at the sight of him.

Even though I introduced myself as the younger brother of his colleague, historian M.N. Das, he exclaimed (just short of Eureka) as if he had hit a jackpot. He almost embarrassed me by citing proofs of his keeping track of my writing.

'From this moment you're in my charge,' he announced in a hijacker's tone, unmindful of our exuberance winning for us a quietly amused audience. He exchanged his seat with that of the passenger by my

side and overwhelmed me with his solicitude.

'The end of my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of Jodhpur University at last brought me a taste of freedom. I desired to pass another day at Jaipur but a friend informed me over the phone of some event at Jodhpur warranting my presence. The horrendous telephone line swallowed up the sound and I could catch only one-fourth of his words,' he said.

We were approaching Jodhpur and the most conspicuous sight on the edge of the Thar desert was Umaid Bhavan Palace shining with its rosy and red marbles. Begun in 1929 by the last ruler of the land of Marwar, Umaid Singh, it had just been completed - at a cost of one and half crore of rupees and labour of a 3000-strong work force - when Jodhpur, like the other princely states, was roped into the treaty of merger. The last ruling prince's desperate bid to blackmail and terrorise the government into complying with his condition constitutes one of the most dramatic bathos in contemporary Indian history:

'His Highness, the Maharaja Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur, clearly under the influence of his British advisers, thought he could negotiate better terms with Jinnah since his State could be geographically linked with Pakistan. Driven by his hostility towards Congress he ignored how his State's Hindu population would react to this act of their Hindu ruler. Along with his friend the Maharaja of Jaisalmer, whose State also bordered Pakistan, he had had a secret meeting with Jinnah. It must have been a glorious moment for the Quaid-e-Azam to have two of the proudest Hindu Rajput princes come to him with the idea of joining a Muslim State and he was willing to agree to whatever terms they put forward. But Jodhpur lost his nerve when Jinnah produced a blank sheet of paper and asked him to state his terms; the fear of his population's reaction stopped the impetuous prince from committing political suicide. Mountbatten described how the Maharaja finally surrendered with a last grand gesture. "I left V.P. Menon to get Jodhpur to sign the Instrument of Accession in my study, whilst I was dealing with the Hyderabad delegation in my wife's study next door. During my absence, young Jodhpur pulled out a revolver and told Menon that he would shoot him down like a dog if he betrayed the starving people of Jodhpur; but

he signed it.” (Partition and Independence of India by Manmath Nath Das)

It was no ordinary pistol, but one concealed in a fountain pen. As Lord Mountbatten’s biographer, Philip Ziegler, records: ‘The pistol was presented to the Viceroy and eventually passed on by him to the conjurors’ society, the Magic Circle, of which both Mountbatten and the Maharaja were members.’

It was Prof. John who introduced me to the couple present to receive me at the airport - Bina Dasgupta, an education officer, and her barrister husband. Then and there also was revealed the nature of the function which obliged the Professor to cut short his programme at Jaipur. He was to preside over the meeting I was to address in the evening.

As I sat looking into the street through my window the next day in the morning, a small marital procession attracted my attention: The bridegroom was aged ten or eleven. A sword hanging from his waist and a turban on his head, the hero on a decorated horse was on his way to win his bride, the sight rivalled in colourfulness by that of a hundred ladies in their over-bright attires gathered on their doorsteps to enjoy it.

Somewhere inside a house not too far away, a girl-child aged six or five must be going through the process of her metamorphosis into a bride. The hand of law can never be long enough to interfere in their destiny in the making.

E.M. Forster wrote of Jodhpur: ‘This is the land of heroism, where deeds which would have been brutal elsewhere have been touched with glory. In Europe heroism has become joyless or slunk to museums: it exists as a living spell here.’ (Adrift in India, 1914).

I had two days of respite from travels and I could drive into the suburbs and even a not-too-near hamlet and talk to some elders. One of them was absolutely sure that his region, Marwar of the bygone days, had been the most civilised society in the world. All that was old was gold and all that passes on as modern was as ephemeral as bubbles: ‘We love our culture, our lifestyle, our tradition,’ he asserted.

‘But your children would soon forget your

traditions...’

‘Why should they?’ he interrupted me.

‘You cannot help it. The trend is ...’

‘If I cannot help it, I cannot help it; that’s different. Once upon a time there was Ramrajya. That is gone. Nobody could help it. That does not mean we are more fortunate or happier than the people who lived in Ramrajya. We adore our traditions, our heritage, that’s all, even if we be doomed to lose them.’

I had read an instance of their stubborn love for their heritage in artist Krishan Khanna’s Rajasthan Diary. Architect Philip Johnson and Dr. Mulk Raj Anand were examining the sculptures on a temple when Philip’s attention went over to a walking stick of exquisite artistry held by an old man in a small throng of curious villagers surrounding them. Philip desired to buy it and offer a “hundred” - maybe he meant dollars and not rupees. The old man displayed an amused smile, but refused to sell it. Philip probably thought that the man was being clever and ambitious for a better bargain. He went on raising the price and at last promised to pay any amount demanded by the villager.

The old man looked moved, but requested an English-knowing bystander to explain to the Sahib that the stick was an heirloom and the question of parting with it simply did not arise. Thus did an ordinary Rajasthani farmer spurn a windfall.

Soon after I was back from Jodhpur the moving story of Amrita Devi, a daughter of the soil, was narrated to me by Shri Sundarlal Bahuguna, the Chipko leader. That event happened in the 1730s. The Maharaja of Jodhpur had ordered the construction of a new palace, and in search of suitable timber for it, his men reached a village of Bishnois. (“Bish” is twenty and “noi” is nine. These folks traditionally counted things by units of 29.) They chose a tree and began to hack at it.

The sound surprised Amrita Devi. She rushed out of her home.

‘What are you doing? We never cut our trees and we never allow others to do it!’ she warned. ‘They are sacred!’

Her plea went unheeded. She hugged the tree. The unrelenting axe struck her head off. Her three daughters, too, emulated their mother's style of protest and went her way. The news spread like wildfire and hundreds of Bishnois gathered and hugged the trees.

Three hundred and sixty-three heads had rolled on the dust by the time the Maharaja reached the spot, stopped and regretted the bizarre operation and apologised to the people. An annual festival still celebrates the sacrifice of Amrita Devi and her followers.

The old fort on the hill on the outskirts of the city continues to be the most significant monument in Jodhpur. Built by Rao Jodha in the 15th century it is a monumental document of the paraphernalia warranted by medieval forts. There was much in it that deserved to be remembered, but all I remember is the imprints of a few mehendi-painted tender palms on a wall. They were made by the young Ranis on their march into the funeral pyres of their husbands, in a pathetic bid to leave behind a visual whisper of their memory.

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'TALK HELD ON LOKPAL BILL'

(A report published in *The Hindu* on the lecture delivered by Prof. RVR Chandrasekhara Rao at the Centre for Policy Studies on July 12, 2011)

Civil society without directly attacking the corporate sector, was doing the same by attacking the state which was weak due to many reasons, former vice chancellor of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University R.V.R. Chandrasekhara Rao Observed here on Monday.

Corporate sector, which prospered due to globalization created many problems and the civil society was hitting back through its attack on the State, Prof. Chandrasekhara Rao said during his talk on the Lokpal bill organized by Centre for Policy Studies and the Visakhapatnam Public Library.

Prof. Rao, a former HoD of Politics and Public Administration of Andhra University and a noted scholar, traced the conflicts between the State and the society.

In the globalization era state was not even technically a welfare State, he said. Judicial activism would also be not an alternative to the Lokpal, he felt.

Director of CPS and former Rector of AU A. Prasanna Kumar, while explaining why the Lokpal bill was needed, what it was and how it has to be implemented said now the people had woken up and started to fight the corruption, more significantly in a democratic manner. There was huge variation in the content of the Lokpal bill prepared by the government and what the civil society wanted, he added.

D.V.Subba Rao, Former Chairman of Bar Council of India and President of GVP & VPL who presided over the function said that the civil society for the first time realized the role it should play.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & INDIA AS A GLOBAL ROLE PLAYER IN THE 21ST CENTURY – III

- A.Prasanna Kumar

The foreign policy of a democratic nation is expected to reflect that nation's "total culture". Jawaharlal Nehru must have thought on those lines when he proclaimed that India's foreign policy was "inherent in the circumstances of India, inherent in the past thinking of India, inherent in the conditioning of the Indian mind during our struggle for freedom." Right from the time he entered public life Jawaharlal Nehru evinced a keen interest in world affairs and Mahatma Gandhi depended on young Jawaharlal for advice in articulating the Congress party's stance on important world issues. At the historic Haripura Congress in 1938 Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Congress leader to talk about India's role in world affairs. Interestingly Nehru spoke about the need to promote world peace at a time when the war clouds were gathering in the sky and in less than a year the Second World War broke out.

As the Vice-President of the Interim Government Nehru declared that India would follow "an independent

The merits of democracy are negative: it does not ensure good government but it prevents certain evils... - Bertrand Russell

policy, keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against the other.” “India”, said Nehru, “would work for international co-operation and goodwill and oppose racial discrimination.” The motto too was stated : “Closer relations with neighbours and good relations with all”. Distressed at the raging of cold war winds then, Nehru struck a note of caution too when he said that “it would have been astonishingly foolish to fall into this business of the cold war either on grounds of principle or on grounds of expediency”. Nehru seemed to have been constantly inspired by the heritage of the great Asian civilizations, like the Chinese and Indian, and he did not hesitate to emphasise, whenever occasion warranted, the greatness, if not superiority, of these ancient civilizations. He summoned the Asian Relations Conference at Delhi in March, 1947 and that marked the beginning of a new era for Asian consciousness and identity in world affairs. For about a decade from then on the proclamation was made in no unclear terms that Asia would show the way to the world; India would lead Asia in this effort; and he (Nehru) would lead India in pursuit of this goal. It was more than a movement. It was a mission. Buddha’s concern for humanity, Ashoka’s renunciation and Gandhi’s non-violence constituted the core of Nehru’s philosophy. The days of secret diplomacy, the narrow nineteenth century diplomatic methods and the crude cold war politics could all be given a burial, Nehru thought.

Nehru’s speech at the Columbia University in 1949 in which he stated the goals of India’s foreign policy was another instance of his determination to strike a new path in world affairs. The goals of India’s foreign policy, he said, included “maintenance of freedom both national and individual”, “the elimination of want, disease and ignorance which afflict the greater part of the world’s population”. These were goals not just for India but for the entire world. No wonder India’s foreign policy became “a fascinating study” to some Western scholars. As Geoffrey Tyson put it: “Nehru did not need to go to New York to make pronouncements of international affairs; the world press came to Delhi to hear him”. Delhi became a necessary diplomatic stopover for world leaders and diplomats visiting Asia.

Yet, Nehru was aware of the hazardous path he was treading. E.H.Carr once wrote that “foreign policy is not an exercise in sainthood.” Nehru was in agreement with this view. In *Glimpses of World History* Nehru admitted that the world was a hard place for “the idealist.” He fully understood “the power dynamics underlying international relations.” As K.Subrahmanyam observed, Nehru’s non-alignment “was a sophisticated policy of retaining maximum available options at any given time in a bi-polar world”. Nehru’s policy, as Escott Reid perceptively pointed out, “United India” and helped “to ease relations between the West and Peking”. The creation of a new third force, practically a moral force, arresting the spread of military alliances, the fight for the liberation of the oppressed peoples of Asia and Africa through non-violence and the zeal to build bridges of understanding and goodwill among states, small and big, and among people of all climes became the features of a new movement launched under India’s leadership. “We are not neutral between right and wrong. We are neutral between hatred and fear,” declared Nehru. Yet some Western scholars and writers like Henry Kissinger poured scorn on India’s policy. Said Henry Kissinger : “The most strident advocates of neutrality are often the people who in dress, learning and manner of thinking are closest to the West” adding that Nehru and the non-aligned leaders were “tempted to play a leading role in international affairs which was a fertile field of manipulation for ambitious men because of their intractable domestic problems”. Kissinger accused the third world countries of behaving like “arbiters” not “neutrals”. Exhorting the United States and the USSR “not to compete for the allegiance of the uncommitted” Kissinger lamented that “We sometimes act as if we and the communists were engaged in a debate in the Oxford Union, with the uncommitted nations acting as moderators and awarding a prize after hearing all arguments”. Such strong comments were made particularly at a time when India looked “blatantly partisan” in the eyes of many critics for her sharp condemnation of Israel aggression against Egypt (backed by the Western powers) and her reluctance to condemn Soviet Russia's invasion of Hungary.

Criticism of India's different positions on two similar issues seemed justified. Michael Brecher, however, made a sharp distinction of India's perception of the two crises. Said Brecher: "Nehru's condemnation of Western powers over Suez and his initial rationalization of Russia's occupation of Hungary were due to two sub-conscious responses: 1) a continuing mistrust of Western actions because of the lengthy history of Anglo-French colonialism in Asia and Africa and willingness to give Russia a fair hearing because of the absence of direct Russian penetration into South and South East Asia and 2) an unstated belief that violence is bad but white violence against non-whites is worse". This explanation apart, India lost many friends because of the manner in which India's spokesmen, Krishna Menon being the shining example of them, harangued in world fora and the United Nations. The "liberation" of Goa was described by the *Washington Post* "as a world class instance of post-colonial hypocrisy". China's aggression against India in 1962 caused immense damage to India's policy and to the non-aligned movement as a whole. In a way the Chinese attack "exposed" the limitations of India's policy. A more practical approach became necessary in the light of new developments. For India the 'sixties were the most troubled decade both internally and externally. Two Prime Ministers, Nehru and Shastri, died suddenly. Two wars rocked the nation that was passing through a severe food shortage. Another war with Pakistan was thrust on India. India's treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971 was criticized as the last straw on the back of non-alignment, though Mrs. Gandhi made it clear that there was no question of making a compromise of our policy of non-alignment. Critics should remember that by taking American aid and advice during India's war with China in 1962, India had not walked into the "American trap". Indian Prime Ministers from Nehru to Manmohan Singh have always enjoyed a special status in world fora because of the path laid down by the first Prime Minister.

(to be concluded)

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DRAUPADI - III **or** **(The ultimate Hindu ideal of an** **impeccable *pativrata*)**

- Sri C. Siva Sankaram

Drupada the fond father of Draupadi was convinced that she came of marriageable age. Indian tradition, custom and convention brook no delay in arrangement of wedlock for such girls brimming with untapped youth. He duly announced that Draupadi would be betrothed to the hero that succeeded in shooting the *matsya yantra*. The *yantra* was to be shot down by looking at its shadow. Condition irrevocable was: scions of *kshatriya* clan alone were eligible for betrothal with the bride apparent. Draupadi summoned to her memory her father's ardent wish ventilated often that Arjuna the middle of the pandavas was the fit choice to be her husband. However, news was rampant that Arjuna along with his other brothers perished in the fire that burnt down the lac house wherein they were housed.

The gathering of kings and others was restless. Almost all of the enthusiasts for Draupadi's hand had an earnest try at the *matsya yantra* but in vain. The kaurava camp headed by Karna attempted at it and miserable failed. So there was none from the *kshatriya* camp who could shoot down the *yantra*. Arjuna disguised as a humble mendicant-Brahmin with stubborn gait neared the *matsya yantra*. He invoked his most worshippable god Shiva, unleashed the arrow, shot down the *yantra* in no time. Draupadi was won over as wife by Arjuna. The gathering looked aghast on seeing the spurious Brahmin winning the hand of Draupadi. Her shapeless inward aspiration was realized though she was not yet conscious of it. The imperious Drupada might have experienced tremors of disappointment at the culmination of the affair. The string puller behind the stage of the

The Bhagawad Geeta is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of
the Perennial Philosophy. - Aldous Huxley

world was the invisible omniscient Sri Krishna. He is the undisputed Cause of both good and bad. As cause he is imperceptible but as effect he is experienced and enjoyed. He is the rightful progenitor – sustainer of the apparent and the absolute. He is the propounder of Vedanta as world religion spreading its mammoth wings amply between ether and earth leaving no vacuum.

The time for the acid test of the mettle of Draupadi came. She had to shift from princely palace to plebian hutments of poor Brahmins. Plenty to penury, prosperity to adversity a queer somersault for Draupadi in her early prime strangely enough she had to share herself with five destitute brothers bereft of shelter and means. They were under straightened circumstances and the prospect of prosperity was remote. The fundamental issue staring her in the face was how to allocate herself to be integral part of the family dividing her personal and filial life in such a way that fairly meets the needs and humours of the five husbands. Harmony in family reigns high in the light of order or priorities she had to choose. At no hour family calm should be in jeopardy.

Kunti the aged and noble mother of Pandavas who passed through a chequered life surmounting hazardous and arduous odds was her mother-in-law. Both were targets of misfortunes and favorites of precarious circumstances keeping ceaseless vigil for dawn of happy days.

Narada the tireless globe-trotter-roaming ambassador of kingdom of heaven dropped on the scene. His wont was advancing advices unasked. His insight guided him to dish out his own type of advice to solve amicably the embarrassing dilemma. Draupadi was profoundly perplexed. The devil-may-care sort of her heart was on the brink of breaking. The divine minstrel cum messenger thought fit, correct and apt, to tender advice to perplexed Draupadi to live at the rate of a year with each husband. System of rotation was adopted. She, an angel and uncommon practitioner of lofty equanimity bowed to the dictate of destiny and lived to be the undying beacon light of humankind. Mother India. Draupadi is an ever luminous gem in your diadem!

(To be continued)

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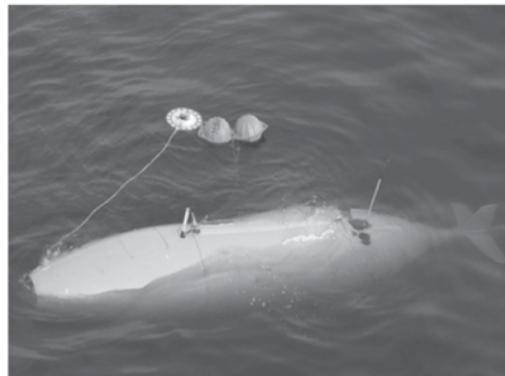
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