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# TRIVENI

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INDIA'S LITERARY AND CULTURAL QUARTERLY



Vol: 87

APR.-JUN. 2018

No. 2

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# TRIVENI

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## TRIPLE STREAM

### ABHIGNANASAKUNTALAM

kavyeshu natakam ramyam  
natakeshu sakuntalam

D. Ranga Rao\*

Kalidasa the author of *abhignana sakuntalam* is considered the guru of the fraternity of poets in the Indian context. In the post-Vedic Indian polity Kalidasa takes his place with Valmiki and Vyasa for his aesthetic and artistic excellence. Details about this eminent poet are not available in record. The father of Greek philosophy, Socrates, is known through the works of his disciples Plato and Aristotle but Kalidasa is surmised only through his works.

One can guess that he must have been an impressive personality, a scholarly and a social figure deeply read in ancient literary lore, the *Vedas*, *sastras*, systems of philosophy, *puranas*, erotics, ethics and the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. He must have been a devotee of Lord Siva who also worshipped Lord Vishnu with equal fervour. He was certainly a votary of beauty and a lover of nature, possessing a clear knowledge of the social, political and religious conventions as well as the geography of vast areas of the kingdom and the country in which he lived, perhaps during 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Common Era. Kalidasa represents the culture and depicts

the grandeur of the life of his times in his work.

Legendary personalities of whom not much is known have interesting stories attributed to them. It is said that Kalidasa was a dunce and an illiterate but won the blessings of Goddess Kali whom he worshipped with deep devotion and emerged as a scholar and poet. Hence his name Kalidasa, the servant of Kali.

Scholar critics say that Kalidasa's literary output was great but the common understanding is that he wrote two long poems (*kavyas*) *raghuvamsam* and *kumarasambhavam*, two short poems *meghasandesam* and *ruthusamharam* and the three plays *vikramorvasiyam*, *malavikagnimitram* and *abhignana sakuntalam*. Of the three plays our focus is on *abhignanasakuntalam* considered the greatest Sanskrit drama that made a mark in the sphere of world drama as an unmatched literary marvel.

Sanskrit plays were in vogue before 500 B.C. This makes them the oldest in world literature. Drama had evolved as a popular form of public entertainment to all

classes of spectators, high and low alike by the time Kalidasa appeared on the scene. The spectators were multilingual and followed easily Sanskrit and Prakrit used on the stage by the players and drama provided intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment to the people. Bharata Muni's *natyasastra* had laid down the conventions to be followed in the art of dramatics, *natya* meaning both dance and drama. Bharata said that drama provides the much needed rest and relief to the spectators. Kalidasa followed in his plays the rules laid down by Bharata.

### **The story in brief:**

Preamble: Indra, the God of Heaven, dispatches the ravishingly beautiful celestial dancer Menaka to disrupt the severe penance undertaken by maharshi Viswamitra against him. Menaka succeeds in her mission and also presents the sage with a baby girl whom she leaves in the ashram of rishi Kanva before leaving for her celestial abode. Rishi Kanva finds the baby girl, names her Sakuntala and rears her in his ashram with fatherly love.

The play runs into seven cantos. The place of action is earth, sky and heaven. The hero is Dushyanta, the Pourava king who has all the attributes a hero and king should possess. The heroine is Sakuntala the most beautiful and innocent daughter of the celestial damsel Menaka and sage Viswamitra. Dushyanta in his hunting spree visits the ashram of rishi Kanva in his

absence and meets Sakuntala. They fall in love at first sight. The king marries Sakuntala in the *gandharva* tradition and they spend a happy time together. The king leaves for his kingdom promising to take her to his palace at the appropriate time giving her his bejewelled signet ring with his name carved on it as his memento.

Durvasa mahamuni, the very personification of anger, visits Kanva's ashram. Sakuntala who is lost in longing thoughts of her lover fails to attend on Durvasa and honour him. Durvasa curses that the man who loves her will forget her. But on request for redemption he says that the man would recognize her on seeing any object left behind by him.

Kanva returns to his ashram, learns what transpired in his absence, blesses Sakuntala who is with child and decides to send her to her husband. Sakuntala sets out with her maids but loses the signet ring which slips from her finger into the river they were crossing.

The king fails to recognize her when she meets him in his palace, rejects to take her as his wife and orders her to leave the palace as Sakuntala fails to confront him with his signet ring. Now the most unexpected thing happens. A ray of light in the form of a woman carries away Sakuntala to the mountain in space, where maharshi Maarecha has his ashram. Sakuntala gives birth to a baby boy who is named Bharata.

In the meanwhile the signet ring lost by Sakuntala is recovered by a fisherman from the belly of a fish he had caught. The news reaches the king and the fisherman is taken to the king with the ring. King Dushyanta looks at the ring, recollects the past and repents whole-heartedly for rejecting his wife. But he does not know the whereabouts of his wife Sakuntala.

Dushyanta who is close to the God of Heaven Indra, goes to help him in a war against *rakshasas*, completes his mission and in his journey back to earth decides to spend some time in the ashram of maharshi Maarecha situated midway on a mountain. There he sees the boy Bharata, well built and strong for his age who resembles himself in features. He learns that he is the son of Sakuntala who is present in the ashram under the care of maharshi Maarecha. He meets Sakuntala, expresses his deep agony at their separation, repents for his earlier act of rejection and seeks Sakuntala's forgiveness. The play ends happily as Sanskrit drama cannot end in a tragedy. Maarecha blesses the king to rule his kingdom with peace and plenty for hundreds of years. All is well that ends well as Sakuntala is recognized by Dushyanta.

Kalidasa borrowed the story from Vyasa's *Mahabharata* and improved upon the original by introducing his innovation of the signet ring and the curse of Durvasa which pep up the tempo of the play and elevate the dramatic effect making Dushyanta's character blemishless.

The dramatist establishes the hero as one who follows *dharma* and the heroine as the best specimen of womanhood, while making the play a 'love idyll' which theme gained international appreciation.

Keeping in tune with the tradition, the play projects *sringara* and *veera rasas* which are characteristic of Sanskrit drama of the day. Kalidasa makes the play more impressive by making *karuna rasa* and *hasya rasa* also a part of the narrative through Kanva and the king's companion the Vidushaka.

Kalidasa's style is graceful, lucid and pleasing with no bombast. His prose is as racy as his poetry. The superb picturesque descriptions of nature and his handling of romantic passion are the other highlights.

Another characteristic of Kalidasa is his abundant use of similes, truthful and realistic which make his narration pleasing. The style adopted by Kalidasa creates happy and pleasant sensations.

There is something more than supernatural in his play which we can call celestial supernaturality. The poet introduces divine beings who appear and disappear helping the narration move forward. Certain incidents that cannot be acted on the stage are narrated by characters in their conversation, some from behind the stage, thus keeping the continuity of action. Sakuntala, the ashramite, expresses her thoughts mostly through 'asides' and are rendered in Prakrit while Dushyanta, the

king speaks directly in Sanskrit, again a typical trait of Sanskrit drama.

This classic play of epic dimensions upholds the ideal of *dharmā*, traditions, cultured and upright behaviour and a deep sense of devotion to God and such virtues which the hero, the heroine and other characters display in an exemplary manner.

It is said that the taste of the pudding is in its eating. One should read *abhignanasakuntalam* at least in a translation to know why the play enjoys international reputation.

Sir William Jones, the Indologist, translated the play into English. This version was translated into German. Goethe, the German poet is said to have gone into raptures at the magnificence of the play after reading it, extolling the genius of the dramatist.

This epic drama has a special significance to us because the child Bharata, the son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala was to be the ancestor of **Bharatavarsha**, India, whose descendents we are.

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## COOL SHADES: THOUGHTS SUBLIME

M.G.Narasimha Murthy\*

Brilliant sunshine on trees in bloom  
On the majestic mountain slope  
And the sparkling, sprawling lake -  
A vast mirror to the bright blue sky  
And the gliding clouds, snowy white -  
An exhilarating, heavenly sight!  
Strolling happily under lush green trees  
Along the side of the glistening lake  
Charmed by the enchanting scene,  
Deep in my heart, I keenly felt  
A saintly poet's unseen presence

And remembered his mystic experience  
Of that "serene and blessed mood  
In which the affections gently lead us on  
Until the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things." -  
An endless echo of ancient yogis' voice,  
Revealing the ecstasy of communion  
With the mysterious, divine presence  
That pervades the splendid universe.

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\* Principal (Retd.), Hyderabad

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**EXTRACTS FROM  
THE FIRST TRIVENI ENDOWMENT LECTURE - 2018  
A Tribute to the memory of Late Sri I V Chalapati Rao**

**ETHICS AND VALUES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**(Delivered by Shri M.Gopalakrishna, IAS (Retd.) on 25th April 2018 at  
Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad)**

The first Triveni Endowment Lecture on Ethics and Values for National Development is a befitting tribute to the memory of Shri Chalapathi Rao and doubly blessed as it is presided over by Swami Jnanadanandaji, President of R K Math. The subject is of enduring relevance as a link between the past and the present and inspiration to create a better future for our country.

**India - A country and a nation:**

India is a sub-continent and territorial entity. It is an ancient country but a young nation. A country is a territorial area united by geography, social, economic, political structural and cultural coherence. A nation is the large group or groups of people residing in a country and united by common descent, language(s), religion(s), ethnicity(s), history(s), culture(s), tradition(s), consent, consensus and united in thought, word, belief, values, culture and collective action. Such a multi-linguistic, multi-religious, multi-racial, diverse, pluralistic cultural entity is India which is known variously as Hindustan, Indes,

Indon, India and Bharat and as the land beyond the river Sindhu.

A country, the nation and its people are usually considered synonymous. A nation has a specific identity which is a combination of its history, geography, geology, its religions and its people with their ethics and value systems and way of life. It is also a cultural concept of what other people and nations think of India and what Indians think about their country themselves and other countries, nations and people.

Geologically India is one of the oldest parts of the globe, the Gondwana land mass, which later drifted and became India, Australia and Africa. The Deccan Plateau is home to some of the oldest rock formations of the world.

Geographically, India is a peninsula surrounded by three seas. India is referred to as *Asethu Himachalam* land stretching from the Himalayas to the seas. Our National Anthem(s) *Vande Matharam*" and

"*Jana Gana Mana* proudly mention about the land, rivers, waters, regions, crops, people and culture of India. Indians consider India as Mother and motherland and superior even to Heaven! *Matha, Matrubhumischa, swargadapi gariyasi.*

Historically, India has had an unbroken culture and civilization of over 5000 years, starting from the Pre-historic era, the Harappan Civilisation, Vedic period and the unbroken continuity till date.

Culturally, its influence spread all over the world as the land of Knowledge due to its reputed seats of learning like Nalanda, Nagarjuna and Takshashila Universities. Its scientific, religious and cultural pursuits and achievements were the envy of other nations. Its philosophy, culture and way of life was carried by itinerant preachers from India and visitors to India from all parts of the world. Its diversity, spirit of religious tolerance, hospitality, openness, spiritual knowledge, harmonious economic growth and peaceful co-existence with its neighbours was the envy of the world. It nurtured Kingdoms, and some of the earliest democratic and republican societies. It accepted all faiths from Animism to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions from all over the world. It traded globally and was a commercial haven for Arab traders. Early Christian missionaries like St. Thomas and the Syrian orthodox church took root in India much before it spread elsewhere. Parsis from Iran sought refuge and settled in India. In recent

times, ideologies of Democracy, Socialism, Secularism, Communism and Marxism have also taken root.

India's cultural influence was widespread as *Brihath Bharath* all over South East Asia, Tibet, parts of China and large tracts up to Afghanistan and Central Asia, primarily due to Sanskrit, Pali and Brahmi texts on religion. It gave the concept of Zero, Vedic mathematics and Astronomy to the world and exported Yoga, martial arts and the way of life. Sanskrit was developed as a refined language with its own grammar and syntax. Hinduism and Buddhism spread all over the world from India.

India's trade was spearheaded by merchants from the East Coast during the rule of Cholas, Pallavas and Kalingas to most of South-east Asia. Trade with Rome and Middle East and China flourished as evidenced by archaeological finds, artifacts and coins. India's built heritage or its influence is visible in AngkorVat in Cambodia. Its living heritage is seen in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Laos, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, China and other countries. The Namaste greeting, names and religious beliefs and stories of Ramayana and Maha Bharata and their influence on language, dress, and culture in many countries are signs of India's cultural influence through amity and unity.

Students from all over the world flocked to India for education, professional skills or religious instruction. India

exported spices, silks, ideas and scholars and imported gold in the past. Today, Indian scholars migrate to advanced countries for study! The nature of trade may be changing, but the exchange of knowledge and technology continues between the East and the West.

India's lasting contribution to the world are its spirit of 'humanity', pluralism, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, peaceful co-existence and assimilation driven by its idealist concepts of *Ano Bhadra Krithavo Yanthu Visawatah* or "Let noble thoughts come to us from all parts of the world" and *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* that "the world is but one family". India believes that tolerance is culture, *Sahanam eva Sanskruthi*.

The world has shrunk with better communications while technology has led to the death of time and distance. We were slow in adopting the earlier three Industrial Revolutions. We are now on the threshold of the Fourth Industrial revolution of Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Frontier sciences, Space voyages, 3 D Printing, genetics and the like and cannot afford to miss it. Meanwhile, nations have moved from dependence to independence to inter-dependence and now to Internet-dependence! Local, Regional and National is now merging into International. Local events anywhere have an impact everywhere in the world. Local has truly become global! Nations have to now become more global in outlook while being local, focal and where necessary Vocal!

Up till the 1750s, India was a prosperous nation. In 1830, it accounted for 23% of the then World's GDP while China accounted for 25%. The British rule of 200 years impoverished the country. Only after Independence, has India come into its own. It needs to now go fast-forward to fulfill its destiny and provide for its citizens, rapid economic development and prosperity.

### **India, a potential Power House:**

India is the largest democracy of the world and the second most populous country with a large demand for goods and services and greater potential for higher growth. It is the fifth largest economy of the world and poised to become the third largest. People below the age of 35 in India constitute more than half the population. This ensures for India, a thirty year "window of opportunity" amidst the world's ageing population. We have to gainfully utilize our human capital to fill the skill gaps between our levels and that of the world in terms of Knowledge, Technology, Strategy, Performance, Productivity, Competitiveness, Credibility and Leadership. This involves development of Intellectual, Organizational, Commercial and Social capital.

India's strengths as a Nation are its democracy, its demography, its diversity, its diaspora and its growing demand for goods, services and technology. Its worldwide diaspora are the source of ideas, investments, innovations, technology, start-ups, and managerial expertise. Its demand,

both present and potential has to be more effectively utilized to leverage its growth. We have to skill, re-skill and up-skill our population. However what is lacking is Discipline and sharper focus on our goals and measures to accelerate action in a time bound manner.

The bane of India's progress is crime, corruption, communalism and casteism, and atrocities on women and dalits. Even more disturbing is the nexus between corruption and crime and the links between politicians and criminals! In popular parlance, we have to break the chain of corruption of Neta, Dada, Lala, Baba, Bibi, Jhola, Haftha, Mamool and the like. Corruption arises due to wrongful use, abuse and misuse of authority for personal gain. We have to make corruption which is now a "Low risk-High return" game to a "High risks - No Return" and pain and prison game. W.Gladstone as Prime Minister of England said "it is the responsibility of a leader to make it easy for people to do good and make it difficult to do bad". This is required to eliminate corruption! It also requires political will, administrative skills and public goodwill.

Our drawbacks are the lack of character, commitment, courage and conviction that with Concerted action we can create our own destiny and build a great future for our country.

The policy and agenda of the country must be National Development

which provides for universal welfare of the people by elimination of poverty. We must provide equal opportunities by way of quality education, including vocational and futuristic digital skills, Better Health, Housing, Roads, Ports, Water, Transportation, Infrastructure and Services to help citizens to lead happy lives. We have to rise in the rating of the Human Development Index and move towards the "Happiness Index" in line with India's ethics and values. Happiness comes when people like and enjoy doing what they are doing for their own progress and that of the Country.

### **Governance:**

Governance comes from the French word *Gubernare* which means rule, but with the consent and consensus of the ruled. Governance is the higher form and standard of administration. It is the role of the captain of a ship who is steering and not that of the oarsmen rowing the ship. The Captain is responsible to set the direction and take the ship speedily and safely to its destination. Governance is the compass that sets the direction and the clock that sets the pace of progress. Governance requires understanding of personal and public good to steer the country. Gita advises Indians to be *Satvik* in outlook and *Rajasik* in action for good governance. *Pravrittincha Nivrittincha*.

Government is the instrumentality through which Governance is delivered. Our government is emphasizing "Minimum

government and Maximum governance". It is said that "if you have good people, you will have good governance". The delivery of good Governance requires an effective and honest Government which is expected to be "SMART" i.e. Simple, Moral, Accountable, Reliable, Responsive and Transparent. Good ethics, morals and values means good administration and business. A Government and business without ethics is a Government and business at risk!.

Governance has three major actors, the State, the Market and Civil Society. The State is the country or nation and Government. Market is trade and commerce both internal and external and Civil Society comprises the citizens, media and non-government organizations.

### **Governance in India in the past:**

The *Vedas* are among the earliest records of mankind. *Vid* means to know, to listen and to learn. The Upanishads represent the quintessence of the *Vedas*, while *Vedanta* explains the purpose and end result of all spiritual endeavour. *Vedas* are not a compilation by an individual but the distilled wisdom of mankind. While *Vedas* prescribed the standards, and leaders practiced them, the *Rishis* and Rulers were expected to honour, maintain and continue the traditions and co-relate them to ground realities.

he four- fold path prescribed for people in the *Smriti* was to follow

*Shruthi* or the *Vedas*. *Smriti*, remember the *Ithihasas* and *Puranas*, practice 'Sadachara' or good conduct and follow ethical practices and lastly *Swasyacha priyam Atmana* or act in accordance with the shrill voice of one's own conscience , the final judge.

Our scriptures like *Ramayana* noted that India comprises of 'peoples' of different races, languages and cultures and needs to be governed and welfare assured in a "just" and "equitable" manner, *nyayena margena paripalayantham* and provide for security of life of not only men; but also animals and wild beasts. The state must deploy the services of intellectuals for the proper and just administration of the country.

### **Governance and Public Leaders:**

People are exhorted to become leaders and not followers! But "Unless one is a good Leader, he cannot secure followers". It is said "To obey is to learn to command". Governance requires people to understand that "means are as important as the ends to achieve our goals". Albert Einstein, the scientist remarked that in the modern world, 'there is perfection of the means but confusion of the ends'. We need clarity of both the means and ends.

In the context of falling standards of Governance and public service, Britain set up the Lord Nolan and Neill Q C Committee in 1997 to examine the requirements of leadership and the conduct

and character expected of a public leader and a public servant. The Committee recommended that all public leaders and public servants have to develop and follow the essential qualities of Selflessness, Integrity, Openness, Accountability, Honesty, Objectivity and Leadership. India must actively cultivate these qualities amongst public leaders and public servants for good Governance and fulfillment of Citizens Charters.

### **Vision:**

India must develop a national Vision with a perspective for the next fifty years or a two generational Plan. A vision needs many Missions which require Action. But it is the national Passion alone that can drive and sustain the Action. Such action must also have elements of compassion, dispassion and secure unity of people' thoughts and action.

India has always believed that Vision or *Kalpana* must be backed by *Sankalpana* or determination, followed by *Parikalpana* or a sound Plan of Action and *Rupakalpana* or building the country and its image and *Karya Nirvahana* or doing sincere work and *Karya Sadhana* or the achievement of the goal. Towards this end, the elders have to guide and youth must become growth engines and drivers of progress who propel the country in the fast forward mode to its rightful destiny and make India a beacon light for the world.

### **The Gita's Upadesa:**

The Bhagavad Gita is the Lord's

own song and sermon delivered through a process of dialogue and conversation *Sambodhana Boditham*. It says that the leader has to set high standards, and follow those standards so that common people may emulate them. A Leader has to exemplify and simplify matters. He has to be Kingly outside and Saintly inside. A king has to be actively calm and calmly active. Albert Einstein when asked about his concept of leadership, said "A leader is one who sees simplicity in complexity, opportunity in difficulty and harmony in discord".

The Gita says that a leader has to be a Thinker and Doer. A leader must have equanimity of mind *Samatvam Yoga Uchyate* and that Yoga is linking thought and action, leading to efficiency and effectiveness in the work i.e. *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*. The last verse in the Gita says that when Yogeshwara Krishna i.e. Lord Krishna as Yogi, the thinker, joins hands with Arjuna, the ready archer, decisive action will take place and lead to assured victory, firm policy, wealth and success. Our focus and action combined with Lords blessings is required to secure victory.

### **ETHICS, MORALS AND VALUES:**

#### **Ethics:**

*Ethos* is a Greek word denoting spirit. It is akin to the Indian concept of life-force or *Prana* or *Swasa*. The practice of ethos is ethikos which becomes a habit in course of time. Ethos is the spirit of the

individual, family, society, country or nation which influences the way the people and organizations think, do, act or react. Ethics includes morals and moral principles which pervade all walks of life. It is society's mechanism of self-regulation to maintain order and good relationships in a society. It is universal in nature and is the unwritten law which people voluntarily comply with. Good conduct and Goodness expected by society is Society's ethos. The Greek motto is *Logos, Pathos and Ethos* or every act must be done with logic and passion which must be tempered by ethos.

### **Morals:**

Morals enable us to distinguish between Right and Wrong, Good and Bad, Virtue and Vice. Ethos is moralistic. Morals teach us that man must grow from 'Selfishness' to 'Unselfishness' to 'Selflessness' i.e. from *Swartha* to *Niswartha* to *Aswartha*!. The nation requires citizens to move from *Swahitha* to *Swa janahitha*, *Anya janahitha*, *Alpa Jana Hitha*, *Bahujana Hitha* and *Sarva Jana Hitha*.

The simple test to decide what is moral and what is not is that if a person does something and feels good about it, it is moral. If he does something and feels bad about it, it may not be moral. All unselfish acts are considered as moral acts. Morals help us to bring about unity in our thought, word and deed. i.e. *Manasa*, *Vacha*, *Karmana*. Morals represent goodness. No wonder, mothers teach

children to learn to "Do Good, Be Good and Feel Good". A famous quote on Governance is "There is more to Governance than Governance" which refers to the moral principles and actions that are important in Governance.

### **Values:**

Value is an enduring system of belief or faith which one follows. It is a personal code of conduct and the preferred behaviour which is expected in a society. Values enable us to "Live, Let live and Help live". It also tells us "to do unto others what you expect them to do unto you". Values are anchors in difficult situations and help you to remain stable and calm during difficult and turbulent times. Good values help in building "Character" and good conduct. All religions lay emphasis on the importance of Character and Values. We have Indian values and Universal values. Important Indian Values are *Satya*, *Dharma*, *Shanti*, *Ahimsa*, *Prema*, *Nyaya*, *Gnana*, *Daya*, *Dama* or Control of ego, *Dana* or Charity, *Yagna* or sacrifice and *Samathva* or Harmony. Almost all Indian values are accepted as Universal values showing the validity of our concepts and practices. Albert Einstein, the eminent scientist said "Try not to become a person of success; but rather try to become a person of value"

### ***Dharma* or Righteousness:**

In India, *Dharma* is considered the eternal or universal law. The nearest equivalent in English is probably Righteousness. *Dharma*

is defined as *Dharmo Dharayathi Ithyahu* i.e. *Dharma* upholds order in the society and *Dharmo darayathi Prajah* that which brings people together and binds them. *Dharma* is *Swayam-Bhuva* or self-born for societal welfare. The King and his laws and orders have to conform to *Dharma*. A popular saying is *Dharmo Rakshathi Rakshithah, Hathova Hanthi* i.e. *Dharma* if protected, protects - *Dharma* if killed, kills. In India, all laws have to conform to provisions of the Constitution of India and *Dharma* as decided by the ethos and conscience of the Judges.

The students must remember the Upanishadic exhortation, of Swami Vivekananda, "Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached". To reach that goal, the students will have to do their Home work, Hard work, Smart work, Team work and build a Network and know never forget that it is sincere work that achieves our aims and objectives.

I would like to conclude my talk

with the stirring message of the convocation address delivered 7000 years ago, to the outgoing graduates by the Kulapathi of Takshashila University, with the mantra of *Asma Bhava - Parashu Bhavax*. Be as strong as a rock in your Determination and be as sharp as the edge of the Battle axe in intellect. And if the edge gets blunted, go back to the hard rock of your determination and hone it to the same sharpness so that we can fight one more battle and win the war of life! Let these two thoughts be the golden weapons of India, our motherland, Bharat.

Let me conclude by thanking the learned audience, the Sabha, for the patient hearing and conclude by echoing your feelings that India will strive to fulfill the timeless prayer

*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,  
Sarve santu nira mayaah,  
Sarve bhadrani pasyantu  
Ma kaschid dukhabhaga bhaveth*

*Lokah Samastha - Sukhino Bhavantu*

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Let us remember we are all part of one American family. We are united in common values, and that includes belief in equality under the law, basic respect for public order, and the right of peaceful protest.

Barack Obama

## **ECO-SENSITIVITY FOR PLANETARY WELLNESS: LESSONS FROM THE VEDAS**

**Tutun Mukherjee\***

Sensitivity regarding ecology and environment has been steadily growing through the last century and has very rightly captured global attention. Several man-made disasters in recent times have shaken the general indifference and apathy towards our surroundings and have alerted us to the irreparable damage that our callous indifference caused to ecological balance. The selfish and greedy exploitation of Nature has wrecked the environment to such an extent that unless urgent corrective steps are taken, the living conditions for our future generations would be irreparably harmed. The serious concern regarding contemporary state of environment that must be emphasized is the need to uplift and nurture the bond between Nature and humans for global welfare and wellness. In recent years, nations of the world gathered to discuss the serious implications of the increasing carbon footprint accelerating global warming and to ponder upon the best efforts to collectively arrest the impact. In fact, scientists have declared that from the last century we are witnessing "massive extinction event" when species are disappearing rapidly and natural

resources are getting depleted at an appalling scale. Whatever corrective steps are taken, at least three aspects must be factored in: first, there must be legislation to govern human activity and accountability; second, wide-ranging education about the steps to be followed to care for the environment; third, inculcation of ethical awareness about the integral connection between the health of ecology and environment with human well-being and the collective and shared responsibility for conservation at both macro and micro levels.

Such concern about environment does not however mean that ecological awareness was absent in human culture earlier. Indeed, in their very first expression, humans celebrated Nature. All ancient cultures provide evidence of this. Literary expression from ancient India can be cited as exemplary texts of eco-sensitivity and ethical understanding about human responsibility towards the sustenance of the environment. For instance, the earliest texts of India, the Vedas abound in hymns and sermons that uphold a holistic understanding of the universe and the cosmic order. The Vedas are written in rich symbolic language in poetic form that can be understood in

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multiple ways. The fundamental belief propagated by the *Vedas* is that Spirit or the energy of life is continuous and journeys through many embodiments. This underscores the concept of 'change' that is caused by the ever-volatile energy permeating the universe which is inevitably reflected in the human world. Such cosmocentric view of life put forth in the *Vedas* explains the cyclic and rhythmic order of creation and destruction, and the passage of energy from organism to organism. The *Vedas* suggest ways to attune one's inner soul, thought, behavior and activities to the eternal laws of the universe to promote and foster harmony and peaceful co-existence among all living forms - encompassing the human and animal worlds and including plants, trees and water bodies. Hence, according to the lessons of the *Vedas*, the presumption about human domination over the natural world is fallacious. What must be understood is that the natural environment does not belong to humans alone. Humans only partake of its bounty as do all other creatures and eventually must return to Nature what they have taken from it.

In the 1970s, chemist James Lovelock formulated the Gaia Theory proposing that organisms on Earth interact with their inorganic surroundings to form a synergistic self-regulating and complex system that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on the planet. Based on homeostatic processes, the theory suggests an integral relationship between

the biosphere and various aspects of natural phenomena like global temperature, ocean salinity, oxygen in the atmosphere, hydrosphere of liquid water and other environmental variables that influence the evolution of life forms and the habitability of Earth. 'Gaia' is another name for Earth-Mother who is addressed by various names in different cultures. Gaia is associated with the Greek myths of the origin of the world and in the words of Aeschylus: "First in my prayer, before all other deities, I call upon Gaia, Primeval Prophetess...The Greek great earth mother." Lovelock defined Gaia as "a complex entity involving Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet" The theory was further developed and fine-tuned by microbiologist Lynn Margulis. Initially the Gaia Theory was severely criticized for being teleological and contradicting principles of natural selection. But over the years the theory has gained wide acceptance. In the present century, the theory is being considered foundational to the study of Earth System Science. In his 2006 book *The Revenge of Gaia*, James Lovelock writes, "If you take the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predictions, then by 2040 every summer in Europe will be as hot as it was in 2003 - between 110F and 120F. It is not the death of people that is the main problem, it is the fact that the plants can't grow, there will be almost no food grown in Europe....We are to take an evolutionary

step and hope that the species will emerge stronger. It would be hubris to think humans as they now are as God's chosen race" (Daily Mail 22 March 2008 "We're all doomed!"). The Gaia Theory seems to recall the lessons of the *Vedas*.

The philosophy of the *Vedas* governs the life of a Hindu who venerates the elements, the water bodies, the forests and vegetation, and all animals as partaking of the divine essence of the universe believing that everything in the world has life in it whether human or non-human. A point to remember before proceeding further on this path is that to have faith in the Vedas would necessarily mean having faith in divinity and divine intervention. Sadly, so-called "modern" thinking tends to dismiss such world-view and practice as pantheism or even primitivism, when actually the realization of oneness of all living entities of the earth leads towards a holistic and interlinked concept of our environment. The Vedas have been called pantheistic because the teachings focus on the deification and worship of the different aspects of Nature, like the terrestrial gods Prithvi, Agni, Brihaspati, and Soma; the gods of the atmosphere like Indra, Rudra, Maruts, Vayu and Parjanya; and the celestial gods like Dyaus, Varuna, Ushas and Asvins and so on. The basic concept is that the five great elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) that constitute the environment are all derived from *Prakriti* or the primal energy that permeates all life forms. Each of these elements has its own manifestation

but they are all interlinked and interdependent. The *Vedas* refer to the protection of the *dyaus* (heavens) and *prithvi* (earth) together as interconnected spheres for comprehensive wellness. This awareness promotes environmental protection, ecological balance, and sustenance of weather cycles, rainfall and the hydrologic cycle. The holistic or what is often described as a cosmocentric view of life propounded by the *Vedas* explains the cyclic and rhythmic order of creation and destruction and the passage of energy from organism to organism.

The four major *Vedas* -- *Rig*, *Yajur Sama*, *Atharva* describe the environment in an integrally linked manner and reveres each of its constituents for careful systemic preservation. The Rig Veda, for example, venerates Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Maruts and Aditya as the powers responsible for maintaining the requisite balance in the functioning of all entities of Nature whether the mountains, lakes, heaven and earth, the forests or the waters. It describes the protective layer -- known to us now as the ozone layer--that filters the harmful rays of the sun and protects the earth while allowing the necessary radiation to enter the atmosphere for the sustenance of the environment. In fact, this paper was motivated by the current global media alert regarding sudden solar flares that could hit the earth around 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 as solar storm [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-5494489/Huge-solar-storm-set-slam-Earth-TOMORROW.html>].

The wisdom of the *Vedas* anticipated such phenomena and Rig Veda seers prayed to the Ashvins, the twin sons of *Surya* (sun), for protection against any excessive solar flares that could affect earth's temperature and also suggested possible mitigating practices to be followed, prayers and oblation were not the least among them. The Vedic prayers invoke divine intervention to bless and protect the environment. The Rig Veda seer's Hymn CLXXXV for 'Heaven and Earth' says:

... I call for Aditi's unrivalled bounty, perfect, celestial, deathless, meet for worship.

Produce this, ye Twain Worlds, for him who lauds you.

Protect us, Heaven and Earth, from fearful danger. ...

(Tr. Ralph T.H. Griffith in 1896:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/rv01185.htm>).

There are many hymns seeking the blessings of the five basic gross elements or the *pancha mahabhoota* of Nature which are: *akash/vyom* or firmament or space, *vayu* or air, *agni* and *tejas* or fire, *apah* or water, and *prithvi* or earth. The *Veda samhitas* (mantras, hymns, prayers, litanies and benedictions) abound in addresses to each of the entities in addition to prayers to Indra, Varuna, Soma, Vishnu and so on. It is evident that the people in earlier times were careful to refrain from activities that could cause harm to Nature's bounties. It was understood that the well-being of

Mother Earth was dependant on the preservation and nurture of ecology and environment. The seers prayed for forgiveness for any inadvertent action leading to earth's excessive exploitation as exemplified in the verse below:

Whatever I dig from thee, O Earth, may that have quick recovery again.

O purifier, may we not injure thy vitals or thy heart.

The Rig Veda seeks to look at every aspect of Nature with the eyes of a friend and sympathiser: *mitrasyaaham chakshushaa sarvaani bhootaani sameekshe* and invoke the principle of replenishment as reciprocity: "You give me and I give you."

In praise of food, the Rig Veda seer sings in Hymn CLXXXVII

In thee, O Food, is set the spirit of great Gods.

Under thy flag brave deeds were done he slew the Dragon with thy help.

If thou be gone unto the splendour of the clouds,

Even from thence, O Food of meath, prepared for our enjoyment, come.

Whatever morsel we consume from waters or from plants of earth,

O Soma, wax thou fat thereby.

What Soma, we enjoy from thee in milky food or barley-brew,

Vatapi, grow thou fat thereby.

O Vegetable, Cake of meal, be wholesome,

firm, and strengthening:  
 Vatapi, grow thou fat thereby....  
 (Tr. Ralph T.H. Griffith, *ibid.*)

The sacred prayers become part of the yagna and sacrificial rituals detailed in the Yajur Veda which is mostly based on the Rig Veda. The Sama Veda *samhitas* echo such thoughts.

Not only in the Vedas, but in later expositions as well such as the Upanishads, the Puranas, the *Smriti* and *Shruti* traditions and subsequent texts like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Nature and its laws have been clearly enunciated and revered. These texts are often described as the Brahmana branch of classical Indian knowledge systems. Other than the Puranas which use narrative forms to explicate complex thoughts, the others are generally poetic in appeal with rich metaphorical, metonymical and mnemonic resonance. The Upanishads expound philosophical tenets and offer intellectual and intuitive tools to explain the mystical truths of the Vedas. Drawing upon the Vedic vision of the world, the Upanishads maintain that life upon earth can be sustained only through rigorous *Satyam Brhat Ritam Ugram* or the strict adherence to Truth, Harmony and Discipline. The emphasis is on the integral connection of the various orders of life which are bound organically together to co-exist and sustain each other, and that together they express the divine. The Upanishadic sages too perceived the divine in every aspect of their surroundings and believed in the

shared source of life as Brahman, the Supreme Reality from where arises space, from space arises fire, from fire arises water, and from water arises earth.

The Puranas too abound in descriptions that emphasize the holistic view of the universe. The Vishnu Purana sees in the banyan tree as analogy for Vishnu who envelops the cosmos:

As the wide-spreading *nargodha* (banyan) tree is compressed in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is comprehended in Thee as its germ; as the *nargodha* germinates from the seed, and becomes just a shoot and then rises into loftiness, so the created world proceeds from Thee and expands into magnitude.

(<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2004/20040425/spectrum/book1.htm>)

In the *Charak Samhita*, destruction of forests is taken as destruction of the state, and reforestation an act of rebuilding the state and advancing its welfare. Protection of animals is considered a sacred duty. As the *Devi Stotra* or the Prayer to the Goddess reminds us,

So long as this land will have mountains,  
 forests and pastures  
 That long will the Earth survive,  
 Sustaining you and the coming generations.

The worship of Nature, the nurture of environment and Hinduism are so

entwined that it is quite impossible to think about one without the other. The sacred texts of Hinduism like the Vedas as well as Vedanta and other sacred texts impart ethical and environment-friendly philosophy and practice for global wellness and peace. According to the well-known Vedic scholar David Frawley, "No religion, perhaps, lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics as does Hinduism. It believes in ecological ethics... has a strong tradition of non-violence or *ahimsa*. It believes that God is present in all nature, in all creatures, and in every human being regardless of their faith or lack of it"

A reverent Hindu prays for good health and peace for all:

*Om sarvesham swastir bhavatu*

*Sarvesham shantir bhavatu*

*Sarvesham poornam bhavatu*

*Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu*

*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*

*Sarve santu niraamayah*

*Sarve bhadrani pashyant*

*Makaaschit duhkah bhaag bhavet*

(<http://www.hinduism.co.za/shanti.htm>)

Regrettably however, collective amnesia has ruptured the continuity of the traditions of ancient wisdom available in the immortal *Vedas* and other texts of Hinduism. Through the last couple of centuries, especially, several factors have combined to break the sacred bond between Nature and the human race which has aggravated callousness towards environment and has caused maximum

damage to the natural world. Most powerful motivation has been the human ambition to gain control over Nature and human greed for exploiting Nature's resources for selfish needs regardless of the concomitant loss and destruction of the ecological balance. The legacy of the past is rejected leading to progressive detachment from the matrix of nurture and recovery that fed and replenished natural resources. The unforgivable neglect of the sources of rejuvenation has compounded the destructive impact of human action upon Nature. Swami B.V. Tripurari describes the present environmental crisis as "a spiritual crisis" since "materialist paradigm has dominated the modern world for last few centuries" According to him, "The current deplorable environmental crisis demands a spiritual response" A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness is urgently required, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment to global wellness. Swami Tripurari explains what could greatly help the situation "is to regenerate and rejuvenate the basic values of Hindu culture and propagate them". Karan Singh too laments the contemporary attitude: "In our arrogance and ignorance we have destroyed the environment of this planet. We have polluted the oceans, we have made the air unbreathable, we have desecrated nature and decimated wildlife. But the Vedantic seers knew that man was not something apart from nature, and, therefore, they constantly exhort us that, while we work for own salvation, we must also work for the welfare of all beings"

(Essays on Hinduism, p 47). He elaborates the five concepts that derive from the Vedas and Vedanta: the all-pervasive Brahman; the *Atman* which resides in all beings; the concept of the human race as a global family; all religions are different paths to the same goal; one must work for the well-being of all and not only of the individual. Singh believes that only by internalizing such awareness can the human race rise above egotism and selfishness and move from greed and the darkness of ignorance towards enlightenment. We must appeal for divine intervention recalling the *Pavamana Abhyaroha* (addressed to Soma) given in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

*Asato ma sadgamaya  
Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya  
Mriityor ma amrtam gamaya!* (1.3.28).

Lead me from falsehood to truth,  
Lead me from darkness to light,  
Lead me from death to the immortality

Current ecological and  
environmental crises and concerns demand

that learning and wisdom of the sacred texts are revived to create intense awareness to sustain earth's resources for a shared global future. Scientist-philosophers like Lovelock and Margulis appear to reach out to such founts of ancient wisdom to formulate their theories. All those with foresight agree that the earth is ours to protect and sustain and keep safe to ensure a happy future for humankind. Only such ethical knowledge can make peace prevail upon earth. The sublime hymn from *Brihadaryanaka Upanishad* illustrates such a planetary concern, the invocation of which indicates the path of ecological recovery and says:

We invoke and imbibe *Aum*, the primordial sound of cosmic harmony

And pray:

May peace radiate in the whole sky as in the vast ethereal space.

May peace reign over earth, in water, in all herbs, trees and plants

May peace flow over the entire universe.

May peace be in the Supreme Being *Brahman*.

May all exist in peace and peace alone.

May peace prevail.

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A democracy which makes or even effectively prepares for modern, scientific war must necessarily cease to be democratic. No country can be really well prepared for modern war unless it is governed by a tyrant, at the head of a highly trained and perfectly obedient bureaucracy.

- Aldous Huxley

## SISTER NIVEDITA (1867-1911), THE SISTER FOREVER A RE-EVALUATION

Dr. Dilip Kumar Chatterjee\*

It is worth remembering on the occasion of one hundred and fifty years' birth anniversary of Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) that even before her arrival in India a good many Irish missionaries came to work in our country at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. But what is striking to note in the case of Miss Margaret Noble's arrival in India is that she strayed from the official routes. Not only that she also considered her travel to India as the travel of a pilgrim. Unlike other westerners she embraced Indian culture instead of attempting to merely transform it along the lines of imperial culture.

Being independent, educated and rebellious against colonial oppression since her upbringing in Northern Ireland, she mingled the Indian and Irish in her approach to the nascent national struggle of Ireland as well as India which she later adopted as her spiritual home. It is for India that she sacrificed her own home, her own religion even her own promising career.

Her meeting with Swami Vivekananda in England at Isabella Margession's residence in 1895 was a historical event and it had a far reaching impact not only on herself but also on the Indian Awakening in the beginning of the twentieth century. Swamiji's electrifying message of practical *Vedanta* and freedom, purity and fearlessness and above all manliness was something she had been aspiring to listen since the inception of her teaching career. Obviously, contemporary Christian leaders and their Sectarian approach and stale speeches did not satisfy her. She was in fact, searching for an alternative. Right at this critical phase of her career she met Swamiji who brought about a total change in her life and thought.

In her most celebrated work *The Master As I Saw Him* (1910) she unequivocally expressed her first impression of Swamiji: "I had recognised the heroic fibre of the man and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people". The lucid language and her inimitable style in conveying the essence of Swami Vivekananda's life and message make this immensely popular. This is also an invaluable document of her interaction with her Master.

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Swami Vivekananda, being a prophet, appreciated the nature of Margaret Noble's quest in the very first meeting. He was quite impressed by her inquisitive outlook. He therefore, wrote to her urging her to come to India and arguing that "India needed not a man, but a woman, a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women, especially". Swamiji's requirements were quite clear in this letter that he wrote in 1895, to Margaret that he needed someone who had "education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all Celtic blood". The "Celtic blood" was the added bonus as Colonial people had a special sympathy for Ireland's struggle for "Home Rule".

However, Margaret took three years time to take decision and at last her inner compulsion drove her to respond to her Master's call. She reached India on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1898 and on 25<sup>th</sup> March of this year Swami Vivekananda dedicated Margaret to the service of the people of India. He gave her a new name Nivedita, meaning 'the offered one'. As the Guru 'dedicated' her before the Goddess to the service of the people she became truly a 'dedicated person' and from 1898 onwards till her death on October, 13th 1911, she made an unflinching effort to do good to the people of the country.

Although she was initiated as a 'brahmacharini' of Swami Vivekananda's order of Sri Ramakrishna, a non-christian organization with religious, social and

humanitarian objectives, she never became a sannyasini retaining her lay status, and this enabled her to teach and be involved in various public issues of the time.

Swamiji believed that Nivedita's personal experience in her own country, Ireland, gave her a certain amount of authority to comment on various contemporary social and political issues of colonial India. Swamiji envisioned that Nivedita was the only woman leader who could rightly address the strain experienced in an age of colonial oppression as well as to promote the interest of a nascent nationalism in the country.

The fire of Swami Vivekananda and his most devoted disciple Nivedita found an initial response in Aurobindo Ghosh and his extremist group, Aurobindo called her *agnisikha* or the flame of fire; two of Nivedita's "Laws of Thought" aphorisms included by Aurobindo in *The Ideal of the Karmayogin* (first printed in the *Karmayogin* daily in 1910).

"As a nation, we must lead the culture of the world who is it that will sacrifice and labour and build and struggle till we have grasped and mastered our intellectual heritage? Ourselves, always ourselves".

This last quote echoes the slogan of one of Ireland's emergent political parties of the time, Sinn Fein - ourselves - which formed in 1907. One should not forget the fact that during Sri Aurobindo's detention

in connection with the Alipore Bomb case it was sister Nivedita who came forward to edit the *Karmayogin*. Being a close friend of the great anarchist Kropotkin and a supporter of the armed struggle initiated by the extremists, she at once played a pivotal role helping hundreds of revolutionaries who were Aurobindo's close associates. Aurobindo as well as Nivedita chose Kali to fire Indians into action and to arouse them out of their political stupor and lethargy.

Nivedita's political activities ran counter to the rules and regulations of the Ramkrishna Math and Mission; being a 'brahmacharini' of the Order she was not allowed to carry on her social and political activities freely. She was intelligent enough to understand her Guru's message why her master did not give her the 'Sannyasini mantra' was fairly clear to her. Particularly after the passing away of her Master in 1902, Nivedita always tried to maintain self distance from the Ramkrishna Mission.

Nivedita believed in activity and strength as well as conscious action for the freedom of India. She never forgot that her Master always stressed the need for work among the poor and the destitute "the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen". Long before Gandhiji, it was Vivekananda who raised the issue of caste and Indian untouchables. Nivedita being the most devout disciple of her guru, did her best to translate Swamiji's ideas into action and served the people irrespective of caste and creed. Her lecture tours in the main

cities of India, not only Kolkata, speaking of her hopes for Indian unity and a national awakening, her leadership in combating the dreadful plague in Kolkata in 1898 - 1899, her relief work, nursing the sick and the helpless, mobilising Swamiji's disciples spreading female education, bringing order and discipline in social and political activities, inspiring courage and energy in the Indians deserve special mention. She spearheaded the nationalist movement through the education of women, championing women's rights to education and promoting ideas of equality, help alleviating social evils.

Nivedita's contribution to India's national struggle was acknowledged by the most renowned leaders of the country, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Krishna Menon and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Nivedita also influenced the eminent Tamil poet Subrahmanian Bharathi; his well known essays on women's rights, which were "marked by a crusader's zeal," were traced to his abiding admiration for Sister Nivedita. S. Bharathi dedicated his collection of poems, *Janmabhumi* (1909), to Nivedita, saying, "She is my guru, who enabled me to realize the nobility of the ascetic life and the dignity of labouring for the Mother". The poet's regard for Sister Nivedita is recorded, in a poem entitled *Nivedita Devi*; here he compares Nivedita to the image of a sun dispelling darkness, and fire that destroys slavery. Nivedita

lived in India only for fourteen years - from 1898 to 1911. But within this short span, her life long fight against the darkness of illiteracy superstition and social evils made her a unique figure.

While re-evaluating Sister Nivedita in the twenty first century one cannot but refer to Rabindranath's Tagore's outstanding Bengali essay *Vagini Nivedita*. Here the poet significantly called Nivedita as *Lokmata* (mother of the people). It is this very word which speaks volumes of Tagore's assessment of Nivedita. She died in Darjeeling being almost isolated, unsung and uncared for. She was just forty four years old when she died. During the short span of life she lived in India, only fourteen years, what she did cannot be forgotten. She died of Tuberculosis yet she kept her inner fire burning. She had a total disregard for her own welfare and if she was offered any hospitality and help she outright rejected it. Her uncompromising asceticism is rare in history.

Mahatma Gandhi as well as Tagore both recognized this feature of Nivedita though they could not accept all her views. Her doggedness, argumentativeness and northern Irish heritage that made her distinguishingly bold and indomitable. Tagore who was out and out a *brahma* by faith could not accept Nivedita's glorification of Hinduism and her worship of Kali. Yet he did not fail to appreciate Nivedita's versatility as a writer, orator,

organizer, a die-hard social worker. Tagore acknowledged the help and co-operation he got from Nivedita who was in fact, the first translator of the poet's Bengali writings. It was Tagore who wrote a remarkable Introduction to Nivedita's outstanding work, *The Web of Indian Life* (1904). Tagore here admits the fact that no Indians could ever question her love for India.

Nivedita had always good relations with all the intellectuals of Bengal. Her organising financial support to editing the pioneering Indian Scientist Sir J.C. Bose's research findings of life in the plant is memorable. Similarly her endless endeavour to help the revolutionaries struggling behind the curtain for India's freedom endeared her to all Indians.

Sister Nivedita, as the two great men of India assessed, is not great for her Hinduism but for her noble soul; her humanity was far greater than any Indians. Her head was always held high transcending all barriers and the sandy desert of all narrowness of so called Hindu outlook. She gave leadership in all social, educational, cultural and political activities. Yet she remained as Tagore said, above and beyond any sectarianism. She did her work silently in her brief life time, performing the ideal of 'Niskam Karma' of her Master Swami Vivekananda. Are not the following words of Sister Nivedita still relevant in our country reeled under poverty, superstitions and ignorance?

"What is the value of your education if it does not help you to bring your women folk to your own level? Don't you realise that the country would never advance or prosper if one half of it is ignorant, backward and superstitious?"

Present India advanced a lot in the sphere of women's education but there is yet to be done towards the fulfilment of women's rights in every corner of our country. Sister Nivedita did her work and thus became a sister forever.

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## THE KOLAB

Debendra Kumar Bauri\*

In the middle the Kolab, feasting on this edge of the river  
Get-together of songs and dances on the other edge  
Laced with rhapsodies of ailments and weaknesses of life  
The Kolab sings in unison with the kendara of Dom Jani  
And the twirling smoke engulfs the sky  
You can smell the festivities in the burning flesh of animals.

One day Dom Jani had a village, a house there at  
And a world intertwined with the tempos of the dhemsa  
At the time of siesta were there peacocks  
Danced unfurling their green and sepia plumage  
When a dam was built on the Kolab  
He lost his house, golden crop fields and the livelihood  
Like the mayflies do lose their wings  
Since then he forgot the plough and embraced the boat

To fish on the waters of the Kolab for a living.

After he lost his wife and daughter to cholera  
Moving just one round of a wheel  
Was like moving twelve yards ahead  
Eventually the Kolab came in between his life and death  
One day while fishing  
His young son was drowned right in front of him  
Little of his stomach caused such a big tragedy  
Thenceforth, Dom Jani has hugged the Kendara  
He keeps harping, not the songs of the Kolab  
But the elegies of the tears reserved in the Kolab dam.

Translated from Odia by Pitambar Naik

Glossary

*Kendara* is a stringed instrument used by the tribal in Koraput of Odisha

*Dhemsa* is the dance of the Paraja tribe of Koraput

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\* Poet, Hyderabad

## ACCESS TO AXIS OF EDUCATION - DR. ZAKIR HUSAIN

**Dr. T. Radhakrishna Murty\***

Dr. Zakir Husain, the third President of India from 1967 to 1969, was an economist and educationist. He obtained his Ph. D. Degree on The Agricultural Economy of India from the University of Berlin in 1926. He was Vice Chancellor of Jamia Milia Islamia, National Muslim University for a period of twenty-two years and shaped it into a successful institution. Under the leadership of Gandhiji he designed the national policy on education with an emphasis on work centered learning and played a crucial role in the Basic Education Conference at Wardha in 1937. Dr. Zakir Husain served as Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, Member - University Education Commission, Press Commission, World University Service, University Grants Commission, and Indian Representative in UNESCO, Governor of Bihar and Vice President of India before occupying the august office.

In 1967, in his Presidential speech Zakir Husain presented a glimpse of his core philosophy of education: "...education is a prime instrument of national purpose and that quality of its education is inescapably involved in the quality of the nation... We shall seek to combine in our

national life power with morality, technique with ethics, action with dedication, the East with the West, Siegfried with the Buddha. We shall keep in view the two poles of the eternal and the temporal, of an awakened conscience and skilled efficiency, of conviction and achievement."

Education policies of any government aim at forging common citizenship, pooling the human resources and harnessing their energies. In 1950 the Government of India appointed the Planning Commission to prepare a blueprint for the development of different aspects of life, including education. The University Education Commission of 1949 under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan made recommendations regarding the reorganization of courses, techniques of evaluation, media of instruction, student services and the recruitment of teachers. Consequently the University Grants Commission was set up to look after university education. The Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Lakshmana Swami Mudaliar focused on secondary and teacher education. The Education Commission of 1964-66 of Dr D.S. Kothari made a comprehensive review of the entire field of education by evolving a national pattern for all stages of education.

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Against this backdrop of a nascent nation relocating its path from the past into the future, *The Dynamic University*, a slender but extremely valuable text, was published in 1965. It is a collection of twelve addresses delivered by Dr. Zakir Husain during the period 1957-1962. The addresses cannot be dismissed as conventional words of wisdom and exhortation to the populace of academic world. It is said that for real understanding of Zakir's ideas and words in the book, one must convert the indirect into direct forms of expression, praise into polite doubt, hope into sorrow and the vision of what might be into the lamentation that even the attainable has not been attained.

### **Education and its Problems**

Education is an important factor in India where an attempt is made to build a democratic and secular state to shape an honest and graceful social existence. Zakir Husain hinges his idea of educational reconstruction on two principles, 'work and social orientation.' He compares the process of education or the culturing of the mind to the process of gradual development of the body. As body from embryonic stage grows gradually and attains its full stature, so does the mind develop from its original state to its fullest powers by assimilating the mental food supplied by the environment in the form of cultural goods, science, literature, arts, technique, religion, customs, moral and legal codes, social forms and personalities etc. As the same cultural good cannot be utilized by all, scientific

education and cultural psychology should locate and exploit different cultural goods of the society.

It must be understood that all knowledge and skills are not educative. Knowledge, acquired externally and passed on as information is different from knowledge acquired through our own experience - knowledge that has grown in our mind by its own work. Similarly, skill can be of two kinds: it can be mechanical skill attained by imitative diligence capable of repeating existing values, or it can be a non-mechanical skill based on natural disposition of creating new values. The first kind of knowledge and skill are additions from outside, the second kind display an enrichment and a transformation from within; the first represents an external appendage, the second signifies an internal development; the first is instruction, the second education; the first is outward dressing, the second essential culture; the first comes from drill, the second from educationally productive work. As long as education was integrally related with life and was not taken over by specialized agencies, the second kind prevailed. But specialized centres of instruction turned more and more to the first kind by making the school and college as drudgery to which we all have been witness since 80's. Zakir Husain's comments relevantly help us in dispelling the confusion surrounding the definition and range of education and in distinguishing between real education and pseudo one in the light of coaching centres

masquerading as centres of excellence across India.

Zakir Husain treats the breathing of soul into the drudgery of mechanical work as the biggest challenge of socio-economic ramifications and manifestations. Problems are aplenty: "...textbooks or original source material; lectures or discussion groups; objective tests or essay type examinations, or a combination of both; selection of teachers primarily for research or for teaching or for teaching and research, and with what variation of emphasis at what point; whom to admit and how to select; liberal general education or specialized education; the medium of instruction - English, or regional language and Hindi - these are all questions... There is a pathetic feeling of security in treading along the beaten track; everyone is afraid of doing anything for the first time." Transformation from passive receptivity into spontaneous activity is in dearth and is deeply desired.

### **Real Concerns of Education in Indian Universities**

Zakir Husain cautions that national control and uniformity of education will not be realized if young men -- who are blind to the beauty of their own art; deaf to the harmonies of their own music; ashamed of their cultural heritage; ignorantly and arrogantly parading it; incapable of using their tongue with no competence or effectiveness; woefully unaware of their own literature; indifferent to the social scene and out of touch with the aspirations

of society -- are recruited. Higher education should preserve its autonomy and academic freedom; and should not succumb to the exigencies of political polemics and disturb its own stability.

Zakir Husain was particularly worried at the burgeoning trend of new universities. They help the people in getting a job and in this process the primary purpose of the old university -the reverence for the intellectual and moral superiority of education is lost. The university should be able to distinguish between the heritage that hampers and the heritage that helps and take good care to see that nothing is rejected or accepted because of the label some people seek to put on to it.

### **On Teachers**

Zakir Husain maintains that the teacher is responsible not only for himself but for the whole society. He forthrightly says "Teacher is the custodian of the highest values created and cherished by his people. He is the transmitter of these values to his students, and if he has not experienced them himself... he is, I am afraid, in the wrong place. If he has the urge to dominate, if he is principally interested in earning money, or even in detachedly collecting useful data for scientific work, without the positive relationship with his students, he has, indeed, missed his vocation."

### **Engineering Minds and Human Values**

Zakir Husain desires that the engineer whose work is based on scientific

knowledge and systematic thinking processes should also have a humane attitude. He says the engineer should understand and appreciate the urges, aspirations, and limitations of these human beings. The engineer should not lose sight of the man in him and he should appreciate such things as good poetry, music, books and relationships. Zakir Husain stresses the need for developing links between the branches of engineering and social sciences.

### **Vision for the Nation**

Zakir Husain opines that India has a unique historical advantage of diversity of cultures and creeds which can create a humanity of universal character. It is not right for the nation to adopt one-sided growth of its citizens as lineal growth is

not a characteristic of organic development. The perfection of the whole through the perfection of the parts shall be made ready for material and ideal goals, for inner contemplative experience and outward activity and for suffering as much as for enjoyment.

Zakir Husain's passion for education and pain at the collapsing standards are evident in the tone of these lectures. His idea of true education through a synthesis of Indian culture and value system is testimony to his authority on the subject. V.V. Giri, the former President of India, says: "...Zakir Saheb was an enemy of all that was parochial, narrow and sectarian. He fully appreciated and often underscored the need of a spiritual content to life."

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Son decides to admit the father in the old age home as desired by his wife (the daughter in law).

He brings his father in the car to an Orphanage cum old age home run by a Christian priest.

The receptionist gives different choices like TV, AC , Veg etc. Father says No TV, AC etc.

Son goes out to bring luggage from car. The wife calls up to check whether all is fine. And also insists that father need not come home even for festivals .

The Christian priest appears and talks to the old man.

Son wonders and asks the Christian priest whether he knows his father before as they were talking as though they knew each other.

Christian priest says, yes. He came here 30 years back and took with him an orphan boy in adoption.

Speechless !!

- Internet

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

**Dr. Muddu Ramakrishna\***

Swami Vivekananda burst forth on the world with his brilliant speeches at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago, USA in the year 1893.

Who does not know Vivekananda? He is acknowledged as a fore-runner and pioneer of revolutionary ideas which gave impetus for Indians to struggle for independence. His thoughts also helped to develop a character based on self-reliance and sacrifice to build a modern India and an India which will set an example to other countries, following the precepts of age-old traditions like Vedanta and related spiritual topics applied dynamically to the body politic of India.

The Government of India had declared January 12th as National Youth Day, to be celebrated every year. This reflects the ideology of the intelligentsia of India who have seen in Vivekananda, a youth par excellence and in whom all dynamic qualities for an ideal citizen are present. Verily Rabindranath Tagore, the poet said "In Vivekananda, there is nothing negative, everything is positive". Swami Vivekananda is a condensed India. All the

past and present was embodied in him when he was alive and he became a prophet also who showed brilliant plans, schemes, methods to follow to build an India of immense proportions. "The complete works of Vivekananda" are replete with speeches and ideas to this effect.

The culmination of his thought reached its climax in 1892, at Kanyakumari, a few months before going to America. It was here, he could visualise the greatness of India, its heritage, what it had to offer to other countries and what he himself wanted to do for India in order to materialise this objective.

Rightly, today, there is a Rock memorial in his memory at Kanyakumari and Kanyakumari makes us remember what he thought at this place and then burst forth on the world in America.

Swamiji's life is divided into three phases.

The first phase is his early upbringing, brilliant school and college education in which he studied more than a dozen subjects of topical and eternal interest. He was a past master in logic and debate and the words he used were like a sword to cut the arguments of the opponents

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\* Writer, Hyderabad

to size. He was an athlete, a wrestler, a horse rider and he learnt fencing also. These show the perfection of his mental and physical achievements. He passed BA exam of Calcutta University and also studied law for some time. For various reasons, he could not continue his education.

The second phase was his discipleship under Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar, for about five years in which he reached the peak of spiritual realisation.

Many of the spiritual heights he attained were during the period that he was with Sri Ramakrishna. At first, he questioned the very existence of God and used to quote from Western philosophers and say, "Does God exist?" and if he exists, how are we to reconcile the dilemma of Good and Evil, extreme poverty and extreme affluence and wealth and power found in individuals in society, the high-handedness of the rich people, the impossible situations in which poor people find themselves in." Such questions were put by him with a sword-like sharpness and sincerity which very few people had the courage to reply satisfactorily.

He used to ask also great people, considered to be wise and *Rishis* like DevendraNath Tagore, Keshav Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and so on, whether they had seen God. Some answered sincerely that they have not seen God. Some like Maharshi Devendranath Tagore asked

him to meditate on great statements, *Mahavakyas* of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, so that he could feel the presence of God. Brahmo Samaj at that time emphasised *Nirakara Paramatman* as the objective of spiritual quest.

His quest continued, unsatisfied as he was with the replies of these great people. One day, while discussing the condition known as "trance", as written in a poem by Wordsworth in "Excursion", his English professor, while explaining the word, said that he has seen one person who goes into "trance" regularly, on hearing glories of God and his name. This person was Sri Ramakrishna, who resides at Dakshineswar, near Calcutta.

Narendranath, as the Swamiji was called those days, went to Dakshineswar, shortly afterwards, with a friend of his to see for himself, whether Sri Ramakrishna was indeed a man of God. When questioned, "Have you seen God?", Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Yes, I see him always, more clearer than I am seeing you." The sincerity of the saint, the saintly character and life of this great man, greatly attracted Narendranath.

From that time onwards, for the next five years, until the passing away of the great Master, Narendranath used to frequent Dakshineswar and learn spiritual values, see God with form and without form and get imbibed in all saintly values which he assimilated during the period. At the passing

away of the Master, he, being the foremost leader, who was highly educated, more spiritual than all other disciples, became the guiding spirit of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, which he established after the first visit from the West. He carried out the wish of his master in which the age-old traditional values of *Sanatana Dharma*, which we call 'Hinduism' was broadcast all over the world in the English language. His main emphasis was on the upliftment of the poor and weak without distinction of caste, creed and sex. The rich were also not neglected in being given the spiritual values.

Swamiji used to say *Aatmano Mokshartham Jagadhitaaya cha*. This body is for self-realisation and for the welfare of the world. He developed this conviction and used to say "the life is short, the varieties of the world are transient, but they alone live, who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive."

When he told Sri Ramakrishna, "I want to be immersed in Samadhi and to come down periodically to take care of the bodily needs", Sri Ramakrishna told him, "What a small man you are, you are made for higher things, there is a higher state and objective than Samadhi ! You will have to teach the world the way and help others in distress and this you will do in spite of yourself". And this was the order he had to take from his master.

After the passing away of the Master, the *Antarangika* disciples of the

Master faced untold troubles and difficulties. Only the leadership of Narendranath and help of the householders like Surendranath, Balaram Bose, Mahendranath Gupta, the sadhana of the disciples could continue, regardless of financial troubles. The establishment of the brotherhood at Baranagore, then at Alambazar, and later at Belur was the creation of Narendranath's genius.

The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's blessing and her fervent prayer to the Master also was significant support to the new order. She had prayed at Benaras, "I see so many monks wandering on the streets, begging , without clothes or shelter. Is it for this, your disciples are destined for ? How I wish they had their own shelter, so that the belief that, those who have taken shelter in Sri Ramakrishna need not worry even on physical plane may come true". Her prayer was answered by Sri Ramakrishna in the success of the brotherhood to establish the Math and branches all over India and later in the world also.

During this period of about 7 years, Swamiji spent more than 5 years, touring the length and breadth of India as *Parivrayakacharya*, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Bengal to Rajasthan and beyond. He impressed princes, monks, householders, Sanskrit scholars and pundits, secular scholars, Prime Ministers of States, Dewans, very important persons, high Government officials, doctors, administrators, wherever he went with his

effulgence and knowledge. He impressed one and all by his spiritual and physical vigour and the knowledge of diverse subjects.

The Swami learnt many things on the physical plane; the conditions of the country, its poverty, the condition of the poor and downtrodden, the limitations of the caste system, the degradation to which India had fallen due to *Varnashrama* system, interpreted in a selfish way by half-baked scholars and so called guardians of the society and the priest community. The condition of India was gauged rightly by him. This period of tour was an exercise in seeing at first hand, the practical condition of the people of India and also a study was made on the religions, customs, and cultural situation as existent in different parts of the country at that time.

The touring period also was not without intense musing, pain, tribulations; often for 3 to 4 days at a stretch, he went without food. Disease, fevers etc followed at many places. He was on the verge of death at a couple of places. The hand of God and his faith in his Guru and Mother, pulled him through everywhere.

When at last he reached Kanyakumari, he felt, he had a message to this country and also to the West. After deep meditation at the Sripada Shila over there at the Rock, he arrived at many decisions of import. To go to the West, to electrify his own country for which he would take

the financial help of the West; to create a band of monks and workers who would spread the message of the Master across the length and breadth of the country as also to future generations of Indians and to inculcate everywhere, *Atmano Mokshartham Jagadhitayacha*, "For the uplift of the self and to help others in the world".

These thoughts he put into motion after he got the permission from Sri Ramakrishna on the spiritual plane and also from the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi who was then living.

The Third phase begins with the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in USA in 1893, his lecture tours in that country and Europe, especially in England. He went abroad from India two times, spreading the message of Vedanta in all its aspects. He established R.K. Mission centres, Vedanta societies all over the world. He induced his brother disciples to come and take charge of these institutions and run them on the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. In India, he established the headquarters of RK Math and Mission. The world teacher and prophet, who strode East and West, did the bidding of his Master for about 10 years. When seen in retrospect, it appears, he had done the work to the satisfaction and what he was fully capable of. Nothing remained to be done except to continue the legacy he left behind in India and West. It was now left for his brotherhood to take up the work. He did not stay longer than required on this

Earth. The speed and anxiety, the work and fatigue of the duration as recorded by his biographers would have finished off any other lesser human being. It was Vivekananda, who could undertake the work he did. He passed away though to the outer world prematurely, before reaching his 40th birthday. He had said that he had given enough for fifteen hundred years, (Spiritual and material knowledge; ref: "The History of RK Math and Mission" by Swami Gambhirananda and "Swami Vivekananda, His voyages to the West, New discoveries" by Marie Louse Burke).

In conclusion, it can be said that he is a Yuganayak, the prophet and leader of the age. His was a multifaceted genius like any prophet in the world. Take any aspect of his life; you can write whole range of books on it. He has been called variously as Prophet of Modern India because of his influence on freedom struggle, builder of Modern Indian culture on Vedantic foundation, a social revolutionary, an intellectual and scholar par excellence, an educator, a teacher, a synthesiser of Science and Religion, India's cultural ambassador, a great humanist, a visionary par excellence.

Even though his teachings are many, the central theme was "the uplift of one's self, coupled with the help to society's poor and ignorant". For this, "Tyaga and Seva", renunciation and service, have to be done by individuals. Then only a great India will emerge.

Another noteworthy saying of Swami Vivekananda is: "So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them".

This message is very suitable to our educated and affluent brethren of our country that is India, by following which, they can uplift themselves and then country albeit the world itself.

His Vedantic teaching is expressed in the following words which summarise much of spiritual realm: "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy by one or more or all of these and be free." This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples, or farms, are but secondary details.

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## THE ART OF ARGUING

R.R. Gandikota\*

Arguing is as old as 'Genesis'. Surely there might have been a heated argument between Adam and Eve over eating the forbidden fruit. I am not sure Adam might have won over Eve by using his logical argument. The mighty-man might have succeeded in convincing the poor Eve. Arguing is beyond Time and Space. Can you faithfully say how many people were converted by you, impressed by your argumentative power. Perhaps not even a single person. Then why do we argue. Can you say that you yourself got changed by someone else's argument. When you do not change, how can you change others?

Robert Lynd says, "The human being seems to be a person who jumps mystically to conclusions, yet who never loses hope of being able to reason others into the same conclusions." Man is optimistic, it appears. He goes on trying to convince others to convert to his view point. The case with epic heroes like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna or of the spiritual giants like Adi Sankara, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Gautama the Buddha, or for that matter in the recent past, Paramaacharya Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswati of Kanchi and Mahatma Gandhi is quite different. They are born for the very

purpose of convincing people to take up the right path, by their logical and faithful argumentative discourses.

In our epics, the *Ramayana*, and The *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, the Bhagavad Gita and The Upanishads we come across thousands of 'Rational-Arguments'. For instance in *Ramayana*, Sage Viswamitra approaches King Dasaratha and asks him to send Ramachandra, with him for protecting the sacrifice he has taken up from the *Rakshasas*. Dasaratha went on arguing that Rama was still a child and tender, and how can he fight with the mighty *Asuras*? Viswamitra grew angry and was about to curse Dasaratha. Then sage Vasishta intervenes and convinced Dasaratha to send Sri Rama along with the sage Viswamitra and that he would take care of him and he had nothing to worry.

Similarly in The Maha Bharata too we come across myriads of arguments in every anecdote to establish *Dharma*. The very purpose of the great epic is to enlighten the common man at every stage 'what is right and what is wrong'.

The song celestial-The Bhagavad Gita starts with the argument between Arjuna and Sri Krishna. Arjuna argues that

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\* Principal (Retd.) Kakinada

it is not fair to indulge in war and kill his own kith and kin for the sake of power, and that he was even prepared to give up the claim for their rightful portion of the kingdom. Sri Krishna could convince Arjuna to perform his duty.

In our *Upanishads* too we find beautiful arguments between the Teacher and the Taught. Argument is a must for clarity of thought and to develop decisive power. Adi Sankara, with his razor sharp argumentative power could defeat all the spiritual leaders of other *Darshanas* including *Charvaka*, *Pashandas*, *Aghoras* and agnostics. During Sankara's argument with Mandana Misra, Uma Bharati (wife of Mandana Misra), acted as a referee.

Now we find every one arguing, irrespective of age, purpose or necessity. In our life span of about 60 or 70 years, we might have argued thousands of times, with siblings, parents, uncles and aunts, friends and colleagues, officers and managers. Can you say with confidence, that you could convince at least a couple of people with your rational arguments?

We have academic arguments, social arguments, spiritual arguments, political arguments, legal arguments, family arguments etc. In my school days there were just 3 topics for debate/argument. 1. Do girls need education? 2. Students entry into politics. 3. National language English or Hindi. We went on arguing for years with no conclusion. Of course now these topics became irrelevant. In Nineteen sixties,

argument was a pastime. A distant relative of mine used to meticulously get ready by 9 am. Every day, having taken heavy breakfast, with 2 packets of cigarettes, and a couple of News Papers in hand and leave for the 'Happy Club', just to pass time by indulging in very heated discussions, at times to the extent of tearing each other's shirts, and return home by lunch time. Next day the very same scene- very cool to begin with and gradually tempers rising, with shouting, threatening each other, almost coming to blows.

Social arguments:- These are "Holier than thou", arguments. People claiming that their religion or caste is superior. It is O.K. But why should you denounce the others. The Holy Vedas have clearly proclaimed that all the 4 'Varna-s', *Brahmana*, *Vaisya*, *Kshatriya*, and *Sudra* are formed from the very same *Virat Purusha*. Then where is the question of superiority? In Bhagavad Gita, it is stated by Bhagavan Krishna himself that the classification of these *Varnas*, is just for division of labour. No where there is a reference to the 'Fifth Varna'. I strongly believe it is in view of our 'inherent argumentative nature', this problem was created.

Spiritual Arguments:- This is nothing but, "My God is Great Syndrome". God is one-every religion clearly proclaims. Then how come 'My God/ Your God'. If you really love your God, the question of denouncing others' God does not arise. It looks quite silly and stupid.

In the court scenes too we find the same scenario. Lawyers shouting, threatening clients, creating a war-like scene. Afterwards we find these opposing Lawyers joking with each other in a lighter mood. The clients become fools finally. In our Democracy, the Parliament and the Assembly are supposed to be 'Temples'. The elected peoples' representatives are supposed to put-forth their arguments, deliberate, discuss and take decisions. But what is happening is witnessed by all. Political arguments are indulged in for power.

In our tradition we have Tarka-Sastra, Logic of modern days. There are some parameters while indulging in rational arguments. Truth is the cardinal issue in any

*Jayathe*. Argument for mere 'argument sake', is a mere waste of time, and wasting our energies. Louder the argument-weaker the case. But we believe that prolixity and loquaciousness alone win in an argument. The political scenario within and without the Parliament establishes it.

Arguments have lost their respect. They have become a mere 'pass-time', pleasure, and exhibition of our ego. I conclude this article with a couple of lines of Bengali poem by Ram Mohan Roy,

“Just consider how terrible  
the day of your death will be,  
Others will go on speaking,  
and you will not be able to Argue Back.”

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Last night I was sitting in the living room, talking to my wife about life.. In-between, we talked about the idea of living or dying. I told her : 'Never let me live in a vegetative state, totally dependent on machines and liquids from a bottle. If you see me in that state I want you to disconnect all the connections that are keeping me alive, I'd much rather die.'

My wife got up from the sofa with this real look of admiration towards me proceeded

to disconnect the Cable TV, DVD, then the Computer, the Cell Phone, the iPod, and the Xbox, and then went to the bar and threw away all my whisky, rum, Gin, Vodka and the Beer from the fridge...

I ALMOST DIED!!

Moral : Think before you speak. The female brain works on a different wavelength!

- Internet: Reader's Digest

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## WHERE TO FIND HUMOUR?

**Dr. Chaganti Nagaraja Rao\***

There is a popular adage in all Indian languages which goes thus: "Fifty per cent of our strength comes from happiness." Happiness has its roots in humour. Humour is an integral part of routine life. The fact that most people seek it somewhere else without finding that it is available at their fingertips is a matter of surprise. Humour is found not only on the celluloid or in cartoons in the magazines but is everywhere and is found every minute in our lives. It all depends on one's observation of men and matters around them. A man with much wealth remains poor if he cannot find or enjoy humour in life and a poor man who can enjoy humour remains rich. Mirth fences us against the infirmities of ill-health and other evils of life. Humour adds to the worthiness of life. Humour relieves man of strain. George Bernard Shaw rightly says that "You never laugh at a joke unless there is some truth in it." It clearly discloses that humour lies in observation of a hidden truth. People with habitual sense of humour enjoy life and make life worth living for others. As Thackeray rightly says, "Good humour is one of the best articles of dress one can wear in society." People with a smile on their faces are respected and admired while those with a grimace or anger and

blurt out tantrums are despised and hated. Some people would often approach a humourist for relaxation when their mood is not good or when they are upset by some problem since they are assured of either a solution for their problem or a soothing effect to forget their worry at least for some time in his presence since he would create some instant and hilarious humour based on the prevailing circumstances. But humour also springs automatically from general conversation of certain people. Some such events are recollected here:

A municipal road sweeper's wife entered the Commissioner's chamber along with her three children and complained against her husband that he gave away all his salary to his second wife and didn't give a single pie to them for the last two months and that they had been starving for two months. When the Commissioner called the sweeper and chided him he politely said: "Sir! I have not given a single pie even to my second wife also for the last two months, since I had to purchase medicines for my third wife who is pregnant."

After the tenth day ritual of my grandfather's demise was over, all including my widowed grandmother sat for meals. During the meals my grandmother ruefully said wiping tears: "The preparations are

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very tasty. My husband is not fortunate enough to enjoy these delicacies. So he left the world." It didn't occur to her that they would not have performed his death ritual with delicacies if he were alive.

When my aunt lost one of her sandals, I accompanied her to the shoe mart to purchase new sandals. When she found a pair of sandals exactly similar to the one she wore till the previous day she picked up the right foot sandal and asked the sales boy to pack it since she got the left foot sandal.

During the regular visit of the District Collector to a Municipality the uneducated illiterate Municipal Chairman described certain local problems to him at which the District Collector was irritated and retorted a little bit harshly: "It is not my business to solve them. That is your responsibility and your Commissioner's responsibility. Don't you both meet daily and discuss them and find solutions?" The Municipal Chairman immediately replied pointing at the Commissioner: "What discussion sir? I come, he go; I go, he come. No meeting."

When the Chairman of the Official Language Commission visited a Municipality, the illiterate civic chief asked him the purpose of his visit. He said that he came to verify whether all official transactions in the office were conducted in the local language. The civic chief immediately whispered in a councillor's

ears in his mother tongue: "Somebody might have complained to the Government that our Commissioner always speaks, writes and reads English, so he came to enquire," and then he turned to the Chairman and mumbled in his mother tongue: "Sir, Please take stringent action against our Commissioner who always speaks in English with Collector, Minister and everyone and even writes all files in English. Even the red colour bound book (by which he meant the Municipalities Act) is also in English and he does not tell me of my powers contained in the book." Baffled at his words the Chairman directed his Assistant to look into the matter and hurried to the guest house.

When the same civic chief learnt that certain miscreants who troubled him went underground, he remarked: "Please close the ground with a slab so that they do not come on the ground again."

I stood at the door of a lecture hall and asked the lecturer to send my brother. The lecturer turned to my brother and said: "Somebody is outstanding for you."

We all went to see my uneducated aunt who just returned from the USA. When she was asked as to how she could communicate with Americans she said: "Though Americans do not know our mother tongue I was astonished when some of them laughed and wept in our mother tongue."

When an officer chided a clerk for his poor memory, the superintendent entered

the room and suggested to the clerk to read a book on memory which remarkably improved his memory. When the clerk asked for the title of the book the superintendent thought a minute seriously and said: "Oh, I don't remember. I will let you know later."

An officer dictated a letter to his stenographer thus:

"On expiry of leave Mr.Sen is permitted to join duty".

The next day the clerk came to the officer and asked where to join, since the proceedings didn't indicate it.

"Do as per the orders," said the officer in a pensive mood.

"But it is not possible to join as per your orders sir," said the clerk.

The officer angrily snatched the proceedings copy from his hand and read to his own surprise: "On expiry of Mr.Sen, he is permitted to join duty".

A British Indian Civil Service officer asked a second level Village Accountant (*Karanam*) as to why didn't he pass the examination prescribed for Karanams. He immediately replied: "Even my senior Karanam has not passed. Then what is the urgency for me?" The British Indian Civil Service Officer didn't take him to task but enjoyed its humour.

Every minute such events take place in our surroundings and it all depends on one's observation to derive happiness from them. G.B. Cheever asks "Give me a keen and ever present sense of humour," for "health and constant enjoyment of life." "To be able to laugh is a fortune; to be able to create laughter is a blessing; and to be not able to laugh is a disease. But the creator of humour must bear in mind what Keith Preston says: "He must not laugh at his own wheeze; A snuff box has no right to sneeze."

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Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

- Mark Twain

## NATURE IN THREE POETS OF THREE NATIONS

**Dr. Rajamouly Katta\***

Nature with its dramatic function of attraction leaves the people in its contact impressed in diverse ways. It feasts their eyes by the sight of dancing peacocks, dazzling daffodils, snow-clad woods, starry heavens etc. It also delights the ears by the melodies of cuckoos, the buzzing of bees and so on. It soothes the hearts by gentle blowing of breezes. It is heaven on earth as it has rich treasures for their sensuous pleasures. In quest of pleasures, nature lovers they love its sights, sounds, scents and so on.

The Romantic poets like William Wordsworth love nature, as it is an integral part of their lives and poetry. They as nature poets treat nature in a special way, giving it the supreme status. For them, nature is Goddess, mother, teacher, soul or everything.

Like the Romantics, the poets like C. Narayana Reddy, popularly known as 'Cinare' find utmost joy in contact with nature. The poets like Robert Frost also find in nature the source for rejuvenation and solace in their contact with it. The three poets have the goals for their joys in contact with nature.

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William Wordsworth and Dr. Narayana Reddy belong to one category in the delineation of nature. Both are nature poets, as they become one with its beauties of sights and sounds, colors and rhythms. Robert Frost belongs to another category because he marks a clear-cut difference in the treatment of nature. He never crosses the boundary line he draws between him and nature to mark a special identity as a nature poet.

As a researcher, I would like to attempt an in-depth study of the three poets: British Romantic poet William Wordsworth, Indian Telugu poet Dr. C. Narayana Reddy and American poet Robert Frost, dealing with nature in their ways as delineated in their respective poems: *Daffodils*, *Absorption (Vileenatha)* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. It is very interesting to note the comparisons and the contrasts in the treatment of nature by the poets.

William Wordsworth, a nature poet, worships nature. He personifies nature. He identifies himself with nature. He sees its sights and listens to its sounds for his pleasure. He finds himself still and motionless in his contact with nature. He goes into reverie, the farthest realms on the wings of imagination. In times of loneliness

and gloominess, woes and throes, he recalls the pleasure in contact with nature's wonders: sights and sounds. Nature is the mother to lull him and bestow on him pleasures. Nature is the teacher to teach him all the lessons on values and virtues. Nature is hence the university to present universal facts for him to learn as a student. Nature serves as a source and a fairyland for his perpetual bliss.

In contact with nature, Wordsworth as a poet and man goes into the world of fancy and forgets the world of woes and throes in his real life,

*I listened motionless and still  
And as I mounted up the hill  
The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more*  
*Solitary Reaper*

Wordsworth goes to nature for its music and color, smells and charms. He enjoys the sights and sounds of nature in the poems like *Solitary Reaper* and *Daffodils*. For him, nature serves as a perennial source of perpetual joy. Whenever he is in a 'vacant' or 'pensive' mood or in times of solitude, the bounteous charms of beauteous daffodils flash upon his inward eye and fill his heart with joys:

*They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude*  
*Daffodils*

Wordsworth recalls that the sight of daffodils in multitude fill his heart with gladness and so he gets engrossed into its beauties as it serves as a source for bliss, solace and peace.

*And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils*  
*Daffodils*

Wordsworth loves daffodils and their graceful dance, wandering like a cloud and finds the most lovable companion in their contact,

*A poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company  
I gazed-and grazed-but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought.*  
*Daffodils*

Like Wordsworth, Cinare loves nature in the heart of his heart. In contact with nature, he enjoys the beauties and gaieties in the beautiful and delightful objects of nature all in earnestness. He loves the earth, the soil that shelters nature:

While being as I am  
I get engrossed  
Into all everywhere;  
... ..  
*I fly high in my flight and become one  
With those farthest realms  
Riding the horses of clouds awhile  
And dancing to the silent chorus rhythms  
In the calm garden of starry heaven;  
Absorption*

The question that Cinare poses is

*By all that do the stages  
Of my absorption stop?*

It reflects the presence of his mind in the form of consciousness but not forgetfulness.

Like Wordsworth, Cinare enjoys the lovable sight of newborn saplings, the flowing streams, the sunrise for warmth, the wind that caresses the tops of trees and speaks to the mountain ranges. As an eyewitness, he gets engrossed by the beauty of a stream, born on hilltops to flow in hill-slopes, watching it stepping and floating on the ridges of its waves. His descriptions of natural objects: hills, rivers, the sun, the wind mark accuracy, picturesqueness and minuteness.

*Absorbing into the soil,  
The saplings,  
Just sprouted and freshly breathing  
Are at my lovable sight  
I set them swing  
In the swing of my glances  
While assessing their future  
Of how exuberantly verdant they are.*

...                      ...                      ...  
*While becoming one  
With the creek-stream  
Born amidst the hill-beds,  
As an eye-witness  
I glimpse how it splits into various flows  
After it steps down on to the plain;  
Absorption*

Cinare becomes one with nature and finds pleasure in contact with nature like Wordsworth who finds pleasure in the objects of nature like daffodils while treating them as his 'the jocund company'. He loves nature like Wordsworth who firmly believes that the beauty of every blade of grass leaves him impressed. He gets engrossed into the beauties of nature, 'jaunting on my jolly flight.'

There is a clear-cut difference between Wordsworth and Cinare though they come close in the treatment of nature. Wordsworth is a mystic. Cinare enjoys the beauties in nature while being conscious of his being, '*While being as I am...*' Wordsworth gets engrossed with the beauties of nature but forgets himself while being 'still and motionless' whereas Cinare consciously enjoys the beauty in nature. He comes back home with bliss,

*I come back  
With the heart of bliss  
Full brimful, before it does not spill over  
And absorb into sound sleep  
In my bedroom.*

The two poets, Wordsworth and Cinare respond to the beauty of nature. They romanticize nature unlike Robert Frost who draws boundaries between man and nature. They show distinction in the treatment of nature though the three are nature poets.

Frost seeks to have a momentary contact with nature that refreshes and

rejuvenates him. He watches the glittering snow-clad woods in the sunlit evening and stops the horse to enjoy the beauty in nature. Meanwhile the horse gives a shake to his harness bells to know as to why his master stopped,

*He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is in some mistake  
The only other sounds the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake*

*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

The shaking of the harness bells is the only way for the horse to confront the poet with a question to 'ask if there is any mistake'. The poet springs into the world of reality from the reverie and realizes not only the sounds of 'easy wind' and 'downy flake' that enrich the beauty of woods. He realizes the promises he has to keep and the obligations he has to fulfill as man:

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

There is a scope for Frost to have been lost in the idealistic meditation or reverie in the beauty of woods, but the horse gives a shake to his harness bells and brings him back to the world of realities.

Frost is a nature poet but he is not a nature poet in the tradition of Wordsworth

who loves nature for its music and color and goes to it enthralled and engrossed into it. Cinare watches nature at its best for its beauties with all his consciousness.

Frost is therefore a different kind of nature poet as he has a momentary contact with nature. Whenever he gets tired of the monotony of mundane living and routine working, he goes to the objects of nature like birches and woods, as they are the source for his refreshment and rejuvenation, relief and solace. He swings with them to the top and gets back on to the ground,

*When I'm weary of considerations  
And life is too much like a pathless wood  
Where your face burns and tickles with  
the cobwebs  
Broken across it.*

*Birches*

In his poem, *Birches*, Frost feels, *Earth is the right place for love*. He goes to nature to have a momentary contact with it. His contact with nature makes him forget the stress and strain of reality. It leads him to a fresh mood in performing his duties with new vigor and enthusiasm.

Wordsworth and Cinare romanticize nature to seek harmony between the soul of man and that of nature whereas Frost harps on the boundaries that separate man from nature. His contact with it refreshes and rejuvenates him whenever he gets tired of monotony of daily routine

living. Wordsworth and other Romantics go to it enthralled. Wordsworth, in contrast with Frost, wants to have perpetual contact with nature recalling them in pensive and lonely moods.

Frost insists on definite boundaries between man and nature while referring to the response of the horse on stopping by woods on a snowy evening in the poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. The horse stands as a real character to remind him of his promises by ringing the bell tied to his neck. Like Wordsworth, he

directly speaks to the objects of nature like the tree with its foliage in comparison with the drying of women's hair. His way of addressing the objects of nature reflects humor to mark a contrast with that of Wordsworth's high seriousness.

Frost successfully establishes as a nature poet in a unique way, drawing a line between man and nature unlike Wordsworth and Cinare who as nature poets adore nature while stressing a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

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## A JUST WORLD

A. Mahesh Kumar\*

The eternal dream of justice  
is a misnomer born from the tireless efforts  
of the few souls  
who fought against the harsh realities of life.  
The most unpleasant truth is that the ageless  
shadows of darkness  
cease not by the few gentle rays of light.  
But the meaning of their short existence is

to sparkle  
the spirit of equality and freedom by  
breaking the chains of selfish patterns of  
life to witness the dream world.  
May the vision of the souls awaken all lands  
from the bedlam of profound pain  
into a new dawn of freedom and equality  
for a just world.  
Comrades of the world! Let us unite to fulfil  
the dream of the Just World  
Only Just World!!

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## MODERN TEACHING PEDAGOGY IN ENGLISH

**N. Mahesh\***

Language is a gift of humankind through which one may share one's own experiences, wishes and ideas. It is not an inherent tenet, but it is a skill that must be earned through a systematic method or approach which guides us in its acquisition. There are multitudes of methods and approaches of teaching a language that would help the students learn the language. In the contemporary digital world, learning English which is very rightly called 'Globish', is a rewarding experience.

A brief account of an introduction to English language in India may be discussed here. Thomas Babington Macaulay was the first to take measures to introduce English education in India by replacing the good old concept of ashram type of instruction through Sanskrit and Persian. English surpassed all native languages and became 'the ruling language'. It has introduced the knowledge of Europe to India. Soon people felt that they must acquire and learn it by following various methods and approaches. Thus English became an inevitable language one is supposed to acquire. Earlier pupils faced difficulties in learning English language but

now it has become very easy with the help of modern technology along with the appropriate methods of teaching.

English played a vital role to connect India to the world which no other Indian language could. Though it came to India almost 200 years ago people find it very difficult to follow the language meaningfully. There are solid reasons for that. Firstly Teaching Pedagogy was outdated and was formulated at a time when there wasn't much progress in teaching methods. Secondly there was dearth of skilled experts of English. Thirdly there was Anglophobia lurking in the Indian minds. So there must be some reformation in Teaching - Learning Pedagogy keeping in mind the latest and emergent technologies and innovations. Training must be provided to English teachers and they in turn, should inspire, instigate, and instil interest among the students with their motivation to drive away Anglophobia. These stringent measures should be taken at the earliest to bring about the desired fruition in the realm of English Teaching Pedagogy in India. It is better to adopt new methods like digital method where everything must be done in accordance with the latest technology.

To acquire any skill one has to adopt certain approaches or methods through

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which one acquires the required skill in general, and mastery, in particular. There are a number of methods and approaches that are in vogue in the field of English Language Teaching. They are Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Dr. West's Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Structural Approach and Communicative Language Teaching. A note on each of these methods may help the learners of English in India.

The Grammar Translation Method came to the forefront probably in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century though it was prevalent in the early 1500s in Europe. This may also be called the Classical method. This method would solely emphasise the translation of a text, grammar and rote learning of vocabulary. Originally, it was tried to learn the Greek and Roman literatures. This method was used to study any dead language. This is primarily a teacher centred method where students have no active role in that they are passive listeners. This method is useful in the class where a large no of students participate. This method doesn't consume a lot of time. Students get acquainted with the meanings of new words, phrases and sentences very easily. Mother tongue dominates throughout and helps in mastering vocabulary and grammar. Though it is out-dated it has been used exclusively in some institutions as it is a very easy method. It has some drawbacks too *viz.*, it neglects the speech patterns of the learner. The learner's participation is mostly minimal and it lacks

in a well-defined aim and perspective. So the teachers of English later explored or tried another method called the deductive method.

Knowingly or unknowingly the deductive method is used where rules appear first and examples later. It is like a top down approach which moves from the more general to the more specific. Mostly, exact translation may not be possible. It is uninteresting, dull, mechanical, and bookish and moreover, it is an unnatural method with its emphasis on reading and writing instead of listening and speaking. It helps the average students but it is not always for intelligent students. Next appears on the scene Direct Method which has been practised vastly for quite some time.

The Direct Method is a sort of reaction against the Grammar Translation Method. It is also called natural method or oral method as it follows the natural way of learning a language. It lays stress on correct pronunciation and grammar. It aims at the target language mostly a foreign language. The students' involvement is predominant as they directly think in English without the aid of mother tongue and thereby getting good fluency of speech. Thus it succeeds inductive method of teaching English in which example first and rules next. The unit of learning in a sentence is not a word. Here vocabulary is learnt through regalia, pictures, postures and so on. It is not good for the mixed group of learners, in which intelligent students only

benefit. In the mid-20th century it slowly lost its appeal thereby giving the way for the Audio-lingual Method.

The Audio-lingual Method initially was used for the military purposes to enhance the proficiency of soldiers in a language. It is also known as Army Method or New Key method as it emerged after the Second World War. It sprang up from a behaviourist theory of B F Skinners. Sometimes it is akin to the Direct Method as it gives importance to dialogue in the target language. Its aim is to acquire proficiency in communication skills. The teacher uses four skills *viz.*, listening; speaking, reading and writing and teaches them separately. The teaching aid primarily is the Language Laboratory where visuals are used for learning. Vocabulary is taught in the context and the focus is on pronunciation. The learning takes place very effectively as visual aids are used. Memorization and drills are profusely applied. No translation, no grammar as the emphasis is on audio-oral habit formation. The sole focus is on listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. The learner listens passionately the samples provided during the lab classes. Next approach that gained prominence is structural approach that stirred the imagination of academia in the mid-seventies.

A systematic arrangement of words can form a structure that would give the complete sense of the sentence. In Structural Approach the learner is expected

to master the patterns of the sentences or structures. So, the knowledge of structures is very essential to construct a meaningful sentence to convey one's thoughts and feelings. Its main concerns are with the mastery of patterns of structures, word order, and function words. Soon this approach lost its use leading to another approach called Communicative Approach. Communicative Language Teaching (Communicative Approach) came very recently with its emphasis on communicating through a language. It came to the scene in 1970s and linguists like Michael Halliday and Dell Hymes introduced the idea of a wider communicative competence. The learners directly start to converse in the target language without using the mother tongue. They have the real life communication used in day to day life by the common people. The Communicative Approach is predominantly practiced today all over the world. It also focuses on the teacher being a facilitator rather than an instructor. As it is a learner centred approach it solidly preserves the interests and needs of the learner. It gives much importance to the dialogue, information-gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities etc. Task-based language learning can be considered a branch of communicative language teaching. Students are involved in meaningful tasks using the target language, tasks like visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, calling customer service for help etc. Here learning takes place naturally. It was popularized by N Prabhu in India.

## MY CHIRPING VISITORS

Dr J. Bhagyalakshmi\*

Today, in morning hours, I heard a chorus of chirping and stepped out into veranda to see who the visitors were. I saw a few tiny grayish birds flitting from branch to branch. I was wonder-struck. Were they all sparrows? I almost shouted, "Eureka". Wait a minute, I told myself. This is no less than a miracle. How come half a dozen sparrows appear from nowhere? Is it a wish fulfillment?

I fixed myself in a chair to watch them closely. Yes they were sparrows, I thought. No, I told myself again. They were look alike but not sparrows. I argued with myself for a while because there was no one else around.

My thoughts raced back to 2012 when Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit declared sparrow as "State Bird of Delhi." Already there were danger signals that house sparrows were counted as endangered species. That was when India launched the largest conservation programme, "Rise for Sparrows"

Many governmental and voluntary efforts were on to attract sparrows, heartily wishing, "May their tribe increase!" Artificial nests were built to welcome the

special guests. At that time I felt lucky when two sparrows made a nest in my balcony over descending water pipes. The droppings and the construction material of my friends were welcome though it meant a little more labour for me. Soon there were little babies making sounds akin to tiny bells on the feet of a graceful dancer.

All of us can recall that there was a time when sparrows flew from one end to another end in a room trying to make a nest anywhere they pleased. Some of us might have even witnessed them dashing against a speeding fan and getting killed leaving us sad for long. Possible, creativity might have urged you to pen a poem or two.

At villages sparrows were flocking at fields and people had to device means to drive them away. In certain films they became part of romantic pastoral scenes. But now sighting a sparrow itself has become an occasion to celebrate.

I like the song, "May you walk with sunlight shining and a blue bird in every tree." Now I don't mind having a sparrow along with a blue bird in every tree. Will this wish be granted?

These birds which drew my attention this morning are not sparrows.

\* Writer, Madanapalle

They are very much similar in appearance but are a wee bit smaller and are smooth with well groomed appearance. I am no ornithologist though birds, animals and nature are very close to my heart. My morning friends are finches belonging to the same species as sparrows.

My happiness did not diminish just because my chirping visitors are not house sparrows. What is in a name? A beautiful bird is a beautiful bird that spreads happiness wherever it flies. Whatever be

the message of World Sparrow Day, I shall surely declare, "I love sparrows."

As the day progressed I shared my happiness with Rama who assists me in my work. She told me cheerfully she has sheltered a family of sparrows at her house. There are a few newborns in the nest. Rama dutifully leaves a bowl of water and a fistful of grain for the benefit of these birdies. I thanked her profusely and smiled to myself imagining the musical sound of tiny birds which reminds one of soft treading anklets.

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## CARTOGRAPHY

**Basudhara Roy\***

From each encounter with you,  
I return with some pain  
Like a triumphant trophy  
That I would fain hold on to.  
    Pain, thankfully not often enough  
    To well and flow from eyes  
    Which would, in any case,  
    Have been a waste.  
But a throbbing bruise, a smudge  
In some forgotten corner of the heart.  
A mark of darkness  
Like kohl freshly gathered.  
    For a few days, I am sore  
    At the point where words  
    Pricked the soul

Till gradually with time  
The sting wears away  
And I recover from the hurt  
As naïve as ever.

Not that I don't know  
That you cannot but hurt  
Firebrand as you are  
World-bound to set it aflame  
And that I must keep  
Myself at bay.  
    Only that I am drawing  
    A clandestine map of longing  
    And need the bruises for my art.  
    The watermark of smudges  
    On the canvas of my heart  
    Engenders new belongings

And who, having witnessed nations born,  
Can hope cartography to be painless?

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## NADINE GORDIMER'S "A GUEST OF HONOUR" AFRICA'S POST-INDEPENDENT POLITICAL NOVEL

Dr. P. Satyanarayana<sup>1</sup>  
C. Vijayalakshmi<sup>2</sup>

Nadine Gordimer is one of the foremost women fiction writers in South Africa and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1991. Her fiction covers the period from the late forties to the late eighties. All her novels deal with the issue of racism in one way or the other. They reflect the mood of her country before and after apartheid. All her efforts have been to see her country free from all racial oppressions and sufferings. Through her novels, she demanded justice for the blacks. They stood as a testimony to her fight for justice. The quest for freedom in South Africa took place in two stages. One was for freedom from the British government who occupied their lands for more than three centuries. The next stage was for the freedom of their lands from apartheid. Neo-colonialism crept into the country. Native leaders wanted more option for money and power than the life of their own people. One such novel from the pen of Nadine Gordimer is *A Guest of Honour*. It is the story of an unidentified African nation which got freedom from the imperial

governance of the British and is in honeymoon period of new democracy. The new government follows the footsteps of the British to gain political and economic development whereas the people of the land want total freedom. Political conflict forms the centre of the novel.

Colonel Evelyn James Bray, a European character narrates the whole story from his point of view till he meets his death and after his death, it is his lover Rebecca Edwards who shares his thoughts. Only the last page unwraps the point of view of other characters. The central figures are political men. Bray was expatriated from the country ten years earlier by the colonial government for encouraging the ascent and emergence of the People's Independent Party (PIP) which then was insurgent. During the independence negotiations in London, he again meets the leader of the Independent Party, Adamson Mweta. Mweta invites him to the Independence Day celebrations. Bray goes but his wife Olivia stays behind to be present when a grand child is born. Despite vague plans to come, she does not join Bray when he takes up an offer by Mweta to become an educational planner in Gala. Gala is the district where he once was a District Commissioner. On his return, Bray

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is optimistic that his own liberal humane principles are shaped by President Mweta and that the nation's development will be peaceful. The celebrations are indeed optimistic and ebullient. Thus, Bray became the guest of honour in the newly independent nation. After Bray moves to Gala, he meets old friends again and makes new ones. His old friends are Roland Dando, new Attorney General; the Wentzes, proprietor of the Silver Rhino hotel and pub and the Neil Bayles, Principal of the university, Kalimo, the servant who had served Bray and Olivia during colonial times had come back to him.

While Bray is working on an educational system which is mixture of skills training and adult education, he goes to see his old friend Edward Shinza, the original founder of the Independence Movement who is now in conflict with Mweta. Bray learns that Independence instead of bringing the two men Mweta and Shinza closer, has only widened the gap between them. The reason is that Shinza is neither included in the committee of the cabinet of the government ministers nor invited for the independent celebrations. There were serious differences with Mweta over what method should be adopted to build a nation. Mweta's methods for running the government are those which were used by his white colonial officers. Moreover, Mweta confronts Shinza with the brutality of the forces of law and order in the independent state. Bray is shocked and goes to the capital to talk about it with Mweta.

He also hopes to reconcile Mweta with Shinza. But Bray fails in his mission, returns to Gala and makes a success of his job.

The novel then develops into a description of the love affair set in Boma life against the background of erupting political unrest. Bray falls passionately in love with an expatriate Secretary, Rebecca Gordan, mother of four children, who lives in Gala with her children but apart from her husband, Gordon. This love affair leads to complications for Bray. There is political unrest. Strikes breaks out, which are complicated by clashes between party youth and unions. Shinza is plotting against the government, supported by foreign rebels. At a party congress in the capital, which Bray attends, Shinza splits formally with the party. The council issue is whether the secretary general of the union is to be appointed by the party or elected by the members of the union. Shinza builds up his support among the workers and takes a strong anti-neo-colonial line. Bray supports Shinza and transforms as a person. He sides with Shinza and sides with the opposition to Mweta.

After the People's Independence Party (PIP) conference at the capital, Bray commits himself to the girl, Rebecca whom he loves. The poor working conditions and accidental deaths, which were the straight repercussion of the colonial inheritance, created fury among the black population of the country. The trade unions are at conflict with Mweta's government. He feels

worried about Rebecca who had already sent her children with her husband to South Africa for education. But Rebecca commits herself to Bray. Bray obtains power-of-attorney for her and she draws out money and arranges to send it illegally out of the country to Swiss Bank for her future. It shows that he has engaged in a corrupt act which he had never done before. Thus Bray's idealism is now modified for personal benefits. After Bray has returned to Gala, Strikes break out again and there is a general breakdown of law and order. Bray and Rebecca try to escape but they are attacked by hooligans with a vague political background. They think Bray as a conservative white. His efforts are all in vain and he dies as a martyr. His death is contingent and accidental. Rebecca manages to survive by hiding in the grass and afterwards she gets help from some villagers. She collects money in Switzerland and begins a new life in London, near Bray's wife without knowing her. Even she did not join with her husband, Gordon. It would only be a means of reliving in the distrust. Thus, Gordimer constructs a double plot in the novel. Two stories are interwoven here. First is that of Bray, a liberal white returning to an unnamed newly independent African country and the other is that of his lover, Rebecca, whose stay continues after Bray's death. The relationship between Bray and Rebecca lies at the centre of the novel.

Besides the main double plot, there is another sub-plot in the novel which

involves the Wentzes. They are friends of Bray in the capital where they own a hotel. However, they are in the first place intellectuals and their aptitude for the world of business leaves a lot to be desired. They are non-Anglo Saxons. They come from the European continent. She is Jewish and he saved her from the "endlosung". Their daughter, Emmanuella has an affair with an African Politician, Ras Ahafe. He disappears in the political crisis and Wentzes' daughter elopes with him. As a result, the father has a mental break down, leaves his wife and comes to Bray in Gala. He finds solace there in brick laying while political fabric collapses around him. At the end of the novel, Bray's girl friend, Rebecca meets the daughter of Wentzes in London, where she has found a new lover. This sub-plot could have been used to bring out significant aspects of post-colonial society in South Africa. RasAhafe is a man without qualities, except he is suave. His love affair is inter-racial sex. Compounded with this are the complications of differences in social status that often go hand in hand with inter-racial love affairs. For example, the bar maid who marries the expatriate secondary school teacher, a true European secretary who makes the general manager. Society can make inter-racial sexual relationships painful. The indulgence in love is set in magnificent landscape of beautiful beaches, lakes etc. There is another sub-plot. Rebecca's husband and his friends had been doing illegal business in Africa. They have been supported by many powerful people to run

their business. Africa is being ruined and smuggled by these illegal poachers and white people that could not be stopped by any government. The friends of Gordon, Somshetsi and Nyanza whom Shinza was meeting across the borders was only to make a tie up so that he could find funds from them and buy arms and wage a war in the country. It shows that Africa's wealth and money is always misused either for the good or for the bad.

Thus, *A Guest of Honour* links concerns of politics, governance, morality of moral commitment and romance summing up in the process an entirely new and original way of seeing the world. This idea around which this novel unfolds its controlling vision is the view that the white liberal could play a part in the struggle for a liberated South Africa.

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## CITYSCAPE

**Gopal Lahiri\***

In its midst always  
The layers of filth and froth  
Holding in both hands the begging bowl  
With hope filled faces  
Striking into existence  
The city howls from its chaos and concrete.

There are times when  
a few pale white birds  
Hovering in the smoky sky

---

\* An earth scientist, bilingual poet, writer, editor, critic and translator, Mumbai.

And come down  
Kneeling in the underworld,  
A rapid search between the cracks,  
The lifeless ants and insects.  
Mithi river lights up the underbelly  
In her matchless eyes.

Glass building and beyond the dirt  
Quiet, calmly  
A loose wind blows under the grey clouds,  
Butterflies fly around  
In all corners of the nearby shady green,  
Grow out of the grave,  
in the company of the all shades of dead.

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## ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

Every Sunday morning I take a light jog around a park near my home. There's a lake located in one corner of the park. Each time I jog by this lake, I see the same elderly woman sitting at the water's edge with a small metal cage sitting beside her.

This past Sunday my curiosity got the best of me, so I stopped jogging and walked over to her. As I got closer, I realised that the metal cage was in fact a small trap. There were three turtles, unharmed, slowly walking around the base of the trap. She had a fourth turtle in her lap that she was carefully scrubbing with a spongy brush.

"Hello," I said. "I see you here every Sunday morning. If you don't mind my nosiness, I'd love to know what you're doing with these turtles."

She smiled. "I'm cleaning off their shells," she replied. "Anything on a turtle's shell, like algae or scum, reduces the turtle's ability to absorb heat and impedes its ability to swim. It can also corrode and weaken the shell over time."

"Wow! That's really nice of you!" I exclaimed.

She went on: "I spend a couple of hours each Sunday morning, relaxing by this lake and helping these little guys out. It's my own strange way of making a difference."

"But don't most freshwater turtles live their whole lives with algae and scum hanging from their shells?" I asked.

"Yep, sadly, they do," she replied.

I scratched my head. "Well then, don't you think your time could be better spent? I mean, I think your efforts are kind and all, but there are fresh water turtles living in lakes all around the world. And 99% of these turtles don't have kind people like you to help them clean off their shells. So, no offense... but how exactly are your localised efforts here truly making a difference?"

The woman giggled aloud. She then looked down at the turtle in her lap, scrubbed off the last piece of algae from its shell, and said, "Sweetie, if this little guy could talk, he'd tell you I just made all the difference in the world."

Courtesy: The Internet

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## PATRABALI-SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Madhulika Ghose\*

One's deepest thoughts, bravest resolutions and most tender emotions, I believe, find expression in their personal letters. The book *Patrabali-Swami Vivekananda* in Bengali lucidly brings forth the opinions of one of the greatest sons of India- Swami Vivekananda (born Narendranath Datta, Swamiji to millions). This inspirational book, published by Udbodhan Karjalay, compiles the letters written by this prolific thinker from 1888 to 1902 during his journey as a monk all over India, to America and Europe.

On reading this book, I could begin to fathom various aspects of Narendranath Datta's life, his gruelling struggles and unwavering dedication towards the betterment of his country. Even in the bleakest situations, his ability to maintain faith in himself and other followers of Sri Ramakrishna (Swamiji's spiritual mentor) is admirable. His deep knowledge and impartial insights into the scriptures of different religions expressed in this book are meaningful and thought provoking. Each individual should have the independence to do as he wishes, as long as it does not infringe on the rights of others. A man should be free to eat what he wants, pray

to whichever supreme power he desires, lead the life of an ascetic or *grihastha* (family-man); as this has no bearing on the purity of his moral character. This is mentioned in the letter to Haridas Biharidas Desai on 29th January, 1894 and to Singaravelu Mudaliar (Kidi) on 3rd March, 1894. Swamiji says that we have created idols of God in the human form and other restrictions related to religion in order to comprehend the supreme power with our limited mental resources as human beings. God, however, is beyond all these mortal restrictions. It brings to my mind a parallel in science: in quantum mechanics certain boundary conditions are imposed in order to get acceptable solutions to the Schrödinger's equation. These limitations are not intrinsic to the system, but are imposed to make the problem solvable with our limited quantitative capabilities.

The book mentions that one should aspire to be the best version of himself by following the path most suited to him, rather than cloning the actions of others without any meaningful results. This flexibility of thought is a reflection of immense respect towards all walks of life and is a vital trait to uphold the multifarious nature of Indian society. It is mentioned in the same letter to Singaravelu Mudaliar (*Kidi*) that the soul of each individual is like the Sun, with

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\* Researcher in Chemistry at Jadavpur University

varying degrees of cloud cover. It is our duty as righteous people to part these clouds and let the light of our souls permeate the dingiest corners of ignorance in this great nation, illuminating the most helpless and endowing them with hope for a wholesome future. If a man's stomach is full, only then can he be consistently dedicated to a noble cause. Education and good health, if imbibed among all, particularly the youth, can bring about wondrous change in the outlook of our society. Another subject that is reiterated in many letters (to Alasinga Perumal on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1893, to Haripada Mitra on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1893,

and others) is the emancipation of women. In this regard, Swami Vivekananda praises American women highly, giving them credit for making their society one of the most progressive in the world.

Swamiji's innate inquisitiveness, subtle sense of humour and remarkable humility permeates the entire book. Written by a true patriot and lover of humanity, it speaks of virtues which are being fast forgotten. This book is a doorway into the thoughts of one of the stellar visionaries of India, to be cherished, read by all and propagated zealously.

\*\*\*

Palkhiwala is no more. His observations at the relevant time are worth noting.

\*Nani Palkhiwala\* India's Most Eminent and Noted Jurist & Lawyer wrote ...

My dog sleeps about 20 hours a day. He has his food prepared for him. He can eat whenever he wants, 24/7/365. His meals are provided at no cost to him. By the way he does not need to pay for medical insurance. He visits the doctor once a year for his checkup, and again during the year if any medical needs arise. For this he pays nothing and nothing is required of him. He lives in a nice neighborhood in a house that is much larger than he needs, but he is not required to do any upkeep.

If he makes a mess, someone else cleans it up.

He has his choice of luxurious places to sleep.

He receives these accommodations absolutely free.

He is living like a King, and has absolutely no expenses whatsoever.

All of his costs are picked up by others who go out and earn a living every day.

I was just thinking about all this, and suddenly it hit me like a brick in the head.....

My dog is like the \*Indian POLITICIAN\*

(\*No offence\* \*intended- to dogs\*)

Source: Internet

Golden Article reprinted from Triveni Vol.3 January--February 1930

## POETRY OF DEVOTION

Prof. T. Virabhadru, M.A.

One of the great Krishna-worshippers in Ancient India as Bilvamangala or Lilasuka, the author of *Sri Krishna Karnamritam*, a series of lyrics in Sanskrit in which the poet, name not known, reveals his great devotion to Sri Krishna. He seems to have belonged to the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and though no accurate biographical details are within our reach, traditional accounts of him indicate that he was a Telugu Brahmin of Srikakulam and that a certain woman, Chintamani, whom he loved, was the cause of his transformation from worldliness and dissipation into saintliness and devotion. From the poem itself we can learn one very interesting thing: that the poet belonged to a family of staunch *Saivites*, enthusiastic about the significance, of the utterance of *Panchakshari* (the five letters –*Na ma ssi va ya*), but that his heart was ever throbbing to utter the name and see the smiling face, with its dark blue radiance, of the sweet little child of that famous milk-woman (Yasoda). As the title of the book indicates, the poem is full of a nectar-like music which is a solace to the ear and a solace to the soul. The poet's bhakti or devotion to God Vishnu in this shape or *Avatar* is most extraordinary. That he is specially in love

with this aspect of Sri Krishna's life, His wonderful child-hood, can be inferred from this one verse, among others of a similar nature, where he shows how even the image of Rama does not satisfy his soul as much as that of Krishna. Kodanda-Rama (Rama with the bow) one day stood before him, but the poet's reply shows that He was rejected:

‘Having given up Thy bow and arrow for a minute, take a flute in hand, and put a peacock-feather in Thy hair. I shall, Lord of Sita, gladly greet Thee.’

In the course of his rapturous description of the lovely little Boy, he sings:

Such a childhood! such lotus-face! such love! the charm of those ever-rolling eyes! that enchanting beauty! the wealth of that soft smile! It is true, it is true, I can declare to the world: ‘Even among the gods it is impossible to seek!

Addressing his God he says:

Thy gait is slow and majestic, Thy words are honeyed, Thy smile sprinkles nectar, Thy embrace is tight and warm; I

see; now I see, the reason why the Gopis are enamoured so highly of Thy deeds!

In his opinion his Boy-God is the most lovely object in the Universe and there is nothing else, however beautiful, that can approach it in excellence or charm. He vehemently proclaims:

If there be any, a thousand, who are critics of art, let them be;  
If there be any who are images of Supreme beauty, let them be;  
We have no quarrel with them: we don't want to please them either by flattery;  
All we know is, "Perfection of beauty exists only in one place—Thyself"!

His enthusiasm reaches its zenith when he, seeing, in one of his mystical moods, a little boy walking in the streets of Mathura, asks:

O, little girl, who is this boy that has just entered the streets of Mathura?

and recognising, on coming near, the jewel-like peacock-feather on the head, the inviting lips, the smiling face and embodied joy, exclaims in ecstasy:

Oh! What a splendour! Wonderful!  
Wonderful!  
Oh! A wonderful, very wonderful Light!

It is this picture that the poet feels painted on the tablet of his heart. He would sometimes feel that his mind was stuck up

in the meshes of Sri Krishna's love and could not be drawn out. Once he would feel that his heart was absorbed into His. Sometimes he would feel triumphant that he could catch Sri Krishna and keep Him in his heart, as when he makes one of the milk-maids say:-

Thou didst forcibly get out when I caught Thee in my hands. That was nothing. I would consider it manliness if Thou couldst by any means go out of my heart !

There are also occasions when the Bhakta feels depressed, for he cannot see his God-Friend; nevertheless he eagerly looks forward to the moment when he can enjoy eternal bliss in His presence. He often asks: "Will the time arrive when I can see Him? Will He ever cast a glance at me? Can I ever kiss Him to my heart's content with my two eyes?" and exclaims joyfully, "How happy would I be if I could see Him! How blessed the day on which I see Him!" But the thought that the God who has manifold duties to perform and might forget him altogether, often intrudes upon his peace, reminding us of Tukaram the great Maratha psalmist who said: -

So many tasks and cares  
Are Thine, while I—  
I am forgot thus, alas,  
And left to die!

He admits that Krishna is absorbed in the music of the flute but he often asks himself, "cannot the sounds of my song

creep into His ear in the intervals?" Seeing no way out of the difficulty, he makes an earnest appeal to the flute in these words:

Dear Flute, tasting, as thou dost, the sweet honey of the breath of Sri Krishna's smiling lotus-face, grant me one boon. Being so near His pearl-lip, wilt thou, unobserved by others, whisper into the ears of Nanda's son my sad plight?

The devotee's condition is pitiable when, in spite of all his efforts, he cannot see Him or meet Him. His song is pathetic when he sings:

Friend of the helpless, Ocean of kindness, Hari, I have been spending fruitless days without sight of Thee. Alas! Alas! What a pity!

Once or twice he tried to catch his friend but was defeated in his purpose, for,

Sweeter than Sweetness, it captivated my heart: Quicker than Quickness, it eluded my grasp.

On the other hand, Sri Krishna played the little thief that He generally is:

It was He who stole away the hearts of pious sages:

It was He who stole away the garments of the love-intoxicated cowherdesses:

It was He who stole away the pride of Indra, Lord of the Heavens:

How powerless I am when he is stealing

away the lotus of my heart now!

This sage, like all other poet-admirers of Krishna, represents Him as one who steals away cream and butter, and whatever is tasteful in the world. Undoubtedly the human heart is the most precious thing on earth, and what wonder is there if the Great Stealer carries away men's hearts with Him? The poet says that on one occasion he met Him, but his heart was not satisfied and was longing to see Him again. We are told, 'Love grows by what it feeds on,' and it is certainly a curious stream, for, the more we drink of it, the greater is the thirst. The enthusiasm of the poet for his object of love is so intense that whatever belongs to Him is lovely; His lips, His smile, His feet, His anklets, His flute, His peacock-feather, His blue colour and His sleep. The Child-Krishna is ever the object of his devotion, whose spirit has sunk in him. He is the dream of his dreams and it is enough if his dear God should listen to his last prayer:

Standing, legs cross-wise, with the peacock-feather adorning the head, singing the flute song with the head turned to one side, how blessed should I be if this Light, the Transcendental and the kind, stood before me at the time of my final parting!

or will Sri Krishna remember him at least after his death? He suggests:

The bamboo on the bank of the Jumna has been blessed by its association with Sri

Krishna's diamond-lip.  
Can I have the fortune, in my next birth at  
least, of my being born on the Jumna bank  
to serve as Krishna's flute and be blessed?

He confesses that he sees only one  
figure, hears only one sound, and knows  
only one thing:

Protector of cows, Ocean of love, Husband  
of Lakshmi, Destroyer of Kamsa, Saviour  
of the Elephant-King,  
Father of the three worlds, Lotus-eyed God,  
Lord of the milk-maids, save me. I confess

I know nothing except Thee  
A confession which all wise men have made  
after much travailing. After having read and  
read, thought and thought, every great sage  
has admitted, with Tukaram the devotee of  
Vithoba:  
Naught know I but Thy name alone.

(The writer apologises to all lovers of Sanskrit  
for having ventured upon this 'free translation'  
of the lyrics of one of the greatest poet-mystics  
of the world. Apart from the inaccuracy of the  
translation, in the tame and prosaic language of  
the translator, one misses the exquisite music  
and the wonderful lyric charm of the original).

\*\*\*

## READERS' MAIL

Glad to know that an annual Endowment  
Lecture is organised as a tribute to  
Prof.I.V.Chalapati Rao. His invaluable  
speeches and writings, matchless  
contributions to the Triveni journal are a  
perennial source of inspiration and  
guidance. I am immensely happy that the  
Triveni Foundation is carrying forward

Prof.Chalapati Rao's excellent work  
promoting our nation's literary,  
philosophical and cultural traditions and  
many distinguished writers have been  
contributing highly informative and thought  
provoking articles.

M.G.Narasimha Murthy.  
Principal (Retd.), Hyderabad

\*\*\*

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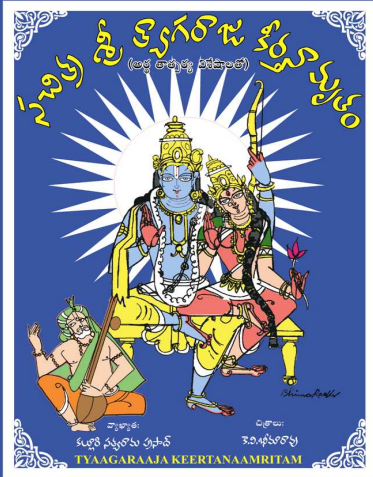
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