

A Tryst with Mother Nature and the Beast within – Can Humans be different?

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

Dedicated to: Cyril Desbruslais who taught me the real meaning of the Bible: whose style I have kept in mind while daring to write the play. Shibdas Ghosh whose two articles Cultural Movement in India and our tasks and Cultural Revolution of China inspire the content. Brother Philip Pinto of the Christian Brothers and Kavita Das Principal of St. John's High School Chandigarh both of whom have inspired me to believe that institutional change is indeed possible if we submit to the call within.



FOREWORD

I think of my Viren, one of my closest friends, a former more-than-committed and inspiring member of my youth group, the SSU, as a more than worthy successor to my life's work.

He had written to me formerly a sketch of the play he was intending to write and I advised him to write for himself the dialogue! What followed was a veritable cornucopia of playwritings that would grace any thinking person's restless mind.

He says he is indebted to my work as a playwright and director of drama. If this is so, it is likely that he, my pupil, would surpass the productions of me, his Master.

I have sought, by my writings, to denounce all casteism, injustice and inequality from whatever source and I am grateful to him to see that my ideals will live on. Viren has always been an activist besides a deep thinker. You are blessed to hold his work in your hands.

Cyril Desbruslais sj.

July 24, 2020

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My Reply

Dear Cyril,

It is not just a playwright and director of drama. You made me open my eyes to the real meaning of the Bible too. That is what is written in my dedication to you.

Catechism class was just after the Biology class when we were taught Darwin. Your uncle Fr Vernon Desbruslais came to teach it. I immediately asked him about evolution.

His answer, science answers the temporal world and the Church the spiritual. It was not until your exposition of the Bible I was able to understand how to look at the text. This was later confirmed in the article on Family Private Property and the State by Engels. However Engels in Feuerbach and the end of Classical German Philosophy dismissed the power of love.

Cyril I cannot surpass the master. He is the one who opened my eyes. What I can do is to train others to see the work of the master.

I have not been as scathing about power mongers as you are in your plays. I have however cut them down to size, ridiculed them by comparison or through subtlety. I am in close touch with a world that does not take kindly to ridiculing authority. You followed a different method to distance yourself.

Due to your eyes I saw it pretty close up and could not distance myself the way you did.

What I was surprised about was that it was thirty years since I met up with you again but it was as if it had never happened.

In the current world I was scared of proclaiming Christianity directly but did so by practise.

What gave me confidence was to see Genny enjoy the very same thing though differently.

That is when I thought. There is something out there that does care what I think, or what anyone thinks for that matter.

Regards

Viren

King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin

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Dedicated to my grandmother: Amy Lobo her seven siblings Jovith, Abel, Louisa, Liban, Lawrence, Sylvie and Lucian. The grandchildren of Especioza a single mother who brought up their father Aogustinho Pinto whose home due to a quirk of fate could be restored to its pristine glory by my Aunt Marie



Introduction:

This play first written in poetry form was an attempt to cover the wide gamut of issues emerging due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The play places the two issues of the outbreak namely the disease on one hand and the economic crisis on the other. It considers the economic crisis and issues to be primary and hence shows how the powers that be are using the COVID19 pandemic as an outlet through which to pour all the economic woes that will unfold. Scientific theories on handling pandemics and modelling theories indicate that it is immunity that is the real solution to the pandemic. Lockdown is merely a way to control the numbers getting ill at a given point in time. When a number of economic facilities had to run as usual to provide the basic facilities and amenities to the population, why then could a scenario not be envisaged where the Society is able to work out a drill of how to work with the pandemic? The reason is not hard to find. The infrastructure to work despite the pandemic lies with the big corporates and the lock down is a convenient tool to drive many out of business at a time of all out market crisis. The scare is also a convenient tool to silence critics and imposing the most draconian form of surveillance on the population.

In a situation where the population is fragmented on caste and religious lines there is a need to take the debate away from the current communal politics being played out which in practise do not provide a real challenge leave alone an alternative to the anti people actions of the government. The play therefore takes the position that a capitalist government is also interested in a solution to the issue within its own bounds. It therefore shows how capitalist concerns play out while arriving at a solution. The play also takes the position that is the superiority of nature over man and the recognition of nature's laws that will provide the people with the wherewithal to break the Capitalist stranglehold on the control of natural resources. This of course includes humans as part of nature and collective actions in the interest of the community that will provide the impetus for real change on the ground.

The second part of the play therefore focuses on three communities namely tribals, pastoralists and fishers as being at the cutting edge of change. Destruction of their life support systems favour the Capitalist while its preservation would involve, restoration and modernisation using the latest developments in renewable energy, Geographical information systems and mobile and internet technology can bring about modernisation without displacement. The play therefore challenges the current growth paradigm as being destructive of nature and points to a development path that builds on the historic learning from nature using modern tools in the control of communities.

There is also an attempt to place three major religions Hinduism, Islam and Christianity in the backdrop of the socio-cultural and economic context in which they developed so as to extract the correct lessons that they have contributed to the building of society. The play does not attempt to be a one cap fits all and hence shows the variations that the landscape provides to the livelihood, culture and support systems. It also focuses on community based approaches reflected in the way the produce from the commons is harvested and governance systems encompassing them. It is hoped that other vital aspects governing the development of society and its impact on nature will take the appropriate lessons from the three communities addressed in this play.

Will mention that small farmers, the genetic seed diversity that they encompass and the issues related to the link between farming systems and the three systems mentioned here have not been covered in the play. Since the interplay is very complex it has been left for now and will

be taken up at a time when it will be possible to do justice to it. Certainly the propositions outlined here will help in that process.

Dramatis Personae

The characters in the play have been given names corresponding to characters from history or art. The idea being to highlight a particular trait: Having done that the character travels freely through history with the idea of being able to identify that trait in present personalities and examine its relevance for the future as well. In that sense the personalities are drawn from reality but are not real. Any resemblance to real personalities therefore is accidental.

Eden: The most powerful Capitalist Nation of the world.

Shaolin: The land where the Dragon originated

King Lear: Character in Shakespeare's play. The resemblance however ends there. The idea is to transpose this character into the Capitalist /Imperialist world of today as ruler of the most powerful Capitalist Nation today.

Edward: Minister of Education

Patricia: Courtesan

David: Courtier

Daniel: Minister of Health

John: King Lear's driver

Tarzan: Nickname given by King Lear to Bajrang Bali the ruler of Mahishmati

Schindler: A Capitalist taken from Schindler's list. The resemblance however ends there. Unlike the movie where he uses his company to save lives, here he represents the interest of monopoly Capital. In some ways the anomaly is intended as the demonization of individuals is sought to be countered as well.

Robert: Chief of Army staff in the Kingdom of Eden

Professor Wiseacker: An epidemiologist.

Scientist Eva: Social Scientist

Professor Natrajan: Developed a programme for modelling scenarios.

Beatrice: Human rights activist

Janice: A Demonstrator

Ulee: A Consumer in Shaolin

Xiao: Ulee's husband

Scientist Lin: A zoologist

Scientist Jason: An ecologist

Mahishmati: The name for India in the play. The idea being to bring in elements not related to reality.

Bajrang Bali: Another name for Hanuman and the name of a group of his devotees. Again the resemblance ends there. Unlike his namesake, his devotion is not to Ram but to self interest and the Capitalist motive of profit being his *raison de etre*.

Katappa: Taken from the movie Bahubali. As in the movie his interest is in the nation and being a nation governed by the profit motive whatever he does is to serve that interest. However the resemblance ends there, this Katappa does not have the pangs of conscience that the Katappa in Bahubali does.

Farookh: Head priest at a mosque

Sugreev: Chief of Police

Dhanna Seth: The Indian version of Schindler.

Amrapali: A famous Indian courtesan known for her intelligence and wit and highly respected by the court. The resemblance however ends there as the character follows the requirements of the play.

Tripti: Collector of a District in Mahishmati

Ramu: Peon at the Collectorate

Vishwanath: Collector's secretary

Ramanuja: The Director of an IT company in Panchwati

Mayor of Panchwati

Asha: A wild life scientist

Anita: A veterinarian

Mohan: An economist

Big Chief Seattle: A Suquamish and Duwamish Indian Chief in America during the 19th Century. The character adapted for the purposes of the play.

Birsa Munda: A tribal leader from Jharkhand around the same time as Big Chief Seattle. He is widely respected by tribals across the country for his spirited fight against the British.

Hunting Hyena: A tribal from Papua New Guinea

Running Brook: A tribal from Shaolin

Whispering Wind: A tribal from the Amazon Forests

Mohan the medicine man: Nicknamed the Bhopa of Udaipur

Sarita: A tribal from the region of Chhota Udepur Gujarat

Krishna: A human version of Lord Krishna (the comparison ends there).

Muhammad: A version of Prophet Muhammad (the comparison ends there).

Genghis Khan: A version of the great Mongol warrior Genghis Khan (the comparison ends there).

Brahmagupta: The mathematician and astronomer who in 628 AD first describes zero as a number. The concept of nothingness existed in different forms earlier.

Atmaram Gujjar: One of the pastoralists listening in on the discussion along with his herd

Hunter: His dog

Peter the fisherman: Having multiple identities one being Peter the apostle of Jesus. The other being leader of fishermen and the third the current Pope Francis: Rolled into one yet distinct from each of them as well.

Albert Pinto: A reference to Cardinal George Pell but with a slight twist as well to accommodate the context of the play

Mathew: A reference to the tax collector Mathew who became the disciple of Jesus but with a twist to accommodate the context of the play as well.

Others: As specified in the play.

King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin – Part I

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Dedicated to my Aunt Marie and my memory of her singing Julie Andrews – My favourite things from The Sound of Music and my father Francis Lobo for his biting wit and converting Waste into wealth

Act 1 Scene 1: The Beginning of the duel

The scene: The lawns in the garden of the palace of the Kingdom of Eden. King Lear sipping tea with his Ministers, courtiers in tow.

Edward (Minister of Education): I say guys have you seen this news of the dragon laying waste to a small town in Shaolin?

Other Ministers (nodding in unison): Yes, shame!! Thousands in hospital, hundred's dead, rest of the population in dread.

King Lear (*looking at the pretty waitress*): Lovely dress Patricia; hey David (*gesturing to one of the courtiers*) can you get some flowers to go with it. (*Then lazily*) What was that again Edward, something about who had who? A dragon you say, serves them right. Think they can out-stage us on 5G research!!

Edward: No, no my King, something about bats in the curry I was told, woke up the dragon from his slumber. You remember the one that laid many low in 2003? Well this one is a morphed cousin. More dangerous I am told. Can jump continents, not long before it is here I fear.

King Lear: Nonsense my dear Edward nonsense. What can harm Eden? God's own country, we have security cover, the best the world has seen. Blast that dragon to kingdom come I say. *Light dim, somebody comes to the front of the stage about to read out news of the dragon laying waste country after country and the cynical approach of one of them where they focussed on the young, leaving the old to the mercy of the dragon on the plea that they halfway into the grave. Reports that the young were more resilient and that it was the old that in fact needed care went unheeded. He exists and the lights focus back on the lawns of the palace in Eden.*

Daniel (*Minister of health gesticulating wildly to King Lear who is sitting calmly*)

King Lear: I say Daniel what's all this fuss about, we are the chosen people nothing to worry about. There! Get one of those electric badminton rackets; we swat those flies away like that. *Waving the racket in the air, electric sparks crackled as mosquitoes died.*

The Ministers sip tea for a while, talking and laughing with each other. Lights dim for while and come back on again. John the King's driver comes rushing in

John (*unable to control himself*): The dragon is here!!

Ministers (*and the rest in unison*): What!! (*Exclamations of horror*).

King Lear sits calmly

King Lear: What with you guys get back to work I say.

Lights dim: Somebody comes to the front stage to read out reports about the exploits of the dragon in the land of Eden. Exits: Lights come back on again. All sitting around the table in lawn as usual

King Lear: (*shouts*): Somebody get me Tarzan from the land of milk and honey. (*Mobile given to him*), hey buddy can you send over 50 million hydroxychloroquine tablets to Eden pronto.

Tarzan: (*voice only*) we need them here too King Lear.

King Lear: Hear what I said, send them pronto (*bangs the phone down*).

Lights dim, all exit.

Act 1 Scene 2: The Corporation and Corona

Scene shifts to the palace of King Lear. King Lear is in conversation with the Health Minister Daniel. He makes a call and Schindler the business man comes in after a while query and anxiety on his face

King Lear: *(looking around expansively)* Guys are we all set for the dragon?

Daniel: Schindler what do you say *(Looking at Schindler anxiously)*?

Schindler: Cost you \$100 billion

Daniel: Done, show me the plan

(Schindler opens the folder he has brought with him and puts it on the table. All three peer over. Health Secretary has in the meantime been called in too. King Lear looks satisfied as if the cat has just got the cream).

King Lear: So lock-down it is to be and quarantine for those affected. Will keep the numbers under control, and the period extended too *(Shakes hand vigorously with Schindler barely being able to contain his glee: Picks up the phone).*

King Lear: *(over the phone)* get me Robert Chief of Army Staff.

Daniel: *(now his turn to shake Schindler's hand).* We will add a research package as well. Put down another \$200 billion I say.

(Enters Robert: The Chief of Army Staff).

Robert: You called my King?

King Lear: Yes Robert, you see lockdown will have to be imposed. Army to be on high alert, we need to keep an eye on all those who protest, give them the once over in the lock up.

National emergency you know and elections soon after.

Robert: *(Clicks his heels)* done sir *(walks away).*

King Lear: Make sure that your men ensure the safety of those who will work to produce for the Nation *(calling after him).* *(Then winking at the other two),* we can't have business suffering due to the lockdown, who will bank roll the elections then? *(All three laugh).* Make sure you have the malls covered and well stocked up Schindler. We don't want to have my bosom buddies fighting over who gets the spoils do we *(winks)? (Then making a playful push at Schindler)* you will get the lion's share of course *(all laugh).*

(Lights dim: A narrator comes to the front of the stage. In the darkness one can see shadows giving the following message: after the lock down imposed, appropriate newspaper coverage to create the right kind of scare into people, Schindler oversaw it all. Toilet paper and masks in short supply as the mad rush to get them could not be satisfied in time. Police were overseeing the process to ensure that physical distance was maintained. A little whack from the baton from time to time did the trick. One could see people jumping up and down rubbing their backsides. The narrator talks of the large scale damage to small industry. Those without the infrastructure to match the conditions for production .Lights come on. King Lear,

Edward, Schindler and the Health Secretary can be seen chairing a press conference. King Lear then gives a speech shedding tears over the death and destruction that has happened.

King Lear *(with a sorrowful face):* It is with great pain I announce that more than 65,000 people have succumbed to the dragon; more than a million have been affected in some way.

(Then shakes his head) no matter we will rise again. The Kingdom that the lord has built will not perish from this earth *(media claps)*.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3: People's response to the dragon of Shaolin

(Scene different parts of Eden and the world for purposes of depiction a collage will do – namely people representing different countries/ issues standing together in pockets).

Professor Wiseacker: *(to an audience of fellow professors/scientists)* have put down my views in detail in a u-tube interview. You guys might like to have a look. Basically on the basis of my study of epidemiology and pandemics I am saying that without immunity, the dragon cannot be conquered. Lock- down slows down the spread of immunity and hence lengthens the period. Children are very resilient and history of development of mankind shows that with the passage of history we have survived all adversity so let's be bold. Let's face the dragon head on. And above all children should be allowed to mingle with each other fall sick and recover. Immunity will come. Yes the old have a problem, we need to take care that they are somewhat protected and not exposed too much. For me no big deal I have dealt with dragons all my life, I am not afraid of going out into the open.

Scientist Eva: All well for you to say! You consider people to be a statistic. If 1% get infected, no big deal. For me that is 70 million. And deaths, 3% of this 2.1 million. Far too many, far too many: *(shaking her head vigorously)*.

Professor Natrajan: Hey guys. I am no epidemiologist. I have developed a programme that shows the rate of spread of the dragon in different scenarios. Depending on the competence of the governance you can take your pick. Eden is different though I would say; King Lear has systematically broken down the elaborate system put in place by his predecessors. Favours his buddies, giving them incentives left and right to bail them out of the market crisis and we call this the free economy!! I say!! *(Stamps his feet and shakes his head)*. *(In another pocket of the stage, people wearing masks showing placards- down with King Lear. We want jobs not lock-down, relief package for the unemployed and businesses destroyed. Shouts to this effect: In still another pocket)*.

Beatrice: Petrol filling up fast, even with a down payment by the government at \$35 a barrel, no takers. Who wants to have their house burnt down, where is the storage?

Janice: Yeah, but my brother told me that way back in his country, the government has not decreased rather increased the price, using the opportunity to suck the country dry, literally. *(Yet another pocket)*

Ulee: *(rubbing her hands)* Lock-down opened up at last. Catch up on my shopping

Xiao: Not so fast my dear, reports of the dragon making a comeback doing the rounds. *(Back to the first pocket)*

Scientist Eva: We were wrong about the dragon thriving only in the cold. It is able to survive in hot weather too. Not natural it seems to me.

Scientist Lin: Have written at length about my hypothesis that the dragon is manmade. Else how these properties?

Scientist Jason: Nonsense, this place is the cutting edge centre for research in 5G, impacts the radio-waves causing mutation in the genetic make-up and with man eating all that thrash from the wild – bats and yuck !! You have its entry into the human food chain.

Professor Natrajan: Yeah Jason, I have read this report that the dragon has mutated eleven times, different strains for different conditions. Possible you know, these creatures mutate fast and adapt to new conditions.

Professor Wiseacker: Yes dears, as I said, the only solution to the dragon is immunity. We have the inbuilt ability to resist, let nature do its bit we are a part of it.

(Back to the protest pocket)

Crowd: Down with Shaolin. Shaolin to compensate!! *(Showing of fists)*.

(A reader comes to the front. Announces: King Lear has asked Shaolin to compensate)

Crowd: Three cheers for King Lear.

Eva; (muttering to her fellow scientists from her corner) of course he will elections around the corner. Something to placate the people's anger needs to be done.

(Lights dim)

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 1 – The beginning of the duel

As King Lear in his garden relaxed
News from Shaolin percolated in
Dragon laying waste the people of Shaolin
Eaten bats it had seemed
Dragon had entered the bloodstream
The People of Eden were alarmed
Dragon would soon be here they thought
King Lear cast aside their fears
Who can lay waste the Kingdom of Eden bawled he
We'll swat the dragon aside with the bumble bee
Time passed and all was well in Eden
The reports of a kingdom in between
The dragon was spitting fire in the North of that country
Save the young and leave the old
They are halfway into the grave already
King Lear's bawl became a little milder
But did not lose its power nonetheless
No one to worry we'll sort the mess
Then Eden too saw the dragon but King Lear was unfazed
Work important, we will sort the dragon out said he
As the dragon grew stronger King Lear did too
Ordered all countries to supply emergency drugs to Eden first
What happens to your country?
I don't care he burst

Exeunt.

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Act 1 Scene 2 - The Corporation and Corona

King Lear his Health Minister summoned
Are we geared up?
Health Minister Schindler called
What's the scene queried he
Cost you a \$100b said he
Done said the Minister show me the plan
Quarantine it is
To keep the number manageable
And the period extended
So
Research package
Drug drill all justified
And surveillance to boot
Will keep the military satisfied
Scare, protest to control
Essential production to continue of course

Raking in the billions for the bourse
Nexus to be tight
So we do not end up in a fight
Toilet paper and masks in scarce supply
Make sure the taps don't run dry
Malls to be roped into the plan
Physical distance whether man or woman
Those without infrastructure had their business crash
No worry
Big Daddy picks up the pieces
Cry a tear
Make sure media is near

Exeunt

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Act 1 Scene 3: The people's response to Dragon of Shaolin

Mixed bag it was
Epidemiologist showed that real solution lay in immunity
Lockdown delays this process and hence lengthens it
Result is another pandemic worse than the dragon
Unemployment and malnourishment its name
Another developed a model that showed
The impact the dragon had in different scenarios
Total lock down recommended for the incompetent
As exponential was the rise when one is not wise
Internationally the dragon hit the most developed
The kingdom of Eden now touching 70,000 casualties
Others in between having 28,000
The less developed fared better
Was it better arrangements or the temperature?
No one knows for sure
The Unemployment, malnutrition pandemic in the inverse
Overall who was worse?
Eden's neighbour had a problem storing petroleum
If you could help you got paid for it too
But in a distant land with milk and honey
Prices remained up all through
Special case
Or government pocketed the money
No one knew
In the land of Shaolin it was declared
War against the dragon had been won

Others too followed suit
Then reports of attacks started trickling in
And in pockets the dragon had to be reigned in
Other reports of the dragon mutating also circulated
An explanation to it being natural and not man made
As rumour mongers speculated
Hanky panky reared its voice
Shaolin to compensate was the advice
A neat diversion trick for King Lear
For whom re-election loomed near.

Exeunt

King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin

Act 2

Change of Scene: *The scene now shifts to the land of milk and honey and King Lear's buddy. This land has a long glorious but chequered history. Thanks to the generosity of the God's perennial rivers flowed across the land and where they did not shepherd groups inhabited. Taking advantage of the seasonal variations in the bounty of nature they made hostile land inhabitable too.*

The rich mineral and other wealth of the country invited many invading hordes from time to time who looted and raided the land taking back slaves and women as part of their bounty as well. Some decided to settle here too and got into mutually beneficial relations with the resident population. However the raids left a scar that was difficult to heal.

While there were those who showed their valour and devotion by giving up their lives rather than surrender, others worked out many innovative ways to get the best of both worlds. While for some out and out being party to loot was their agenda, for others feeding on the anger and lost prestige was the way.

King Lear's buddy became a part of it and like a vampire fed on the blood of the 'descendants' of the former oppressive Emperor hated by many. One who slaughtered his brothers and imprisoned his own father to acquire the throne That his full life was spent in battle and that it led to the glorious exploits of the mountain rat are among the things that are known.

This famous empire initiated by the Mountain rat came to an inglorious end. A brief spark for Independence and then all was over. The conquerors then built the railways troops and raw materials to quickly transport. A half naked fakir used this infrastructure the people to rally. The oppressive rule was put an end to but the white man replaced by the brown and this struggle just another jewel in the crown. Corruption increased rapidly and with it the protests.

The 'foreign native' rule was overturned and hope began to rise and King Lear's buddy rode the tide. The voice of protest became shriller. As glorious history of this country: sent to the cleaner's. A tale of two countries it told. Citizen's laws to be amended: to crush the bold.

It was then that entered the Dragon of Shaolin

Act 2 Scene 1- King Lear's buddy and the land of milk and honey

(The Scene: Grounds of the Ram Leela, King Lear's buddy Bajrang Bali, his aides and the monkey brigade)

Bajrang Bali *(pacing up and down restlessly)*: This dragon sure is a menace, laid waste many countries. Mahishmati he will attack for sure. Are we ready?

Kattapa (Home Minister): Yes sure, Mahishmati is ready for anything. But *(frowning)*.

Bajrang Bali: But what Katappa?

Kattapa: Let's see. We have our annual review convention coming up. And....

Bajrang Bali: And what Kattapa, why this hemming and hawing?

Kattapa: And that little matter in our Central province.

Bajrang Bali: Oh yeah, the King of Panchal has indicated his willingness to switch sides: Matter of time.

Kattapa: Whispering in Bajrang Bali's ear *(Bajrang Bali smiles)*.

Bajrang Bali: What are we waiting for then Katappa, plan A it is. Keep plan B, C ready just in case. You know Shakuni, clever rascal. Never loses an opportunity to scheme against the government.

(Lights dim, somebody comes to the front of the stage and announces. Annual convention goes ahead as planned the government in the Central provinces overturned with the help of the King of Panchal. Opposition cries foul but deed is done. Lock-down announced suddenly all states unprepared. Crowds mill at the borders. Lights come back on; an emissary from a religious community is seen entering Ram Leela approaching the Chief of Police Sugreev).

Farookh *(to Sugreev)*: Sir, lock-down happened suddenly. We managed to get 2,500 delegates out of the country but 1,500 still cooped up. What to do.

Sugreev: You knew this was in the offing, why did you go ahead with your convention. Now pay the price for your violation.

(Repeated entreaties did not work: Farookh went away dejected, lights dim. Someone comes to the front and announces that the dragon has attacked two hundred cooped up in Sultanganj mosque, Shouts of horror and shame on the infidels can be heard all round. Arrangements to evacuate Sultanganj were taken, across the country they returned and along with reports of the spread of the dragon too. Shouts of shame, shame intensified. Lights come on)

Bajrang Bali *(taking centre stage)*: This is a terrible time for the country, but with the help of all of you, we shall overcome. I announce we arrange for a clap on the Thali on Sunday that will drive the dragon away.

(Light dim, the clanger of the thali clap can be heard. As the din subsides, somebody comes to the front of the stage and announced the spread of the wrath of the dragon. Lights come on and Bajrang Bali takes centre stage again).

Bajrang Bali: I am glad that with your cooperation the dragon has been contained, there are pockets where it has done mischief, no matter, we will prevail, and we need your cooperation for that. Lock-down will be extended and again on Sunday let's have a light's out for solidarity

(Lights dim, the announcer comes to the front of the stage and reports of concerns that the electricity supply may trip with this sudden dip, care was taken of course, shows that there is a will there is a way. From somewhere somebody shouted, this is not solidarity day this is party foundation day, let's celebrate, crackers can be heard then all was still, lights come on again. Sugreev is now in charge giving instructions).

Sugreev: *(to his police officers)* make sure arrangements are in place to keep a watch on those who oppose the steps taken by our dear and beloved leader Bajrang Bali. Release all the under-trials in the jails: they are no threat to us and our fight with the dragon. Make sure you round up those trouble makers who were the ring leaders behind the commemoration of the victory of the vermin *(with foreign help of course, how else could they defeat the representatives of the Gods)* at Mahar Shegaon. They call it the defeat of Ram Rajya. This is treason! That it amounts to establishment of Goonda Raj is a small matter in comparison. Lock them up in jail I say. And those women leaders of the minority community protesting the new Citizen's amendment bill we have passed. Peaceful protest they call it. Stirring up trouble I say. Arrest them: Pronto!!

All Policemen in attendance: yes sir! *(Salute, click their heels and leave).*

(Focus shifts to another part of the stage, Bajrang Bali the centre).

Admirer 1: Sir wonderful work being done by you. FAO is highly appreciative, very few deaths as compared to others.

(All nod in agreement and clap).

(Lights dim, announcer comes to the front of the stage and reports. FAO warns of a bigger pandemic than the dragon, that of unemployment and malnutrition. Affect a sixth of the population of the globe it will. Lights come on. The people can be seen congratulating each other on the marvellous performance of the government).

All: *(Keeping distance from each other but smiling and laughing)* three cheers to Bajrang Bali. North, South, East, West Bajrang Bali is the best.

(Lights dim all exit).

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 2: The Response

(Scene: a tapestry of the land Mahishmati. Among these is a press conference being organised by Amrapali the Finance Minister).

Amrapali (*Minister of Finance*): We are deeply concerned about the hardship that the people of the country will be going through as a result of the lock down and post lock down as well. The government has developed a Rs 20 lakh crore relief package for the same. Efforts to ensure relief at the doorstep and money right into your bank accounts are part of it. An app Arogya Setu is also being developed so that upto date information of the impact the dragon is having can be got. Please cooperate by downloading the app and providing the necessary details.

Reporters: (*rushing up to her with mikes*) Mam, can you give us more details of how this will unfold and the steps taken to ensure that the common man will get the desired relief in time.

Amrapali: No time for that now, you will be updated from time to time. Special permission will be given to the press to ensure that they have free right of passage to report on what is going on. Government will be keeping an eye so that rumour mongers and divisive forces do not get free reign.

(At another place on stage, barricades with police in control. Crowds milling but cannot get past. Limited arrangements made for investigation and discharge – free passage to the next destination).

Police: Government has given instructions. Better alive than struck dead by the dragon. So any one of you found violating will be beaten back and blue and if necessary arrested as well.

Somebody from the crowd: What are the arrangements for stay, toilets, food etc?

Police: Stay calm, all will be provided for.

(Some found their way out by going through the bye lanes, at another pocket a man can be seen trudging, collapses from exhaustion. A voice mentions, - he was just fifty Kms from home. And old man, five year old girl and her mother seen trudging too, somehow they reach home and are welcomed – but from a distance. The hordes finally settle down at a community kitchen. Get served.

One of the people: After drinking up the dal served to him. It has been five days since I have eaten and after that I get this!! (*Gesturing to the dal being served*):

Another: No work! We are at the mercy of the government and well wishers.

Another: (*Puts her hands on her face*). What did we do to deserve this? (*Looks up, to the skies*):

(Lights dim and after a while come on again, a medical team is seen trying to approach a slum, angry people preventing them, throwing stones spitting).

Doctor: Look we are not interested in the rumours spreading around. We are simply concerned about your welfare; let us do a check up.

Somebody from the crowd: We know why you have come, you want to lock us all in, nobody is sick here. Go away!!

(Scuffle)

Nurse: Let's go Doctor; this is not the time when people will listen to reason. If they need us, we will get to know. For now nothing to do, but leave them to their fate.

(Lights dim, news of the dragon inflicting damage across the country spread wide. The extent of deaths less, but terror struck despite that: Lights come on again, people in dread and confined to their homes, police patrols ensuring everyone stayed in. Prayers being offered to ensure victory over the dragon):

Lights dim

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 3: After the dragon in the Land of Milk and Honey

(The Scene: A collage of different parts of Mahishmati. Schindler, Dhanna Seth can be seen inking an agreement with minions in tow).

Schindler: *(Shaking hands with Dhanna Seth after signing the agreement)* done then my dear Dhanna Seth, will wire my share of the Rs.40, 000 crores into the joint account we have created. Get to work pronto my man, strike when the iron is hot!

Dhanna Seth: Yes Schindler, our malls are in place, infrastructure available, all it needs is the app. Thanks to our preparedness during the demonetisation drive our mobiles are in every hand. Soon the app will be too. Delivery at your doorstep our call: no need to even come to the mall.

Schindler: Yeah, we did that in Eden too. Working pretty well, with government's Arogya Setu app in place the low down on everyone on our finger tips as well. *(Rubbing his hands and chuckling).*

(In another, the room of the collector, two orders have just come to her).

Tripti: *(After reading the first order and putting it down, rings the bell)* Ramu!! *(Ramu comes in hurriedly)* Get me Vishwanath quickly. *(Also picks up the phone and calls him).*

Vishwanath, I need to come here at once with the Land bank files.

Ramu: Yes Mam *(exits)*

(Ramu and Vishwanath come in together, Ramu holding the files).

Vishwanath; Here they are Mam *(handing over the files).*

Tripti: Hummm *(picks up the phone and talks).* Sir we can spare 20,000 hectares for this venture. *(Listens for a while)* What not enough *(thinks for minute)?* Okay sir we can make it 40,000 hectares. Good cause sir, put Shaolin in its place for sure. *(Listens)* Yes sir, I will do sir. *(Then to Vishwanath)* Vishwanath we need to locate another 20,000 hectares.

Vishwanath: Mam wherefrom we will get it? All land locked.

Tripti: Those podu cultivators, producing nothing much. We will allocate that.

Vishwanath: But Mam.

Tripti: Do as I say Vishwanath. This is war. War against Shaolin: National interest

Vishwanath. There is another important order on the EIA *(Environment Impact Assessment)*, we will talk about some other time. In short will say, it finishes our powers to raise objections.

Vishwanath: *(In deep thought for a while)* Okay mam *(walks out a little stiffly as if in suppressed anger).*

(Ramanuja with the Mayor of Panchwati)

Ramanuja: Due to the dragon and work from home, our facilities are empty. We can turn this into a 450 bed hospital facility for those affected by the dragon.

Mayor of Panchwati: Good idea Ramanuja, we can do with this. Keep them isolated from other patients.

Ramanuja: Okay we work out the modalities.

(Group of scientists)

Asha: Have you seen my u-tube post on the vulture?

Anita: Yes, the destruction due to the diclophenac?

Asha: Yes.

Mohan: The vulture very much alive and feeding on its prey (*smiling*).

Anita: You mean the big guns running the economy.

Mohan (*smiling*): Yes.

Asha: (*throwing up her hands*) Nature will win this battle; conserve the real vulture, the man made one will die.

All: Yes!

(*Song: We shall overcome. All come onto the stage. Song ends the cast takes a bow*).

Act 2 Scene 1: King Lear's Buddy and the land of Milk and Honey

King Lear's buddy strode up and down restlessly
Stories of how the dragon had laid all waste before it percolated
What to do?
The government in one State to be overturned
And the Organisation convention on the cards
So tight lipped was he
Till these were organised successfully
Care was taken though
But the dragon had got through somehow
Lockdown announced without much warning
The vultures then swooped down on the unprepared
And bit those that dared
One community in particular was left stranded
Violated prohibitory orders had they
Asked permission to leave if they may
Arrangement could not be made for all
So stranded they were at the call
Cooped in the chicken house for the dragon made easy prey
Two Hundred was the count before all saw the light of day
Hither thither they went
Taking the dragon along
Convenient scapegoat for our buddy
Who thumped his chest with Tarzan's cry
The monkeys all joined in
My they could make quite a din
And then the lights out parade of strength
To mark the party's foundation day
Investigations went on in secret
As opposition leaders were rounded up one by one
Grandson in law of the founder of the constitution was among them too
And women citizen's bill protesters also put into the zoo
Yet from the dragon's fury not many died
As foul play many cried
International acclaim this Tarzan got
And from King Lear a badge of honour as well
In return the tablet was supplied
While to the dragon for mercy all cried
Exeunt

.....

Act 2 Scene 2: The Response

Packages created

And arrangements made
Food, stay, travel were part of these
Concern for those affected to put them at ease
Yet fears could not be allayed
Crowds milled at the Station of Joy
And on the borders hordes too
Frantic attempts at control
Use of force as well
The dragon could not be allowed to run amuck
Even as arrangements came unstuck
Prohibitory orders passed
And care to be taken as well
So that the ranks of the disorganised did not swell
Yet exemptions to this rule were found
As on foot people went homeward bound
One died just fifty Kms from home
Others around community kitchens swelled
The worst was however yet to come
When from fear medical teams attacked
Even spit upon
Some called it a Jihadi response
Deliberate was their take
Leave them alone
Let's see the mess they make
So in some of these regions the dragon did spread
And among the rest there was dread
And anger too
For being cooped in the zoo
Police patrols and hospital staff selfless duty did
And for them a clap in order
What say Sid?
Not to be mixed up with the banging and the clapping
To frighten the dragon away
A product of ignorance
Ignoring physical distance
So for the long haul people prepared
As first one extension, then another
Along with arrangements to get things in order
Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 3: After the Dragon in the Land of Milk and Honey

What will happen when the dragon is conquered?

Some pointers we can already see
For starters a Rs 40,000 crore tie up for home delivery
Building on the destruction of the small entrepreneur
The vulture finds carrion to feed on
Reminds us of another occasion when money sucked up by the banks
And liquidity had tanked
Then the order to Collectors for the land bank
An area twice the size of Luxembourg
For Companies wanted to relocate from Shaolin
The order ignores the value of the commons
In the life of the rural population
Feeds on anger against Shaolin
And the silence of the lambs
More dangerous are the changes to the EIA
That gets rid of the local variations
Ease of business is the mantra
So to hell with the lessons from the Panchatantra
For this to succeed
Fear of the dragon to continue
Long after the dragon is dead and gone
In winter it will revive
As in the cold it thrives
So surveillance will be in place
As one community put to disgrace
Those that support will be targeted too
So please be careful, you and you
Work from home turns out to be a boon
Company with capacity can promise the moon
450 Hospital bed its facilities temporary to turn
So that the dragon never returns
Survival of the fittest we say
With the vulture waiting on its prey
Feeds on the dead and waits patiently for the dying they say
Environment clean up is the way
Getting extinct unfortunately
Diclofenac the cause
Can man nature's vulture revive?
Only if from the Capitalist one can take a dive
On that hope we prepare
As King Lear and his buddy we dare

Curtain closes to the tune of We shall overcome

King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin -**Part II**

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to My Aunt Therese my godmother, whose home was always open house to everyone. The many cups of tea and chats on India and world affairs displayed the wide interests she had. My Aunt Sr. Rita, a cloistered Carmelite nun for the time we spent together at my Aunt Marie's house in Delhi and saw what a fun loving person she was. For my Uncle Rocque who was mostly an enigma but whose passion for yoga and its link with India stuck with me as a unique blend of spirituality between East and West)

Act 3 Scene 1: Big Chief's Seattle's call to fight the Dragon

The Scene: somewhere deep in the jungles of the Amazon, a pow wow of indigenous people across the world. Circular formation as is the tradition of such meetings. The peace pipe passed from one to the other. Each one taking turns to blow deeply into it. This was a pow wow with a difference. Women too were part of it.

Big Chief Seattle: (*Taking out his letter to King Lear*) see what I wrote here about a hundred and fifty years ago. Do you think these guys will ever learn? See it says here how his people coming here from a foreign land laid waste to our country, killing the bison, destroying the streams, our pasturelands and in short the basis of our very survival. Putting us in reservations, they called this progress!! Serves them right, the Dragon has woken up again after a hundred years. Will set things right.

Birsa Munda: Aye. They did the same in my country too. They replaced sal with teak: wood for the railways, ships and furniture for the big boss of the city. Our homeland decimated, people forced to go for wage labour to mines. Once free tribals converted to slaves, servants of the managers sitting in the comfort of the city!!

Hunting Hyena: (*jokingly*) a tree is a tree is a tree my dear Birsa Munda. How does it matter as long as it is green?

Birsa Munda: The pine replacing the oak too (*as if not hearing him*). Now even though we are supposed to have our own rulers Eucalyptus is supposed to work wonders. Sucked out all the water from the ground it did!! And then when the trees were ready to cut, pulp imported from Indonesia!! Fat lot of good the market economy does to us!!

Running Brook: In my country Shaolin, we were blamed for the Dragon coming out of the wild and invading the city. Eating habits are quite different from ours. We eat to fill our stomachs, keep ourselves healthy. They!! Eat as if there is no tomorrow. And all this research on the 5G! Has changed the way the elector magnetic waves behave. Any wonder the Dragon has morphed!

Whispering Wind: Sure thing a wild relative is not the same as a domesticated one. Darwin did show the link but he also showed how the change in the environmental conditions had brought about this change. And so if nature responds to the changes that mankind has brought about, imagine the fury embedded into it!!

Running Brook: Sure thing Whispering Wind but the Capitalist is clever, he turns every calamity into a source of profit for himself. Like a vulture feeding on the dead.

Hunting Hyena: Heard about the T24 (Ustad Tiger) story from the land of Mahishmati. Fearing he would scare away the tourists whisked away from the jungle to city of Lakes. Cooped inside his cage his roar filled the city, did not eat too but soon he realised it was a struggle in vain.

(Mohan the medicine man got up to dance. With peacock feathers he waved throwing powder into the fire which burned brighter for a while. Sarita got into a trance).

Sarita: Beware of false prophets! (*She said peering into the fire*). Destroyed our forests, poisoned our rivers. Established customs to change our eating habits in the name of progress: Made us dependent on the market and destroyed our immunity as well. Iron rich diets replaced with junk. Ours was called a poor man's diet but now it is served as gourmet.

Suddenly in our own land we are thieves. Foresters with guns to chase us away, file cases against us. What was our fault? Sitting over black gold and iron? There are other minerals also to be had from beneath the land as well.

(All get up for a community dance. The essence being right to food, right to health and right to livelihood their fundamental right .The fruits of the current form of development we can clearly see. Many who went in search of better opportunities have come home, some stranded in far off places, no money, no food, and no facilities. Stories of heroic walks and deaths too were among the narratives. The mood of the dancers changes again anger is now visible. Our right to protect our homelands we insist as to protect us from calamity you desist. The scare of the Dragon: just a bogie to extinguish our rights in the name of protecting us. Shame on you! Nature has responded positively to the Dragon).

Big Chief Seattle: Self determination well and good but we need to restore what has been lost first.

Birsa Munda: Yes we do not ask for much. Just wage employment for regeneration.

Sarita: Wages for production of local grain and preparing the mid day meal for children to cover the transition required to revive the earth.

All: Down with Capitalism! Down with exploitation and up with people's self governance and tribal self rule.

Lights dim

Act 3 Scene2: Big Chief Seattle meets Krishna, Muhammad and Genghis Khan – What to do with the Dragon?

(The scene: Somewhere in the Gobi Desert, it could have been any Desert for that matter, Sahara, Nevada, Kalahari, Great Australian Desert or the Thar Desert in Mahishmati. All gathered near an Oasis with the palm trees providing shade. Now that it was night, they moved a bit into the open so that the stars twinkled brightly. Big Chief Seattle was showing the resolution passed by the indigenous people).

Muhammad: Well I'll be blowed. Context the trees and the perennial brooks, here is the islands of water in the desert but take away that and the situation is the same. The herds, which survive on the twin procedure of grazing and then looking for water when thirsty: unable to handle situations of plenty. Short lived glory as desolation follows. Nature requires us to follow her cycles but here the chain is disrupted, setting in a chain reaction with far reaching repercussions. Look what they want to do to in Ladakh! The desert has its own charm. It is man who has to knuckle down not the other way around.

Big Chief Seattle: True. You know how the bison disappeared from our land.

Genghis Khan: Yes. That is what happened in Mongolia as well. Very few understand pastoralism. A sedentary mind certainly cannot. Response to change, response to catastrophe is very different for us. We can cull/expand our herds to flexibly respond to nature. The essence of pastoralism: why it had equal status to agriculture for generations together. Stalin learnt from the mistakes committed on the Prairies. The one that created the great dust bowl: Planted trees over thousands of Kilometres in length and hundreds of Kilometres wide. Prevented the cold winds of the North: from reaching the South. Khrushchev thought otherwise and undid all that by opening up the Kirghiz to agriculture. We never recovered from that: the queues for bread (shaking his head).

Krishna: Our story a bit different. The agriculturalist and the pastoralist worked in sync with each other. It was a story of a mutually beneficial relationship. However did you attend that International Conference on the Commons in Hyderabad? There was a session titled Criminals, Weed and Vermin. Shows how the pastoralist and tribal were understood! It is not specific to the white skin rulers. Our own people continued those policies after Independence as well. The commons were privatised: The price to be paid, for handing over the natural resources to the Capitalist on a platter.

Muhammad: *(Shaking his head)*. Don't we ever learn? The hare and the tortoise all over again: We showed a different way. All warring tribals were united through a code of conduct. Development followed. For this unity to God I prayed.

Krishna: *(Getting excited)*. Notice the similarity of customs between all of us? Sindoor for us, Goat for you and communion for the Christians: The sacrifice of one for the sake of the community.

Muhammad: Yes but people not appreciative. They want a ball.

Genghis Khan; Not true, fierceness is a reflection of adversity in nature.

Muhammad: Yes, but your grandson thought otherwise: Looked for a unity without which he could not keep his prize.

Genghis Khan: Yes have to thank you for it. Samarkand, Mahishmati and the islands of the seven seas were the result.

Muhammad: Sorry to break your reverie my friend, one of your descendants took my teachings out of context and paid the price for it. He ignored the point made by his great, great, great, grandfather to his son that the people of Mahishmati were not meat eaters and if he hoped to rule he would have to recognise and respect this difference. Very much in line with my principles of arriving at unity: but keeping a new context in mind.

Krishna: (exulting) yes, the mountain rat taught him a very big lesson. He was a very big follower of mine.

Big Chief Seattle: And then? The big betrayal by our very own: This history we cannot disown though robes and robes we put on it.

Krishna: The vastra haran of Draupadi we have to accept. Again and again history repeats itself: As different stories for power and pelf. You were talking about the Dragon Big Chief Seattle.

Muhammad: Closures and other restrictions plague our pastoralists. Fear of the dragon had put restrictions on movement. The cattle know no man made barriers. Grass and other forms of fodder is what they will look for. Man does not know how to respect nature's jurisdiction. There is unity in diversity as we have seen.

Krishna: Mahishmati looks for unity in the zero. It was a great discovery by one of our very own.

Brahmagupta: What they fail to understand that this is only a concept. We know there is something called nothing but we can never get there. Newton described this mathematically.

Big Chief Seattle: The God particle comes very close but as Stephen Hawking showed from there to zero takes upto infinity. The reason for the black hole: We know it is there. Even though no light comes through we can feel its presence.

(Atmaram Gujjar sitting nearby scratched his head. Where did the dragon go?)

Atmaram: Hunter he shouted! *(Blowing his whistle, Hunter came to heel)*. Let's go *(he said and started to trudge. The sheep followed. Over the horizon the moon disappeared and the sun took its place.*

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 3: The Gang meets Peter the fisherman on the question of the Dragon

The Scene: The beach at Danda between Bandra and Khar. Pete the fisherman sitting in a pensive mood on his upturned boat, the waves washing his legs.

Pete: *(thinking to himself)* Albert Pinto in jail on charges of molestation. He was just getting somewhere in his investigation on the drug cartel and the arms dealers when Boom, out of nowhere a thirty old story raked up. Suddenly the powers that be interested in justice for child abuse! Where were they all this while? And Mathew who was helping him caught with contraband on his boat! The real culprits get away and scapegoats found so that corrupt officers can get their kudos for closing the investigation. Crime goes on as usual. Dog eat Dog world I say.

(Big Chief Seattle and the gang can be entering from behind).

Big Chief Seattle: Hey Pete! Look who's here to see you!

(Pete turns around and sees Krishna, Muhammad, Genghis Khan, Whispering Brook and a number of others. He smiles).

Pete: What's up? What brings the gang to Mumbai? It's been sixteen years since we last met at the World Social Forum in Mumbai.

Big Chief Seattle: Yeah. Albert Pinto and Mathew boycotted it attending the Mumbai Resistance instead. WSF sold out to Ford and the CIA they thought. *(Shaking his head)* those were the days. Have a look at this declaration Pete. Would you like to sign it too?

Pete: *(Reading the Declaration and thinking aloud to himself)* Sundarban, Bottom trawling, purse seining, LED fishing, Capture fisheries all over again. *(Looking up)* I can add a chapter too! This wanton destruction of nature turns my bile. More than the Dragon, our fishing has been affected, all fishers confined to their homes. We have nothing to eat, not even fish! Have to depend on government mercy. Procedures are a pain, calculated to increase corruption. Gets the loyalty of the law enforcers as well! If allowed freedom our people are hardy, can withstand anything. Storms, days stranded in the high seas with nothing but our own resources, and in places like the Sundarban, the tiger, alligator always lurking nearby. It was proper food and nutrition by our own resourcefulness that helped us survive. Money making schemes, only help Capitalist development and throw our people out of employment. The few who are called enterprising are mostly pimps of their Capitalist Masters though there are a few good ones too. Kurien did inspire a few. Gave shape to a fishing cooperatives that can hold their own against the Capitalists.

(As day slipped into night, the fishermen and women nearby also joined in. Song sung with the following meaning - All: With the drug cartel and the arms dealers we have nothing to do. They have corrupted some but most not in their grip and with proper direction even these we can wrest away. The Don has instilled fear, but with nature we hold dear. Physical distancing was kept all right as they danced into the night).

Whispering Wind: The revised declaration has been completed incorporating the Chapter written by Pete.

All: Community Control of Natural resources our call. Fishers, famers, pastoralists and tribals to unite, Corridor form of development to fight. The need for all round balanced growth and

decentralisation of governance too. Ecological democracy the mantra: Laudato si the new Panchatantra.

Pete: I recommend that Big Chief Seattle be the convenor.

All: Aye. (*Everyone's hands came up as well*).

Pete: All of us on board now. We will figure out the logistics by and by.

Muhammad: We need to expose all the myths about the dragon while raising the real issues affecting us.

Krishna: Yes, yes of course. Stock exchange machinations have to be defeated if we have to be in with a chance.

Birsa Munda: Demonetisation with a difference. Local production for local markets: related value addition with the help of renewables to increase in house recycling capacity in tune with nature. This is a different form of labour exchange (adsipadsi) in tune with modern needs. Yours in mine and mine is yours made possible by collective action and various forms of labour and resource pooling.

(*Dance to the song Five hundred miles: All take a bow when it ends. Curtain closes*).

Act 3 Scene 1: Big Chief's Seattle's call to fight the Dragon

Big Chief Seattle called a pow wow
All indigenous people to attend
Fight the dragon to the end
As the conference began
Seattle his letter to King Lear recalled
How the white man had laid waste to his country
The dragon was to him a divine retribution
For tampering with nature
And its bounty distribution
Birsa Munda in response said aye
My country too I do not lie
Converted our beloved Sal into teak did he
What's with a tree the white man said
Why do you worship false Gods
Which fill you with dread
The dragon a product of your eating habits from the wild
Do not think nature is kind
Running Brook the accusation denied
It was 5G which created the dragon she cried
As she exposed the white man's lie
Yes shouted Red Eagle but with a difference
It's not the colour of the skin that is polluted
But production for profit that is
Our eating habits are different from this Commodification of the jungle
Taken out of context
Like the animal in the zoo
T 24 (Ustad Tiger) roared in agreement
Wild relatives quite different from those domesticated
Ask Mougli if you may
Bhopa Vikram did a dance
As Sarika got into a trance
Beware of these false prophets she said
Finished our forests
And now parched earth we tread
The freedom we had is now no more
As in the name of protecting the jungle
And us from the dragon
We face the twelve bore
Right to food, right to health and right to livelihood our fundamental rights
The fruits of development we clearly see
As many who went now trudge back home
Our right to protect this, our homeland we insist
As to protect us you desist
Draconian laws on us you bring
As a false fear of the dragon you try to swing
It's you not us who fears this dragon
See how nature to the lock-down responded
As in home custody you kept the people despondent

So the indigenous people around the fire danced
Pledging their unity with nature and her bounty
Critical funds to restore the broken links demanded
And moratorium on land acquisition as well
As for Capitalism its death knell

Exeunt

.....

Act 3 Scene 2: Big Chief Seattle meets Krishna, Muhammad and Genghis Khan – What to do with the Dragon?

Big Chief Seattle Indigenous people resolution to Krishna, Muhammad and Genghis Khan showed.

As under the star light their faces near the fire glowed

Muhammad said

I'll be blowed

Very similar to our perspective

As nature makes us introspective

Remove human thoughts that are defective

Big Chief Seattle talked of the disappearance of the bison

And the great dust bowl that agriculture in the Prairie created

Genghis Khan nodded in agreement

Very few understand pastoralism said he

Stalin planted a tree line thousand kilometres long and hundred kilometres wide

Separate the cold North from the South

As the Kirgiz not be touched

Khrushchev thought otherwise

Not learning from the dust bowl in Eden

Pumped in a lot of resources did he

But nature had its say

And long lines for bread people saw in dismay

Krishna took the cue

Our story little different

Pastoralists and agriculturalists in sync in Mahishmati

But see Criminal, Weed and Vermin at a Conference on Commons

Shows how the white men understood the Tribal and the pastoralist

From the title itself you get the gist

Same policies after independence continued

The commons privatised

And the pastoralist and tribal stigmatised

Sedenterisation the name of the game

The hare and the tortoise all over again

Don't we ever learn said Muhammad?

Code of conduct to unite warring tribals if I may

And for unity to God I pray

Say said Krishna

Notice a similarity in the customs

Sindoor for us

The Goat for you

And communion for the Christians
All about blood sacrifice of one for the sake of all
Muhammad, yes I do but people want a ball
Not true said Genghis Khan
Fierceness related to the adversity in nature
Fighting for territory part of the adventure
But your grandson though otherwise
And looked for the unity without which he could not keep his prize
True said Genghis Khan
Have to thank you for that
Samarkand and Mahishmati were the reward
And islands across the seven seas as well
Have to interrupt before too long on your laurels you dwell
Muhammad had his own story to tell
One of your descendants separated my thoughts from its context in nature
Paid the price
To the mountain rat my friend
A follower of mine said Krishna
And then
Asked Big Chief Seattle
The great betrayal by our very own
This history we cannot disown
Though robes and robes on this we put
Draupadi's vastra haran repeats itself
In the pursuit of power and pelf
Back to the dragon the story goes
And along with the pastoralists woes
Closures and other restrictions
Not respecting nature's jurisdiction
That there is unity in diversity
Is disrespected
A unity with zero is expected
Zero is only a concept
Said Brahmagupta
Yes it will take infinity to get there said Newton
Though the God particle we have discovered
In practise fifty years after in theory its existence was determined
Yet as Stephen Hawking pointed out
From there to aero still a long way away
Why light does not come out of the black hole
Yet its energy we sense
So not all that is created man can dispense
Atmaram Gujjar scratched his head
Where did the dragon go he thought?
The getting up from his squat for Hunter his dog the whistle he blew
Let's go
They restarted their trudge
The sheep followed behind
Over the horizon the moon dipped
And in its place the sun slipped

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 3: The Gang meet Peter the Fisherman on the question of the Dragon

Peter sat in a pensive mood on his overturned boat near the shore
Watching the waves lap his legs
His close aide and friend Albert Pinto had been arrested
On charges of molestation
Albert Pinto had been on a secret mission investigation the financial crimes of the drug cartel
and the arms dealers
Another friend of his Mathew was caught with contraband on his boat
The cartel would stop at nothing he knew
He had only a little time left to live
What to do
Hey Pete boomed Big Chief Seattle
See who has come to see you
Pete looked around
Krishna, Muhammad, Genghis Khan, Whispering Brook, Red Eagle and a number of others
His spirits lifted
All was not lost he thought
What up? He called out in reply
Have a look at this declaration said Big Chief Seattle
We want you to sign it too
Peter turned the pages over
Visions of the destroyed mangroves and pollution of rivers came to his mind
Bottom trawling, purse seining, LED fishing and culture fisheries
Also wafted by
I can add a chapter too he said after a while
This wanton destruction churns my bile
As to the dragon you might have guessed
Even Peter was not impressed
Immunity and dealing with adversity was the fisherman's forte
What's with the Dragon?
He recalled that night on the choppy seas
With the Dragon threatening to overturn the boat
Stretch out your hand Peter a voice had called
Standing on the bow with his staff outstretched
The Dragon to heel he had called
So given freedom Dragon he could deal he knew
This Lock down had cooked another stew
Unemployment and malnutrition among the fisher families rampant
As cooped inside their spirits dampened

Have to set Albert Pinto free thought he
And Mathew too
With the drug cartel and arms dealers we have nothing to do
And the day slipped into night the fishers joined the gang
Physical distancing but Social revelry went with a bang
As in the firelight between the boats all danced
And to liberty they pranced
Come the dawn the declaration was completed
Community control of Natural resources
Was the call
Fishers, famers, pastoralists and tribals to unite
Corridor form of development to fight
All round balanced growth for all
And decentralisation of governance too
Ecological democracy the mantra
Laudato si the new Panchatantra
Big Chief Seattle put in charge
And Pete and the rest also on the barge
Onward the charge Mythical Dragon to defeat
The real one to be dealt with on merits of course
If any challenge is to be given to the bourse
Demonetisation with a difference in discourse
So local markets with renewables for value addition was the chime
And labour exchange (adsī padsī) a form of saying yours is mine
And mine yours
When collective action is the cause

(All take a bow as the Curtain closes to the song – Five hundred miles)

The Seed - Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to Mother Earth our sister who is crying out to us to save her from the rape and destruction she faces due to the quest for profit and protection of profiteering at all costs)



Background

The motivation for this play is the biblical reference to the sower and the seed. The seed referred to here is the seed of change. The genetic makeup of this seed has its underpinning in the past but fertilized by modernity of relevance to the community. This seed is very resilient and hence can face a variety of disturbances. Hence it takes a long time to germinate too. Have to test whether the conditions are mature enough for its germination.

The other aspect of this seed is the trashing of patriarchy as reflected by not just leadership of a woman but also of a qualitatively different kind. One that restores matriarchy: but does not remain there. Matriarchy was a product of conditions of reproduction where the father was not known. The new world order not only recognises reproduction but the quality of life that goes with it as well. Production for profit is based on ownership of the means of production. Women made slave to this thought. Creation of life does not have that kind of ownership, though may be embedded in communities response to nature.

The play does not lay claim to fully thrashing patriarchy and hence shows the dilemma that capitalism places. Working for the collective but not sure that individual survival will be ensured in the process. It shows the seed in transition. Like the different layers of the onion. The confidence that it will succeed exists only partly. How the dilemma between community and individual will be resolved in socialism still has a lot of unanswered questions. What happens when all have the capability to lead or how does collective leadership function minus individual charismatic leaders. Is this at all feasible? Women can only be truly free if men realise that this freedom is good for them as well. In this sense the play does not take cognizance of modern technological advancements of in vitro fertilization that could obviate the relevance of the male. The play recognises diversity and the evolution of the species into different sexes also points to a historical progression where diversity provides stability.

In the bid for production and more production this diversity is thrown to the winds, bringing with it related issues. The need to look to nature to provide solutions is recognised by the corporate world too. Yet it ignores the question of who will pay for it? There is a mistaken belief that Capital has the ability to answer all questions. This ignores the fact that all of knowledge is not embedded in the genes and hence cultural threads are important as well. Preserving them as museum pieces will not do, as the living link with nature is a part of the thread.

The historical vulnerability of human beings to nature plays itself out here too as the play does not provide the conclusive push to overthrow Capitalism. The play while not spelling it out: intrinsically recognises that the real process of the historical development of mankind has a role to play too. In that sense the play is not the end but a search for a new beginning rooted in the reality of today while looking for the solutions of tomorrow. The reader has something to contribute as well!!

Dramatis Personae

The Characters here are a mix of reel and real characters, however a twist has been given to suit the concerns and interests of the play so real is based on reality but not so in entirety. It is inspired by the Brechtian technique to respond to the alienation we face as a result of Capitalism. It helps to join individual dreams of ordinary people isolated by private walls in the mind and walls erected by Capitalism as it deals with the question of markets. While a major part of the play is located in Chhota Udepur, not all of what is described in the play actually took place there. The play is therefore in that sense a work of fiction, inspired by real people and real places but yet having an eye to a dream, a collective vision that is as yet unfulfilled in practice due to the limitations of the current Capitalist system of governance and its related issues in the way people's minds are governed. The play though powered by dreams stops short of making them reality rather poses a question to all of us as to whether we want to be a part of that reality or not.

Mandwada: The village where Durga lives.

Durga: The main hero of the play, a tribal educated woman from Chhota Udepur, for the purposes of the play, her understanding and abilities are beyond those noticed in Chhota Udepur but inspired by real people rolled having the grasp attributed to her.

Rekha: Her friend, a tribal too.

Savitri: Durga's mother.

Anita: Another friend of Durga.

Hiralal: Sarpanch of Mandwada the village where Durga lives.

Chandu: Durga's Dad.

Govind: Friend of Durga's Dad.

Tornado: Seed Company selling GMO.

Laxmi: Activist from Bellary Karnataka.

Rashmi: An activist from Sitapur, UP.

Ramesh: Tribal Activist from Karnataka

Parvinder: A farmer from Punjab.

Dr Jagveer: A scientist from Haryana.

Saura: An activist from Chhattisgarh.

Sunita: An activist from Sundarban, West Bengal.

Devjeet: An activist from Odisha.

Radheyshyam: An activist from Rajasthan.

Rashmi: An urban Intellectual.

Ashish: An environmental activist from Pune.

Joy: A political and environmental activist from Pune.

Dr Shaikh: An activist from Kashmir.

Bablu: A social worker from Anantpur, Andhra

Pradeep: Activist from Kolkatta.

Tarun: A human rights activist from Odisha.

Shobha: An elderly woman from Mandwada.

Savita, Netra, Parvati, Arushi, Rashmi, Rukmini, Ravi: Tribal children

Sushant: An environmental activist from Udaipur.

Shanti, Gayatri: Tribals from Mandwada.

Shaswat: A well wisher from America.

Parvati: His wife.

Vivek: An entrepreneur from Ahmedabad dealing with organic produce.

Radhakrishna: A Tribal leader and elder from Chhota Udepur.

The Seed – Part I

By Viren Lobo

(Dedicated is to my mother Nora Lobo, who devoted her life to her family. It was she who once told me, I only need to listen to your voice for one second to know how you are. And on her dying bed entreated me that whatever I do must never lose my smile. A blend of family and work or work being one large family or between the big and the small between zero and infinity this story told it all)

Act 1 Scene 1: GMO in Chhota Udepur

The Scene: A part of village Mandwada in Chhota Udepur. The fields on one side: Durga's house on the other. Durga can be seen moving around in the fields. Durga's mother Savitri is pottering around near the house.

Durga: *(Plucking lentil and millet seeds from the plants and putting into the shawl strapped around her waist. Then taking out a steel utensil from the shawl and filling it with water from the brook nearby, settles down to cook them over a wood fire she has just made).* It's always good to have fresh food in the fields *(as if talking to herself but watching the bird fly by)*. It fills you with the abundant energy of nature as well. This dragon fly tell me that the water is fresh and clean. It has to be. No pollution, not fertilizer or pesticide in the running water. Not the case with the whole village though shaking her head vigorously. Hi Rekha, *(waving her hand at her neighbouring famer who was moving across on her way home)*.

Rekha: Hi Durga, you going home now?

Durga: Why yes, let me pick up the bundle I have left gathered nearby.

(She picks up the bundle, puts it on her head and accompanies Rekha. The talk and wave at the other famers going home too)

Durga: Ok Rekha, must be off, Mom must be waiting for me. She needs what I am bringing to cook the dinner.

Rekha: Bye Durga, see you tomorrow.

(Durga on reaching home sees her mother with seed in her hand)

Durga: What are these?

Savitri: Cotton seed, your Dad brought them from the market. Said they are wonder seeds. No need for pesticide.

Durga: We don't use pesticide anyway! The variety we grow with vermi-compost keeps the pest under control. Since we do not spray pesticide the lady bug eats the pests too!

Savitri: Not for long Durga, Hiralal the Sarpanch is going around telling everyone this seed will double our money.

Durga: Rot said Durga; he must have got a fat sum from that Company Tornado to give this spiel. Seen their ads plastered all over the city. This is a GMO (Genetically Modified Organism), when you tamper with nature like that it hits you in return. Many countries have banned its production. That is why they have come here!

Savitri: Tell me more! But first let us cook your dinner. Your father will soon come home from his tete ta tete at the Sarpanch's house. He will be hungry too. That won't stop him though, will fill us with the thrash he is picking up at these meetings.

Durga: Yes, nowadays they have nothing much to do on the farm, machines do everything. Why don't they bring some that will make our lives easier as well? Along with the machine the polluted thought from the city. You been there mom, does it look that life has real answers to our questions?

Savitri: No, but do you Durga.

Durga: Yes *(she nodded)*.

Savitri: To work *{she yelled suddenly}*, times running out. Your Dad will be here soon!

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 2: The treaty and the Underground vault at Svalbard

The Scene: Durga and Savitri's house, both sitting on a log near the tap. Dishes have been washed. Durga showing Savitri something on the mobile: Then Durga moving the screen quickly as if showing some photos

Durga: So Mom do you understand a bit what going on?

Savitri: What I understand is the ship of Manu. The fish towing the ship: all the animals on board.

Durga: Pretty close, except that here they are frozen, deep underground: Svalbard.

Savitri: A question all right. How did they get everyone to cooperate?

Durga: A treaty, all countries signed. Need to conserve the world's biodiversity.

Rekha: Hi Durga, both of you huddled so close like that? Something you want to tell us *(smiling and chuckling to herself)*

Anita: Yes Durga looks like something veery interestingggg *(also smiling and giggling)*.

Durga: Heart to heart with one's mom does not mean only one thing guys.

Both: So tell us!

Durga: You will know by and by.

Both: Oh have it your way!! *(Flounce off)*

Durga: Where were we mom?

Savitri: Deep under the ice.

Durga: Okay do you know what happens when everything under one roof?

Savitri: No tell me.

Durga: Experiment

Savitri: We experiment all the time!!

Durga: Oh that! That's for free. Here lot of money gets spent. At the Agriculture University, I saw one guy doing a PhD on what was growing under a tin. Four years it took him.

Savitri: You are serious! Four years looking at a tin!! *(Shaking her head)*.

Durga *(smiling)*: Got a piece of paper to prove it. Anybody knows you discovered the recipe for the lemon pickle?

Savitri: Everybody in this village does certainly. And message has travelled by word of mouth too. All are asking for it, but only special people get it right, looking meaningfully at Durga.

Durga: Okay, Okay I get it. Do you know they think they can resurrect us adivasis if the race gets destroyed, like this COVID 19 Scare the government seems to be afraid of!!

Savitri: No one here has got sick or died. However Hiralal our Sarpanch said someone died in a village about 50 Kms from here.

Durga: Rubbish, it was a relative of his who came from Delhi. He died in the town. He just went to see him that's all.

Savitri: You know rumours how they spread!!

Durga: There is thing about our cattle breeds too. It seems the Gir cow from Saurashtra was gifted to somebody from Brazil. They looked after it well and now India wants to import the breed back as ours have got degraded.

Savitri: Of course they will (*snorting*)! Where are the pasturelands now? How can those wonderful animals remain the same without the rich variety of grasses they grazed on?

Durga: Mom! (*Looking astonished*), that's amazing! How did you arrive at that conclusion?

Savitri: Was not born yesterday Durga. Just because I cannot read does not mean I do not have eyes and use my reason.

Durga: Sure Mom (*getting excited*) so you know about the other breeds that went to Brazil and now we want them back as well.

Savitri (*nodding*): Your Dad told me about the Dairy plans (*somebody from NDDB was here chatting up Hiralal on breed improvement*).

Durga (*kept staring at her and shaking her head*)

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3: The Cancer Train, Infertility and the smog that hit Delhi

The Scene: Near the tap with the dishes all nicely washed up. Styrofoam dishes, plastics bowls and glasses stacked up in a pile nearby ready to be burnt. People were waving their goodbyes and going home.

Rekha: Very well organised party Aunty.

Savitri: Nothing to it, it was Durga's Dad who arranged all the items.

Anita: Still Aunty, just look at mess we have just cleaned up without you things would not have been so good. People only go to Sanjay Caterers if there is no option.

Hiralal (*in another corner speaking to Durga's Dad*): Okay Chandu, time for me to clear off. Been a long day and that wretched man Amar is coming again tomorrow. Wants to know why his Company Tornado's product is not selling.

Chandu (smiling): Our people have a little more confidence in themselves than in Tornado.

Govind: Yes, I must go too Chandu (*shaking his hand*).

Hiralal and Govind leave along with others, Durga and Savitri go to sit on the log a bit dishevelled and tired on the log. It had been a long day.

Savitri (*sighing*): earlier we would have given all of this to the cow or made compost out of it pointing to the plastic pile nearby. What to do leaves in short supply and even if they are there who has the time to make them into plates etc. There is time for rummy of course and gossip around the well, earlier that sort of discussion took place while doing something productive together, really no time for chats.

Durga (*sighing*): We also chipped in amidst running around the portico: sense of family, sense of togetherness. Now!! (*Then suddenly*) you heard about the cancer train Mom?

Savitri: No tell me.

Durga: Nothing much really. It is a train from Bhatinda to Bikaner, called that due to the fact that most of the passengers are those going to the cancer hospital there.

Savitri: Why so?

Durga: Pesticides, GMO, etc etc. No one knows the exact cause and effect but cancer on the rise and infertility too. Breathing in toxic fumes (precautions nonetheless) day in and day out and the unnatural way of life (production driven) makes the immunity system susceptible and if infertility introduced into nature, what else can you expect? CM has announced some relief. A cancer hospital in every District: That is progress for you, Mom. The GDP will increase, employment for Doctors, nurses, ward attendants etc,

Savitri: And the politicians, bureaucracy the opportunity to line their pockets if they so wish. Permissions granted, regulations circumvented and above all opportunities exploited. Win, win for all.

Durga: Not for the common man it is not. He pays for the solution in return for treatment of a disease he never should have had in the first place.

Savitri: You are right there Durga, who has time to think? This is a rat race. Who has time to remember the story of the ant and the grasshopper?

Durga: How did you learn this story Mom?

Savitri: My mother, as we watched the two while the cattle grazed.

Durga: There must be a lot more from where that came from!

Savitri: Yes certainly, who has time for it now? One trip to the city, a motor cycle under you, sunglasses and suddenly you are the cat's whiskers!

Durga (*smiling*): Talking of time, no one has time to cut the rice stalks in Punjab and Haryana. Burnt to cinder to provide potash for the next crop, wheat but look at all the smoke! Eighteen thousand million tons burnt! Smog in Delhi the result: Heard the children of PRATYeK took out a rally in protest. Climate Giri it is called to show its peaceful nature. Quite a treat to watch the children do the Circus Art they are now famous for. It seems Friday for Future were part of it too.

Savitri: I have heard about PRATYeK and their children's outfit YASH. Somebody from Delhi came and told us about it. Wanted our Children to be a part of the National Integrated Children's Parliament but Friday for Future, what is that?

Durga: That came up in response to the Child Nobel Laureate Greta Thunberg's call for Climate Action. Quite a storm she made with her speech on Climate change at the United Nations.

Savitri: I see, this is the other side of COVID 19. World is uniting in different ways. We need to choose which one is our way.

Durga; (*Looks at her astonished*)

Curtain Closes

Act 1 Scene 1: GMO in Chhota Udepur

Durga, with her hair streaming behind
Came running all the way from the fields
She had had her fill
Playing between the millet and the lentil
Of tastiest morsels she took her pick
From the ground she picked up a stick
One that converted her into a fairy queen
Of the butterfly and the tern she playfully asked
Where have you been?
On reaching home her mother in front of her stood
Hands filled with seed
What are these?
Asked Durga
Cotton seed said her mother
Your father brought it from the market
Wonder seed it is
Will not have disease
Durga stared in horror
Of this GMO from her friends had learnt
Many their lives it had burnt
Banned in a number of countries too
This knowledge known only to a few
As with that face at her mother she stared
Mother looked at her in dread
What's up Durga she cried
With this seed we will be fried
Burst out Durga
Tell me more said her mother
So, on a log near the house they both sat
As mother and daughter had a heart to heart chat
What they said to each other in the next few scenes we will unfold
Fortune favours the bold
Exeunt

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Act 1 Scene 2: The Treaty and the Underground vault at Svalbard

Noah's ark all over again
The world was coming to an end
All countries a treaty signed
Biodiversity of the world to protect
Sample of each germ-plasm to be conserved

At Svalbard under the ice
And in other locations too
World property with contribution from each country
Yet work on it possible only for some
With Finances and infrastructure for the same
Not doing it for free for sure
Right enough the concept of IPR came
Patent rights for those who invest
Country of origin too
Proof of origin required though
Possible but difficult and costly exercise
With money to be had National laws and due credits undermined
Onus of proof lay on those affected
Till then perpetrators could make hay
Buy off decision makers too
Victory for the people were but few
Come the Tsunami
There were those who thought they could resuscitate the Jarawa too
Cultural knowledge not in genetics but in society
A fact that troubled few
For the Ongole at CBD a proposal made
Live museum the solution
Extracted from reality many ecological threads go missing
And cost of preservation with it rise
The Gir Cow from Saurashtra to Brazil exported
And the Nagauri and Rathii too
Now from Brazil Gir germ-plasm we have imported
Local breed to improve
Conditions for its well being not maintained
Not something new
Same thing happened with rice germ-plasm
As new 'improved' breeds introduced by IRRI
The rice bowl of Chhattisgarh turned desolate
With the ban on its cultivation during drought
What happened to those drought tolerant varieties
Those who know do not have clout
Durga's mother stared far into space
Thoughts whirling at a fast pace
Did the answer to this lie deep in the snow at Svalbard
Or right here in Chhota Udepur
Durga looked at her and smiled
Rest of the story for another time
Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3: The Cancer Train, infertility and the smog that hit Delhi

Durga's mother, Savitri once again took her position on the log
Had been a tiring day washing the dishes and cleaning the mess from the wedding
Plastic plates and glasses strewn all around
Would not disappear without a fire and then too something left over
Quite unlike the days of yore when the leaf plate and dishes were part of the fare
Waste became compost and back into the fields it went
A sigh and then, Durga tell me more was her call
Durga too was exhausted and took time to clean herself up and stretch her legs
And then looking at the mess around her mother asked
Do you know about the cancer train?
No I don't said Savitri, tell me
It is the one from Bhatinda to Bikaner
Carries those affected by the current practises in agriculture
Punjab CM announced a cancer hospital in every district
Here's development for you
Employment for some of course
Feeding on the dead and dying now part of normal discourse
So common that at his announcement the people cheered
Abnormalities in the fertility of humans were becoming rampant
What can one expect when into nature reproduction is cramped?
Terminator gene it is called
Genetics for profit
And to ensure this lining the politician's pocket as well
Any surprise that this information under wraps
Anybody raising it being tightly slapped
Anti National tag becoming common
As production for profit the mantra
Who cares for the story of the ant and the grass-hopper?
It's green and can jump
Don't worry about the bumps
Somebody else will pay
As the Capitalist make hay
This transformation has another tale too
Of the stubble left behind
Full of silica and not palatable to the cow
Cost of cutting it therefore unprofitable
So burn it
All of eighteen thousand million tons
Gone into smoke
In far away Delhi people's lungs did choke
A Friday Climate Strike, children and others in Delhi organised
What to do with the stubble

Was still left unanswered
As the country did burn
Savitri's head turned
Durga once again smiled
Her mother had got the message
So we can know wait for the next package
Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 1: Soil not Oil

The Scene: Another part of India Durga is reading a book in a room. In another part of the stage Savitri is seen talking to some people.

Savitri: I'm Savitri from Chhota Udepur in Gujarat, where are you from?

Laxmi: I'm Laxmi from Bellary in Karnataka.

Rashmi: I'm Rashmi from Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh.

Savitri: All of you working on natural farming I presume?

Laxmi: Not exactly we have come to study the relevance of this in restoring our countryside ravaged by mining. You just heard how S R Hiremath got the Reddy brothers to close down shop in Bellary. Literally wound down the republic of Bellary he did.

Savitri: Yes pretty fascinating story, he first located the holding company on the Andhra side and then unravelled the mess in Karnataka. Very sharp brain, glad we have him on our side.

Rashmi: We have a women's Union in Sitapur. Interested to see how the women can be more self reliant.

Savitri: Vandana Shiva made a pretty powerful speech. She talked of the relevance of the natural economy based on Soil not Oil. An entirely different perspective from what the government is peddling. Though it is not very different for what we have been doing for ages.

Laxmi: The advocate Prashant Bhushan and the petitioner Aruna Rodrigues gave a pretty lucid description of the PIL against GMO in the Supreme Court. The opponents will stop at nothing. Profit not humanity is their concern.

Savitri: Well I must be off now, Durga must be wondering what I am up to.

Savitri enters the room where Durga is, she is still reading the book.

Savitri: What is it you are reading Durga?

Durga: Vandana Siva's book, Soil not Oil. Can't you see!

Savitri: Durga (*putting her hands on her hips*)! Don't you know I can't read!

Durga: Sorry Mom, for a moment I forgot, you seem just as literate as anybody here.

Savitri: That's because it is a subject which I know. What does the book say?

Durga: It says here sponge iron plants were given permission to set up because they are less polluting. So many were set up near Jharsuguda that the entire area has become polluted.

Savitri: (*nodding her head*) Vandana Siva made a very powerful case for soil not oil. We are destroying the very soul of this country. They are turning the whole country into one vast desert.

Durga closing the book, let's meet some of the other's here. Both go out of the room. They find Ramesh from Telangana waiting for them,

Ramesh (*coming toward them*): There you are Durga, was looking for you.

Durga: Why? You had something to tell me?

Ramesh: Yes, I was thinking Vandana Siva is spot on. We have this story about how our forests were destroyed due to the pursuit of the gold flower (*symbolizing money*) instead of Mahua. We cut down to trees to purchase this flower to offer to the God's (*a tree*). Instead of being pleased the God slowly dried up and withered away before our eyes. You must come over Durga, explain to the tribals of Telangana and Andhra, that our real God's are the forest wealth we have, not the money in our hand.

Durga: Quite right Ramesh, do you know the late B D Sharma wrote a book showing how the value of our commodities has declined vis a vis petrol. And Hemant Das from Jharkhand posted on what's app how in the early 20th Century value of one rupee was thirteen Dollars, then a rupee to the Dollar at the time of independence, then seven rupees to the Dollar in the eighties and now?

Ramesh: We had this two rupee rice scheme to sell the produce of the big farmers from Godavari river basin. It totally destroyed our millet production.

Durga: Heard there is a revival now.

Ramesh: Well yes, there were long lines for fertilizers and the crash of groundnut prices too. Many committed suicide.

Savitri: Looks like there is unity in this diversity (*smiling suddenly*). Durga, you need to become Kalidasa's wife.

Durga: What's that again Mom?

Savitri: We are cutting our legs with the axe; we need to show these pundits that Kalidasa is not the fool they think him to be.

Durga: You mean we will not allow Eklavya to cut his thumb as guru dakshina again. This time Savitri's turn to smile. Durga had got the message.

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 2: Kheti Virasat and the Millet Movement

The Scene: a conference in Jalandhar. There are people from all over the country attending. Durga and Savitri are there too.

Savitri: Parvinder, can you tell me more about this cancer train from Bhatinda?

Parvinder: For one when you book a ticket for the train at the station you do not have to give its name and number, anybody will tell you on which platform the train is standing and when it is about to leave.

Savitri: If it is that bad then why hasn't the government done something about it yet?

Parvinder: Big money involved. Any research which highlights the reality is suppressed or crushed.

Savitri: The Emperor's new clothes all over again it seems.

(Both laugh)

Dr Jagveer: Not a laughing matter this. Real research in this country has been compromised. I for instance am struggling for funds for genome research.

Savitri: What's that?

Dr Jagveer: Genome maps the whole genetic structure. I am trying to research the Murrah buffalo. This buffalo produces the highest amount of milk for the country.

Savitri: Not a priority area of research to me it seems. Lots more we can do with the tax payer's valuable money.

Dr Jagveer: Yes sure, so why did we have to send our scientists to the USA to bring back the Mexican dwarf variety? Could we not have found similar varieties here?

Savitri: Get your point Dr Jagveer, what we want and need is indigenous research. We are trying to see if we can set up a seed testing facility in Chhota Udepur so that we can authenticate the local varieties.

Dr Jagveer: Pipe dream. Top scientists of this country are cash starved and you want money for local communities to do top class research. Where will all the scientists go I say?

Savitri: Search me, if they are not working in the service of this country, they can go to hell for all I care. All that money spent on them and pampering: Gone to their heads I say. Dr Kurien had another intension but looks like money has its own dynamics. How many of those Irma graduates sponsored by him are really working for the poor?

Saura: I will say that again Savitri. Look at what happened to the research of Dr Richcharia? More than eleven thousand rice varieties collected and we had to go to Manila to get the one's that could transform the country.

Dr Jagveer *(laughing)* yes transformed the country all right. And Chhattisgarh, once the rice bowl of India has rice production banned. Why did they not stop mining instead, the real destroyer of the water resources?

Laxmi: Look at this book by Tara Gandhi, see the number of species in the rice field. They are all dependent on each other. Introduction of High yielding varieties and look what happened, the whole web of life disappears.

Sunita: See what happened in Sundarban after the cyclone Aila, saline ingress made the production of high yielding variety rice impossible, so back to the saline tolerant local varieties again. The money spent on cement dykes to protect against ingress? Did it help when Amphan happened this year? Never learn, never learn. Profit to the Corporate guides decision making all the time. While weeping crocodile tears for the affected to justify them.

Devjeet: Good work by the Livestock India Network though. They facilitated a process where the local breeds are being recognised now. The Banni and Chilika buffaloes for instance. The issue is recognition of properties other than milk and draught power and the habitat that makes it happen.

Radheyshyam: Have you ever wondered about the way diets are related to the climate? Moth rich in protein grows in the desert, while the people of the Konkan feast on the succulent plants grown in their kitchen gardens. The tribals could go for day without eating ‘food’ surviving on roots, tubers and nuts found in the forest. Rich store of energy they were.

Sunita: Rodents by the Bushmen of the Kalahari (*smiling*). Seems Pakistan is researching on making protein from the locusts that attacked their fields.

Laxmi: And the Israeli’s from amoeba grown on sludge.

Savitri: So there are modern options too! What did Dr Ashok Khosla say? One route is energy positive, the other an energy guzzler.

Parvinder: Living with nature and yet not being a part of it. Man has been doing that for quite some time now.

Rashmi: First people lived where the water was, and if not they had animals who helped them survive in the hostile conditions. Agriculture and pastoralism are as old as civilization itself.

Savitri: You mean tribals are not a part of civilization!!

All look at her - Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 3: Vikalp Sangam and the Sangam of Sangams

The scene somewhere near Udaipur tucked away in the mountains near the city

Ashish: Here's the book Joy and I have brought out with your cooperation. The world we dream of a hundred years from now. Different visions of this world depending on the natural resources and kind of people we are engaged with.

Joy: Yes a product of our beliefs that these little struggles across the country can make the difference we seek provided they can all be added up. It then is not a question of one plus one becoming two.

Dr Shaikh: I have hope but my country is burning I cannot dream of a hundred years from now. For me it is the here and now I need to talk of.

Durga: Sure Dr Shaikh, for me the Himalayas remind me of my home in Chhota Udepur, tucked away in the mountains like we are here. Only we do not have snow and that lovely blue sky you enjoy.

Dr Shaikh: That is because we are at a higher altitude and clear atmosphere. You are welcome anytime Durga. I also help trekkers and rural ecotourism is my passion.

Durga: Sure Dr Shaikh would be interested in promoting the local foods of your beloved Kashmir, the only way to put an end to all that plastic littering the streams. A beautiful place made ugly in no time, when tourists have their way.

Bablu: Durga, when are you coming back to Kalpavalli?

Durga: I will someday, but I can't bear to see what the windmills have done to that place.

Bablu: I know, I am living right below. Can hear the dull drone, it affects my sleep sometimes.

Dr Shaikh: We finally got rid of the cannon fire in Tosa Maidan after seven years of struggle.

Durga: But you still need to put together the alternative that does not destroy the meadow in other ways.

Dr Shaikh: So come along Durga, what is stopping you?

Durga: Conflict zone, not my cup of tea.

Mohan (*the Bhopa of Udaipur*): I will come, Dr Shaikh, every time I have tried, something has happened and the visit has been postponed.

Pradeep: Let us work on the fishers issue Dr Shaikh, Wular Lake an excellent place to start. We have the support base to take these issues on politically.

Dr Shaikh: Yes I agree.

Tarun: (*tugging at Mohan's arm*): What are you doing poking your nose into controversy. Don't we have enough on our plate already?

Mohan: Well yes we do but without taking such issues head on we cannot do a thorough clean up of pollution.

Tarun: (*shaking his head*): Always attempting the impossible Mohan. I give up. Do what you think is best.

Durga: Stop fighting guys. I have a plan (whispers in Tarun's ear).

Tarun: Sounds like a good idea, let us see. Now it's my turn to invite you guys to Chilika.

Durga: Done Tarun, make sure you have proper facilities for me and my mom.

Tarun: Sure Durga, my mom will take care of that.

Savitri: You three are another breed altogether I can see.

Durga: Yes Mom, this world is not a good place to be in.

Tarun: What more would the hunter like that he can catch all the birds in one place.

Savitri: I get it, disperse. That is the message of decentralised governance.

Durga, Tarun and Mohan put their hands one on top of the other and then suddenly lift them.

All three in unison: We are ready to roll.

Savitri looks at them fondly and smiles.

Curtain closes

Act 2 Scene 1: Soil not Oil

Durga was reading a book when Savitri walked in

What book is that Durga?

Soil not Oil Mom can't you see

You know I cannot read Durga

Yes Durga nodded apologetically I am sorry

I have had such exhilarating conversations with you I forgot

Knowledge is not all you read in books Durga

See what the book says

Living soils are what we need not petrol

Something we knew all along said Savitri why do we need a book to tell us that

See what one product of petroleum has done to our soils Mom

We need to be reminded sometimes

Yes nodded Savitri, chasing mirages like moths to a flame

What more does it say Durga?

That sponge iron plants have come up in Jharsuguda in Odisha on the pretext of being less polluting

The result pollution, pollution everywhere

Temperatures rising too

How can production for profit ever result in the restoration of the biodiversity?

Know that story the Telangana tribals told us the other day

How they destroyed the Mahua and other trees for cash

Buy a golden flower for the gods instead of white

Instead of the tree flourishing it withered away

See this story I saw on the Internet

In the early twentieth century the \$ was 13 to a rupee

Then one to a rupee at the time of Independence

Seven to the rupee in the mid eighties

And now

Why?

The \$ goes to buy oil and in return we have to sell our agricultural produce

The transformation of the countryside from one that fed us to now being fed by the PDS stares us in the face

How can our millets compete with Rs 2/- per kg rice?

No it can't so we grow for the market

And the government provides us with subsidized rations so that the farmers of Punjab and elsewhere have markets

They have problems too as we know

All of us cutting our feet with the axe

Tell you what Durga said Savitri

You become Kalidasa's wife

A new history will be written

As from Oil we are no longer smitten

Durga smiled
Better and better she thought
A new chapter has begun

Exeunt

.....

Act 2 Scene 2::Kheti Virasat and the Millet Movement

Durga and Savitri were at a big convention in Punjab
Farmers from across the country had come
Savitri interrogation verified what Durga had said
From the horse's mouth as it were
Sitting in the Devil's lap itself
Personal testimonies galore
One scientist asked a question
Did we have to go to the USA to learn about the Mexican dwarf variety for wheat?
Plenty of those kinds of varieties here
And when Canada has a problem, where do they look for the germ plasm to solve it?
Why then are we putting not just our research agenda our seed wealth to ransom with the corporates?
If we destroy our ecosystems we will have nothing left
Like we have done for the Gir and other cow breeds we will have to go to Brazil to import it back!
What is conservation agriculture?
No till
This is back to the days of yore
And yet driven by corporate agriculture
See this painting of the rice field somewhere in Odisha
Just look at the number of species dependent on this ecosystem
Introduction of pesticide and poof!
Just imagine Chhattisgarh banning rice cultivation!!
More than 11,000 varieties of rice there
Not one that suits dry-land agriculture and drought conditions?
And in the Sundarban
Back to salt tolerant varieties after Aila
The Chilika and the Banni Buffaloes were there long before we discovered their characteristics
Where from this term non-descript breed emerged
Science has its uses
Now we have the technology to identify the traits and relate it to ecosystem conditions
The same can be done with the food we eat
Why does Moth grow in the desert?

Why are high rainfall foods more liquid in content?
Why do people in Rajasthan eat so much chilli?
Cuisine without the context
And eating for the sake of it
How did the Bushmen of the Kalahari survive?
And for that matter our tribals during the long summer
With scarcely anything to eat
Was all of it poverty and deprivation?
Or our own ignorance
The discussions went on
Savitri had many thoughts whirling in her head
Reassured that Durga was there
She let them rest

Exeunt

.....

Act 2 Scene 3: Vikalp Sangam and the Sangam of Sangams

Somewhere near Udaipur tucked away in the mountains a meeting of minds
Experiments, struggles across the country
An alternative path to development is possible
And these little bubbles across the country could set the pot boiling
Something to connect the dots
So Vikalp Sangam thought of
The Sangam of Sangams being the sea
That connects all to each other
Though the air is another as well
The quantity and quality of the water that reaches the sea important
Reports of the large islands of plastic floating in the sea
Shows that nature has the power to clean itself
But this destruction nothing that nature has ever seen or dealt with
So despite its fury through Amphan and earlier Aila
The earthquakes and tsunamis here and there
Correction factor not taking place
Manmade disaster manmade solution needed
Distinct from market solutions of course
Those governed by the bourse
Have profits not nature in mind
Yet what have we here
Stories of how livings soils could be reborn
And repair of the shroud that was torn
Tosa Maidan, pastures freed from the cannon ball
And in many forests back to natures call

How water can be used judiciously
When proper land use pattern is ensured
The variety is endless
Ensures we are not bored
Revival of the spring sanctuaries above Almora
And the Oak that goes with it
Seed banks of native species
A production system revived
Food festival and Forest festival
That shows nature's bounty
 Local seeds on display
The variation is profound
Even knowledge of part
More than one PhD
Yet no value to what can be got for free
Exchange process has been by the trader warped
A five percent shortage of Onions more than two hundred per cent rise in prices brings
And a glut of the same causes the prices to crash
In both cases the trader takes the cream
Is there another way this fluctuation to control
Value addition at source increases the shelf life
Decentralisation of renewable energy production needed of course
Difficult but not impossible
If commitment to the people is the motive force of production
Not profit for more profit
Greed insatiable
Savitri looked and Durga
Come I have learnt enough
We now have a lot to do
Durga lit up inside
Eyes lit up
A spark has been lit
Will it create a prairie fire?
Wait and watch she thought

Exeunt

The Seed – Part II

By Viren Lobo

(Dedicated to Timbuktu Collective and Kalpavalli: It is their struggle that demonstrated: that this change is indeed possible. Also to Fenai Mata Revakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal who have taken the onus of replicating this process in a different context and with the perspective of bringing in a qualitatively different political change in the leadership as well).

Act 3 Scene 1: The Environment Education Programme

The Scene: Back in a village of Chhota Udepur. Durga and Savitri surrounded by children accompanied by Chandu

Chandu: *(blowing a whistle)* all children make groups of five or six.

Durga: Now listen carefully. Each one of you to go in different directions: Pick the leaves of different plants. Come back here in one hour. You have to be able to identify the leaf and say where it came from too.

(Lights darken, come back in again).

Four of five groups can be seen in different parts of the stage collecting leaves. Some boys climb on trees, not picking leaves. Girls can be seen moving in a pattern: Bending then reaching up moving to one side and plucking a leaf. Excited chatter and showing each other something or the other.

(Lights darken and come on again: Durga, Savitri and Chandu at the centre of the Stage).

Chandu: *(Blowing his whistle)* All children come back again.

Children come from different corners

Durga: *(Sitting in the middle with a table and few chairs around)* Let us see what we have here. Group one!

Group one duly comes to the centre and records what they have with Chandu

Durga: Group 2

Group two duly comes and records what they have and so on till all the groups are over

Chandu: Group three is the winner. They have identified forty four plants and named all of them.

All: Cheers.

Durga: Group three come on up

(It is a group of five girls Savita, Netra, Parvati, Arushi and Rashmi. They give their names one by one).

Chandu: Group two and four comes second with thirty five plants. They too have named all of them.

One was a group of girls; the other a group of boys.

Chandu: Group one has thirty three. They have named twenty eight.

This group was also girls.

Chandu: Last group five. They collected twenty five and named fifteen

This was a group of boys; smiling nonetheless. This was the one that was climbing trees and showing off.

Shobha: *(An elderly woman standing around).* Within the same time we would have collected sixty species and named all of them.

Savita: How can you do that! You can hardly walk.

Shobha: I do not need to walk; there are at least ten species right here in front of your nose, *(picking up two there and then).*

Savita: *(startled)* we never use these in the kitchen grandma.

Shobha: Quite right they are medicinal plants. This is one for bruises and this one for coughs.

Durga: Want to play this game again.

All children: Yes!

Lights dim, during this time someone comes to the front of the stage and describes the games played. One of them was to identify the bird or the animal by the scat or the dropping. Then one called the food web. There were many more as well. Lights come on. Durga, Savitri, Chandu with the children and the elders standing behind

Durga: So children what have we learnt

Savita: That the vulture has disappeared and with that problems with decomposing dead animals. They rot in the fields causing sickness.

Rajesh: The Python has disappeared too and hence we have rodent infestation from time to time.

Rukmini: Pesticide, insecticide, rat poison kill other species in the food web as well causing a ripple effect.

Arushi: Net effect disease has increased and the cost of production going up.

Shobha: You forgot the point of people spending money on tablets which are made of neem oil, available in plenty in the village. What a waste of money!

Ravi: Yes grandma and not to forget iron deficiency because we are now not eating the iron rich foods from the forest.

Durga: You forgot one important thing.

All: What?

Durga: The herbarium all of you have developed.

All children go one by one and pick up the chart paper on which they have pasted the leaves of different plants. They display that to the audience

Lights darken

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 2: Food Festival

The scene: An open ground in the village. Durga and Savitri gathered with the women, some items on display on a few tables at the side. People can be seen tasting the food and appreciating it.

Rashmi: This is a novel use of the Mahua flower for us, makes quite a tasty sweet.

Durga: Yes I know, I experimented on it when I found that the flower itself had been banned due to its link with liquor.

Shobha: I tried to tell everyone, but they just would not listen to me. Mataji has spoken, they said. As you know, whatever Mataji says through somebody in a trance is gospel in these parts.

Durga: Rot and nonsense, either it was the Bhopa Mohan feeding her with what to say or she spoke her own mind and views without reference to the larger facts and issues of concern. Fact is Mahua is rich in protein, comes at a time when there is not much food around and hence its contribution to the diet of the people of this region is invaluable.

Rekha: Yes, the drinking which was part of festival celebration has become a menace because of the men having no employment, drowning their sorrows in inebriation!

Savitri: I talked to Shambu from Palghar at the meeting we went to. He showed me Warli paintings depicting how the Parsi had brought impoverishment to the tribals through the sale of liquor.

Govind: He took advantage of the need for cash at that time, illicit brewing of the liquor (normally used for self consumption) promoted by the cash economy.

Hiralal: This delicacy made of drumstick leaves is really something. What did you add to give it this flavour?

Durga: Jaggery.

Chandu: Oh of course, I should have known, normally what we get in the market has sugar additives.

Durga: Am thinking of taking a box for the collector, what do you say, Sarpanch Ji (looking at Chandu).

Chandu: A good idea.

Savitri: I think a delegation should meet the Collector

Lights dim, somebody comes to the front to talk of the delegation that went to meet the Collector. Due to Section 144 being imposed, only three persons were allowed to meet him: Durga, Savitri and Shobha. Collector was pretty impressed by Shobha's knowledge of the local biodiversity. Wanted to make her advisor to the District, but Durga restrained him saying that the women's group would come up with a comprehensive proposal for the mid day meal first. The Collector agreed. A meeting was called, plans were made but nothing happened. Another meeting was called.

Durga: What happened? No action on the proposal yet?

Silence

Chandu: Speak up.

Silence

Durga: I think the men should leave the room.

All men left. Animated conversation could be heard for about an hour. Then at last Durga called out.

Durga: it's okay, all you men can come back in again.

They do

Durga: What has been decided is that the women will practice the recipes learnt at home and use it in their own houses first. They are not sure of the economics of the Mid Day meal and

how the work should be organised. So they would first like to gain more experience before submitting a proposal.

Govind: I will keep watch.

The women giggle and whisper among themselves After some time.

Durga: Okay everyone let's take a photo.

All pose for it

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 3: Mahayatra

The scene: A tapestry of Chhota Udepur, where the Mahayatra is to take place Durga and Sushant giving final touches to the van which will move with the Mahayatra. One poster was of Chhota Udepur with the following logos Fenai Mata Revakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal, Adivasi Jan Uthan Trust, Habitat, IELA, India Friends Association and Searching and Service in Unity. Another poster having different food items made of local species with photos of local seeds as well.

Durga: There now finally done. We can put in the posters, seeds and other items for display.

Sushant: (*gesturing to the children*) bring all of it now.

Children bring all the display material

Durga: Savita, run along and tell everyone to come Govind kaka, Chandu kaka, Shobha Dadi, Maa, Rekha etc. Also our guests from America and other parts of the country

All come, a prayer is offered in front of the jungle god. Durga leads the prayer and all join in. The Yatra begins and comes to a halt at Mandwada a village. The display items are taken out and set up. People from the village Hiralal, Shanti, Gayatri, Mohan also help out, other villagers too come.

Chandu: This Mahayatra is recognition of our own culture and natural resources from which we have drawn sustenance for centuries. World over there is recognition of the necessity to draw lessons from the knowledge we have as a result people are here to support us to restore the lost confidence we have on ourselves. I call on Durga who has been the inspiration behind this Yatra to tell us.

Durga: As you know the process began when Tornado was trying to damage our local diversity by introduction of GMO cotton. While some people have accepted it, we know what it will do to us and so we decided to resist. Savitri my mother and I travelled across the country to see both the destruction done by companies like Tornado as also see what others have done. In Anantpur District we found this group Timbuktu which had helped restore, barren lands in eight villages covered 7000 acres of land, they have also set up cooperatives of organic farmers and artisans etc to process and market their produce. A windmill company Shaktiman came and wrecked havoc in the region but a lot of it bounced back too, they are studying the long term effects of such an intrusion on their life and culture. In Punjab too we saw the kind of damage pesticide and GMO are doing to the people there. Other places too, some of it is depicted in the posters we are showing. I call on our guest Shaswat from the USA, he and his wife Parvati are from this country. They will tell you why they are supporting us in this Endeavour and what they see in this experiment we are undertaking.

Shaswat: I thank all of you for giving me an opportunity to speak here. As you can see I am taking a video of the Yatra and will be showing it to our friends back home. Your friends too! We too are quite dismayed at the way Tornado managed to buy up the leadership in our country. Our neighbours Canada have banned Tornado, looking for markets they have come here too. I thank Durga for opening my eyes to something I never realised my education was doing to me. I see how our confidence in our own knowledge and culture has been undermined. Production for the sake of it is not on. How it benefits the people is what we have to see.

Savitri: Thank you Shaswat for expressing your confidence in us. We do not have the answers but we are first trying to build on what we know. Recently we went to Jamnagar and saw what Siddharth Vyas and Dr Hitesh Jani are doing. I think that is a way forward, blending the past with the potential of modernity, our people are not yet convinced that it will provide them with the livelihood we need as there are so many broken threads to mend. Nevertheless as time goes on and this anti nature process becomes more and more costly, we will find that this is the only way to survive. I will now ask Vivek from Ahmedabad to speak he is going to help us market our organic produce.

Vivek: Thanks Savitri, I must say I am impressed. Will come back again to train the farmers here about the quality standards they need to maintain if we are to market it. We have a lab in Ahmedabad and we invite your Chandu and others to come with us to see it.

Chandu: Certainly, Mahadev, Rekha and I will come. I now ask our mentor Radhakrishna to say a few words and conclude the Yatra.

Radhakrishna: Fellow yatris, I think this is a historic moment for us. A reassertion of our past with a difference; the acknowledgement of the true role science and development can play in mitigating some of the issues we face with nature and removing some of the superstition in our beliefs as well. Yet we have become fortified with the belief that the solution is right here. Our pledge draws on the past and takes us to the future we call this Trikaal samajh or knowledge and understanding of past, present and future in our expression of life today. We will be having a meeting with the leaders of each village later to see how Fenai Mata Revakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal can be a living entity. We acknowledge our gratitude to our guests from America Shaswat and Parvati, others too but most of all to Durga who had the vision to make it happen. It has been a long journey for us (both this one and the search for the truth about the correct development path to follow), we do not have all the answers we know but that our quest resonates with those across the country and the world we are sure. The report of Durga and Parvati from Jalandhar was an eye opener for all of us. Together we shall overcome.

All take a bow

Curtain closes

Act 3 Scene 1: The Environment Education Programme

Durga and Savitri had the children milling around them
Eager anticipation for the competition that was about to begin
Women and youth in the background looking at the enthusiasm curiously
Children made into five teams and made to go different ways
The task, collect leaves of different species and bring back within an hour
You could see the children jumping fences and plucking leaves as they went along
Boys were more energetic but girls more systematic
As if they knew what they were after
Sure enough when reckoning came
The girls had collected more leaves
And could describe them too
The boys had used their energy to enjoy themselves more
And show their prowess too
The girls had more names to describe and uses too
There were many names they could not give
Elders were tempted to chip in but stopped
You will have your chance said Durga
Sure enough
Another competition between elders and the youngsters took place
The children ran here and there
Elders took their time
End of the day
They had less but could describe each one
Needless to say they had won
Children were furious
Why did you not teach us they cried?
Were you ready to learn was the reply
Durga smiled to herself
A big lesson had been taught today
For some time she kept silent
Children kept egging her on
Durga didi (big sister) what will we do today?
One day Durga decided enough was enough
She took out a string from her pocket
Told one to catch the corner
Then another and another
Soon all of them were in a circle catching the string
The game food web
Each child had the name of a species
If one died which all were affected
They had to drop the thread
So the children used the knowledge of interconnections

To play the game
Fun it was
But not the end
What came next they asked Durga
Wait and see
Jungle safari
At night
Identify the species by sight or sound
Another lesson profound
More collect scat
Identify the animal or the bird
Were there sound unheard
Slowly past ecology was rebuilt in the mind
Ecological history the elders gave
And a story was told which was quite grave
The python had disappeared
And the vulture too
So rats multiplied
And decomposition affected
No wonder so many with disease infected
Savitri looked at Durga in awe
The power of education she thought
Combining the old with the new
In ways that spirits renewed
What would Durga come up with next?
This time she did not ask her
Somehow she knew

Exeunt

.....

Act 3 Scene 2: Food Festival

In the night women gathered around Durga and Savitri excitedly
There was a clatter from the noise each having their own story to tell
Savitri brought the meeting to order
One at a time, each will have their say
For a while the noise stopped but later murmuring continued
However the main gist was the discussion with Durga
Uses of the different species were told and their food value too
Durga suggested a food festival
To assert this diversity
And new experiments as well

How Mahua flower could be made into a sweet for instance
Instead of liquor which the guru had banned
Durga pointed out nutritional content in Mahua
Drumstick leaves and other varieties as well
Biscuits and other delicacies suggested
Which market varieties contested
The health and nutritional camp organised by Government was promoting soya nuggets for protein
Durga made a plea to the Collector that local foods should go into the diet
Collector agreed
Training was given
Collector presented with an assortment
Found it delicious
Asked for a proposal
A number of issues came in the way
Not used to this type of functioning yet
Comfortable with doles
And orders
Restrictions at home patriarchy we cannot forget
Another meeting called
Men were present too
Women did not open their mouths
Despite the prompting from male counterparts
So Durga banished them from the room
The women then opened up
What they discussed not clear yet
As behind closed doors
What can you get?
Finally the men were called in
We have agreed said they
Training for all to be given
So that at least at home they could begin
A long road ahead it seems
As market still dominates the thinking
Bottom line being the potential wage earned
Nutritional potential and spin off benefits still a long way away
How will be eat today
Many questions left unasked
Maybe the mutterings said it all
Were not put upfront yet
So where it will go difficult to bet
Do we have an alternative?
Was what Durga could think
Market pretends that it is so

Though no one can buy mink
Let's wait and watch thought Durga
The time will come
Be prepared the motto
For now let's take a photo

Exeunt

.....

Act 3 Scene 3: Mahayatra

An eight day long Mahayatra covering eighty villages and 220 Kms was planned
Different aspects to be covered each day
Seed festival, food festival forest festival a part
Display by artisans, agricultural implements and utensils another dimension
Cultural and religious festivals using the biodiversity still another
All in all covering the intricate link between the natural resources, cultural, spiritual and economic life
Durga among the speakers
Children shared their experiences too
Transect walks and offering prayers to the forest god among the actions that were planned as well
Support for the venture came from various places
The youth of Pune
Organisations working on ecology and livelihoods as well
The Local federation was the main organiser
A while it took to put it in place
Leaders from each village contacted
Local responsibility given
A number of glitches before the Yatra saw the light of day
First postponed due to change of plans of the chief guest
Then the question of the food material was there
Not all available on call
As market had a role to play
Break down of traditional systems it did display
Yet Durga took it all in her stride
With help of course
Nicknamed the Mata
With a difference
No trance but science
And its link to culture, diversity and ecosystem
Dispelling myths along the way
It became clear that cultural upliftment was a hoax

Destroyed native self confidence
Yet there were things to be learnt
If with modernity culture was not to be burnt
Critical application of science to the local context
Empowerment for all, the pretext
Alienation from nature and from human being
Was what the market achieved
Restoring the threads required exposing the hidden hand on the puppet strings
This in the forest became clear
As there was felling by the mafia
Nexus with the forest officials was noticed
And community action taken
The double standards of the forest department had to be exposed
If community were to realise their strength
With this resolve the people made their pledge
Self reliance to restore
And Local self governance to ensure

Curtain closes

The Panama Papers – Money laundering, arms dealers and the drug cartel

Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to my Dad's Cousin Desmond Pinto for whom Zanzibar was heaven until the revolution. He later tried twice to make Goa his home and failed. It is a story of a revolution gone wrong somewhere. Freedom for all was the call; both Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat did not provide it. Yet for this freedom we all dream and to my Cousin/Uncle Desmond for wisdom I will lean. I acknowledge the contribution of his sister Hazel Cardozo to this play, her spirit and support is with me as I write it).



Background

The motivation for this play is the questions being faced by the current society where the crisis of the markets is sought to be addressed by the increasing recourse to the military industrial complex. A readymade market developed for the Capitalist, at the cost of the State. To make this plausible a story of the Nation in danger, the world in danger has to be put out. The people ruling the country manufacture the story: then comes as saviours to put the fires out. Any narrative that challenges theirs is snuffed out.

The play traverses history in an attempt to creatively place the dilemma we face today. The play does not offer any answers, neither is it meant to question the action the actions of the Current State. By counter posing the Capitalist State with the Socialist State and a revolution gone wrong, the play intends to traverse a hitherto less travelled path, the fine line between Democratic governance and the Dictatorship of the proletariat. It builds on Lenin's call in his Last Testament that Stalin must be replaced if the impending clash between Stalin and Trotsky was not to be inevitable. Lenin while spelling out the essential traits of the General Secretary of the CPSU could not spell out who this person could be. The fate of the CPSU is before us and the fate of what this first phase in the revolution led to as well. In India, the left front Government buried Marx at Nandigram on 14th March 2007 his 124th Death anniversary. The Trinamul Congress which replaced it buried the land struggle which brought it to power. CPI ML Red Star through the Bhangar struggle in West Bengal showed that Marxism is still alive and kicking.

My engagement with CPI ML Red Star begins after Bhangar when they sought to expand this spark to other parts of the country. The result was the creation of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha a forum designed to provide a class perspective to the tribal struggle. Why such a perspective was at all needed after 70 years of independence is not a perspective to be addressed here. The point raised by me was that right now the task is to unite all left and democratic forces on one platform and hence the primacy of developing party is secondary. Party will emerge out of this unification process but what form it will take cannot be determined beforehand. In a separate process, Comrade Battini Rao raised the point that the Leninist form of party formation is now outdated and a new form and conception of party is needed. Comrade Battini Rao was instrumental in creating People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism (PADS), a forum to unite all left and democratic forces. The forum is clear that fundamentalism of all types is not on, even of the left variety. In its first conference, the forum highlighted many cases of violation of inner party democracy and use of violence/ even murder to crush the opposition. The forum also highlighted the plight of members of the majority religion in minority dominated State s. The forum has also made clear the distinction between fundamentalism and communalism (sponsoring of hatred against other communities). While the forum will not have truck with communalism, it does engage with fundamentalists on the margin (the belief that no discussion is possible with fundamentalist but an engagement with them necessary to ensure that they do not side with communalists). In a sense this is the unexplored space between identity and class. While most put class issues primary, the purpose of the forum is give these issues equal importance. In practise this

translates as looking at the class question within the identity question and then seeing the larger process of unity of the identities within the class.

Due to the complexity of this issue, in practical terms this has resulted in a separate process guided Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti which accords primacy to the individual/ group conducting struggle at various levels. There is obviously the question of the leadership and the led counter posed by why should people be led at all? It is a question of what is the process that will make self governing societies a reality if at all. The play will not conclude on this question, it leaves it to the audience to join hands in the Way forward. An essential element of the Brechtian technique: to break the alienation induced by Capitalism and its corollary, the market.

Dramatis Personae

The Characters in the play are a mix drawn from real life and those required to suit the requirements of the play. The resemblance to real characters however ends once they enter the context of the play. It is however the authors attempt to address issues arising out of interpretation of characters outside of the real situations they were in.

Guard (Jason): The one assigned to guard the cell of Julian Assange.

Julian: A reference to Julian Assange incarcerated in Belmarsh.

Thomasa Rivasa: Somebody referred to in a story on the wall through the tribal territory of the Tohono O' Odham people on the America Mexico border.

Sun Yat-sen: Chinese leader.

Mossadegh: Former Prime Minister of Iran.

Jared: A reference to Jared Diamond.

Manipadma Jena: An activist from Odisha

Bhagat Singh: A reference to the Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh.

Lenin: A reference to Vladimir Illyich Lenin.

Mao: A reference to Mao Tse Tung.

Mohan: The Bhopa Mohan from the previous two plays.

Durga: The tribal lady from the play The Seed.

Tushar: The lawyer from Odisha from the play The Seed.

James Petras: A reference to James Petras.

Jason: Of Zanzibar.

Zita: His mother.

Meera: Jason's girl friend from India.

Ali: An informer.

Hussein: Sergeant Major posted in Baghdad.

The Voice: From MI5.

Bond: Reference to James Bond.

Sehmat: An activist from Kashmir: Reference to the movie Raazi.

Mithun: An activist from Assam.

Rajalaxmi: An activist from Telangana.

Selveraj: A fisher from Tuticorin.

Vijaylaxmi: A women activist from Tuticorin

Nicholas: An intellectual from Tuticorin

Rajesh: An economist from Tuticorin

Sushil: A researcher from Tuticorin

Sudha: A woman fisher from Tuticorin

Indira: Tea shop owner.

Kanchan: An activist from Delhi.

Salma: A woman from Shaheen Bagh.

Fatima: A woman from Shaheen Bagh.

Mariam: A woman from Shaheen Bagh.

Alia: A woman from Shaheen Bagh.

Kapil: An activist from Delhi.

Supriya: An activist from Delhi.

Kannika: An activist from Delhi.

Salma: An activist from Delhi.

Part I

Imperialism is moribund but refuses to die

(Dedicated to my cousin, Joseph Vinay Braganza: He was born on the same day as me though seven years earlier; died tragically of a heart attack in a swimming pool at a very early age of seventeen. He was not just a brilliant student but a craftsman as well. His death was a great loss to all of us, one from which we never really recovered. His memory is etched close to my heart)

Act 1 Scene 1: Julian Assange and Wiki Leaks

The scene like any other where solitary confinement takes place: except that there were no heavy chains binding hand and foot and the stiff rod in between. The room fairly comfortable but nothing to see, except the four walls. A slot for communication to take place that was all. A knock on the steel door

Guard: Your lunch Mr. Julian

Julian: Just a sec. ... Okay now.

Guard (*pushing the lunch through the gap, grabbed on the other side by Julian*) there you are sir; let me know when you are done (*going back to his seat*).

Julian: (*eating his lunch and thinking out loud*) I am not the only one facing this fate. There have been many before me and across the world as well. (*Looking at the photos of Guantanamo prison and cellular jail he had pasted a few months ago on his wall to remind him that he was part of a community that was revered by history: moving to the door a few minutes later with his plate in hand*). I am done he called out.

Guard: (*getting up and taking the outstretched plate*). Time for a few winks for me I say.

Julian: Suit yourself, am going to read this book by Engels 'Origin of family private property and the State' The part I have read till now pretty interesting. It shows how mother right gives way to patriarchy. Am going to read the rest: It provides and insight into how values have changed with the change of the governing system in place.

Guard: Not for me sir. My life does not extend much beyond the confines of this prison campus. Only satisfaction can feed the hungry mouths in my family and send money home to my mother who is now bedridden. Just hope my son has some sense and uses the education he has to get something better than I landed up with.

Julian: Sorry to hear this Jason. Can you send this letter to my wife Stella Morris?

Jason (the guard): No sir, there is a strict watch on all communication. I will be stripped of my job if I do. You have got to find another way. For now I have heard she is trying to move heaven and earth to get you released while the US government is trying to fabricate a case to extradite you from here to try you for treason.

Julian: (*laughing*) sounds funny to me now. The whole world knows. What are they afraid of?

Jason: beats me, those in power do not trust their own mothers I guess.

Julian: That's true, look at the erstwhile Socialist States, not able to handle difference of opinion, and related leadership questions. The leader is always right, even though Mao said the opposite, bomb the headquarters was his call. Did he mean to spare himself then?

Jason: Over my head sir. Leave you to your reading.

Julian: Fine. Two lonely souls meet up for some time.

Jason: (*Thinks to himself and then speaks to himself*) Figured a way of getting to Stella Morris but not here guys walls have ears.

Julian (*reading a book*): Looks like Shibdas Ghosh got the Cultural Revolution in China right but his preoccupation with correctness of the leadership has led him astray. Hope in that thought though.

Jason: *(knocking on Julian's door, Julian walks up. A tiny slip of paper passes hands. Then a short while later both back to their seats).*

Julian: *(looking at the piece of paper and talking to himself).* I was right; there is hope left in this world.

The lights dim and scene changed slightly

Act 1 Scene 2: The wall on the America Mexico Border

Scene: A little modified to look like a wall with a passage in between for cars to pass by on both sides. There is a booth on both sides. A hoarding on both sides of the border with the following message:

For the Tohono O'odham people, the mountains are sacred.

The story is told that, I'ittoi, their creator, lives in a cave below the Baboquivari peak. One day, Tohono O'odham farmers who wanted to expand their land asked I'ittoi to move the mountain. But the greediness of the men forced the top of the mountain to break off and the rain to stop feeding the farmers' crops.

Even as the land turned brittle in the heat, the Tohono O'odham people never left.

They were here long before their land was divided, first by a border, then again as fences were built and gates closed. Now they fear they will be divided once more.

There is no O'odham word for wall, the people say. They promise each other they will stay and fight.

Thomasa Rivasa standing to one side and reading out the message

Thomasa: (to herself) easier said than done I say. Money power from drugs corrupts the very soul of the Tohono O'odham people.

Sun Yat-sen: What do you think the British tried with our people Thomasa? It was called the boxer wars.

Mossadegh: You can say that again! The Middle East is a cauldron. Talk of Islam being violent and sponsoring world-wide terrorism. Why were secular leader here overthrown/ killed and fundamentalism sponsored?

Jared: Read my book Guns, Gems and Steel guys it's all there business interest behind the façade of violence and crime.

Thomasa: Yeah I know connections in high places too but the common people the scape goat as usual. There is nothing new about that.

Manipadma Jena: There is the other side too. See the unanimous vote by the gram sabhas of Niyamgiri against the corporate giant Vedanta?

Thomasa: You are right Manipadma, there is the other side but slow poison is difficult to fight, it corrodes the brain.

Bhagat Singh: yet thoughts live on and thoughts get sharpened through contradiction.

Mao: Yes they sure do. My book 'On Contradiction' shows the way to approach this.

Lenin: Did not get to see this. I for one would surely have endorsed when coupled with the realisation of Bhagat Singh in jail: that guns and bombs do not bring revolution. However there are very few understand the context in which it was said. It is very important to place that too.

Mao: Yes very important indeed. Before me Stalin said, power does not flow out of the barrel of the gun but who carries it. Peace initiative important, bought him time to recoup before Hitler turned his guns on Russia. I said the exact opposite but meant the same, it was who was carrying the gun, so I opposed Stalin and said let's start the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek twenty percent of his army is infiltrated by the Red Army, soon those guns given to him by the American's will be ours. In two years I was proven right.

Lenin: yes Stalin apologized to you too, said you prevented him from committing a grave historical error.

Mao: Am not so sure Lenin, we got no support from Stalin even later, some gap in what Proletarian Internationalism means.

Lenin: I most certainly agree, very unfortunate, the communist camp got split and from there further splits too. I warned against the way Stalin was handling contradictions though.

Mao: Shibdas Ghosh got the Chinese Cultural revolution right but a bout of grandeur relating to the leadership question and he slipped up, very badly at that.

Lenin: Watch out what you say about Shibdas Ghosh, there are those who can prove that he fudged many statements to prove his correctness.

Mao: yes, has been a great concern to me too. Yet there seems to be a thread of truth running through which we need to digest.

Lenin: Yes sure Mao, look at the works of Marx and Engels we have learnt a great deal by the way they turned many debates upside down or right side up.

Mao: Sure like the path breaking discoveries linking Feuerbach and Hegel but turning both their conclusions upside down.

Lenin: Am not so sure Mao. Love/hate is a contradiction too so somewhere Engels did not get that right entirely I guess.

Mao: (thinking for a while) looks like you have a point Lenin, Pope Francis in Laudato si said there was something we guys could learn from religion.

Bhagat Singh: I have defined religion as something else in why I am an atheist. So according to that definition, even Marxism was converted into a religion. See the play King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin to see what the real teachings of the founders are.

Lenin: Good point Bhagat.

Mao: (*reflecting*) you are sharp Bhagat, I think you would have caught the essence of my call in Cultural Revolution of China.

Lenin: (tapping Mao on the shoulders) let's not ponder on imponderables. It is time for us to break this wall.

Thomasa: (*who was bored at the discourse of the three suddenly got excited*) yes I agree, but how?

Lenin, Mao and Bhagat (*turn on her sharply and in unison say*) how indeed! You tell us.

Thomasa: (*looks at them in wonder, it was a surprise for her*). Thought you guys had all the answers.

Lenin: (*winking at both Mao and Bhagat*) A total misinterpretation of Marxism what say you both?

Mao and Bhagat Singh: (*in unison*) yes.

Lights dim

Act 1 Scene 3: Lockheed Martin and the Global war on Terror

Scene: Changed again, the forests in Udaipur, Mohan the Bhopa (medicine man looking at his mobile and then addressing a gathering)

Mohan: I have here a graph that shows the forty year price of Lockheed Martin. See this sharp increase here pointing to the mobile.

Durga: yes Mohan, very much like the kink we see in the climate change graph. What does it mean?

Tushar: What else Durga, superimpose this on the global war on terror and voila. There you have it. See this small kink here (*pointing to the mobile again*). This was the time the stocks prices were declining due to the cash crunch and then ... An announcement of a terror attack and boom, the prices shot up again.

Durga: you cannot be so cocky Tushar; these small kinks can have other explanations too.

Mohan: yes they can, so we need to superimpose long term trends to filter out the kinks.

Tushar: (*glaring angrily*) you guys think I did not do that! I am a lawyer remember.

James Petras: guys, guys stop arguing. Did any one of you see what I wrote about the US in the early nineties?

Mohan: yes I did, you talked about how the solemn promise to the US people was crumbling

James: right, the result of crushing the Unions. Pink slips everywhere, people fear losing their jobs so the voice of reason crushed.

Mohan: The result of the realisation that the USSR was no longer the global spokesman for the World's proletariat. Glasnost and Perestroika! It was a false promise of the road to freedom.

Durga: Look at the Russian women invading Goa shortly after the collapse of the mighty Soviet Union. The road to freedom indeed!

Tushar: Liberalisation and globalisation for us. Pawning the nations gold at the Lloyd's bank.

Mohan: Massive protest just a year later.

Tushar: (*eyes twinkling*) demolishing Babri Masjid just ten days later. Hardly an accident caused by overenthusiastic kar sevaks. There was complicity of the administration for sure.

Durga: ((glaring at Tushar) how dare you say that. These bhakts were interested in Ram Rajya, a noble cause.

Mohan: Am all for Ram Rajya, but what is Ram Rajya exactly? Making Sita prove her innocence?

Durga: (thinking for a while) you have a point Mohan.

Tushar: Misguiding the gullible public, not the fault of the Ram Rajya cause. Look at the Shah Bano case and the mischievous Shilanyas done in 1948 and left at that.

Durga: *Why I am atheist* by Bhagat Singh, a major point in that I guess. Pooja to Bhagat Singh but paying scant attention to what he taught.

Mohan: Not the only case Durga, it also happened to Jesus, Muhammad and many others as well.

Durga: so many sects, all claiming one God and all claiming to be the pathway to heaven.

Mohan: heaven and hell are here on earth Durga. Francis Lobo says that in his book *Bol Lobo Bol*.

Tushar: I saw and noted that (*with a smile*). The old man was wicked, did not give this insight till just before he died.

Mohan: you can say that again. I particularly noted that piece. It was a sharp insight into that man.

Durga: Hid a lot behind his humour. Had many biting their nails sharply but unable to get their claws into him.

Mohan: He had his wife Nora to thank for that, his son told him so, see the introduction to the book by him.

Tushar: A prophet not recognised in his own country. It is an old story.

James: Let's get back to Lockheed Martin.

Mohan: Or Rafael and Anil Ambani?

Durga and Tushar: shh.... The people of India have spoken!

Mohan: (*thinking far while*) I say those guys at HAL did a good job on the Bison. What do you say? Tushar? Durga? (*looking from one to the other*).

Tushar and Durga: (*both with hands to their lips and smiling*)

Curtain Closes

Act 1 Scene 1: Julian Assange and Wiki Leaks

Julian Assange on death row in Belmarsh
A prison designed for detention without explanation
Somebody decides what's good for the State
And in this case not just for the State the world as well too
The law of no man's land has been transgressed
And the law of the land its victim possessed
Is this a punishment for a single man who dared defy?
A flat NO we get in reply
Such a case was the Cellular jail
And the Guantanamo prison
What is treason over the years has been differently defined
The Erinyes considered blood right to be primary
Greek Slave Society overturned that through the establishment of Patriarchy
And so on the story goes
Bruno, Copernicus burnt on the stake
And Joan of Arc too
The Moscow trials had another spin
Then came Nuremburg
Peace movement was born
Socialism a third of the world had overturned
Imre Nagy some questions raised
Cultural Revolution in China sought this to overturn
But the Gang of four foiled the plan
Burn the head quarters Chairman Mao had said
Did this mean spare him?
Or destroy a leadership based on sycophancy
The fate of the USSR to avoid
Despite its campaign against the cult of leadership
A legacy of Stalin
Though Stalin himself sycophants decried
Was it just a matter of a gap between theory and practise?
Or something deeper as well
Shibdas Ghosh tried to explain
And failed
Yet a valuable point he made
Today's world is not one of sacrifice
So submission of individual to the collective is out of choice
A superior form of life
Yet
When differences of opinion arose
The party forgot all the prose
Condemned those objecting as renegades

And in the process its own ignorance displayed
Death sentence is now being condemned
Though punish the offender of the crime continues
Recognition of a link between crime and societal conditions on the increase
Yet still not able to get rid of the disease
To Julian we now once again go
And to Anand Teltumbe and others too
Why is the due process of law being put aside we ask
Not any new law we have in our mind right now
But the current law of the land as they say
Is the law for all?
Or rulers have the power to transgress
In whose interest: They are not bound to confess
So to Julian and all these wrongly confined
Our hearts reach out today
May their struggle not go in vain: For that we pray

Exeunt

.....

Act 1 Scene 2: The wall on the America Mexico Border

Thomasa Rivas read out the message sent out to all her people
*For the Tohono O'odham people, the mountains are sacred.
The story is told that, I'ittoi, their creator, lives in a cave below the Baboquivari peak. One day, Tohono O'odham farmers who wanted to expand their land asked I'ittoi to move the mountain. But the greediness of the men forced the top of the mountain to break off and the rain to stop feeding the farmers' crops.
Even as the land turned brittle in the heat, the Tohono O'odham people never left.
They were here long before their land was divided, first by a border, then again as fences were built and gates closed. Now they fear they will be divided once more.
There is no O'odham word for wall, the people say. They promise each other they will stay and fight*
Thomasa reflected
Easier said than done
Drugs a powerful tool
Money power divides many a land
Of the Opium wars that hit China in the previous century
The Middle East cauldron
Of Guns, Gems and Steel wrote Jared Diamond
Tribal lands and communities destroyed
Yet they were coming together too
Niyamgiri was one

Gandmardhan nearby too
Was there a method in the madness she thought?
An external force that will bring us together
Make us realise right from wrong?
Money a slow poison she thought
More powerful than a direct war
It poison's your very thought process
Through the actions you take
Divorced from the community
Thomasa drove up to the wall and stared at it long and hard
Divides my people into two
Are you American or Mexican?
Take your pick
No I am a Tohono O'odham
Show your certificate will you
Even then there is no guarantee that you have not been bought
So can I check your vehicle please?
Long line on the border
To move from place of work to home
Or the reverse
How long will this go on?
There is Medecins sans Frontiers
And the COVID19 has no borders too
Why this wall that separates my people?
And with it the wall of suspicion too
Thomasa shook her head and looked back at the pamphlet in her hand
Long fight she thought
But fight we will
The wall will come down one day
In Germany it did
Though we know the issue here is of a different kind
And requiring a different kind of mind
Yet for the same end we too will bid

Exeunt

.....

Act 1 Scene 3: Lockheed Martin and the Global war on Terror

Mohan the Bhopa was looking at his What's App messages.
It showed war mongering going on and the relationship to the cash crunch faced by Lockheed Martin
The reply said this is a microcosm

Many other parameters for war, selectively looking at facts will not do
So the Bhopa investigated a time period of forty years
Got a shock of his life
The share prices of Lockheed Martin showed a steep rise since the period the war on terror
was announced
Very much like the CO2 graph on climate change he thought to himself
An article written by James Petras in the eighties
Showing the crumbling of the mighty US economy edifice
Another film showed the change in the graph between the income of the rich and those of the
poor
There was a steep rise in the difference kept stable for forty years after World War 2
Attributed to the smashing of the bargaining power of the Unions
Glasnost and Perestroika had happened
The Soviet Union was no longer to be feared
And right enough
The great edifice crumbled
And with it the Dunkel Imbroglia
WTO was born
And liberalisation and globalisation
The promise of freedom
The Berlin wall finally collapsed
Enough of the Stasi
Even family members could not be trusted
Walls have ears and love perforated with suspicion
Better freedom than lifelong employment
Stability complacency
And with it inefficiency
A people's government turning into its opposite
Corruption of the use of power
Power to the people
Becoming power of a few
Freedom was like the morning dew
It evaporates when the sun rises
But for the time it is there it glistens
As to the rising sun it beckons
The rise of the Military Economic Complex
A dog feeding on its own tail
Yet refusing to die
Still has the ability to snarl snap and bite
All those that threaten its own existence
Bhopa thought
The Tsar Lenin's brother hanged
Lenin said finish the system that create Tsars
What is to be done now?

Tsar no longer there
Democracy has been perverted
How can this be subverted?
Onion peel the logo of his alma mater
Take them of one at a time was the way
The Emperor has no clothes said the child
Yes the system teaches us to close our eyes
Until you become like little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven
A great sage had once said
The Bhopa Mohan for the life of him could not remember who
Not to matter
Another had said
A child holding a lamb
Lamb secure
That is the world we want
Thought Mohan the Bhopa
Not for us now at least
We are dealing with beauty and the beast
Nature and human beings being raped over and over again
When will it stop?
What is in my hands let me do
The rest will link up
Drop by drop the ocean we will fill
Into our life we won't let the poison spill

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 1: A revolution gone wrong

Scene: A house in a city. Jason was sitting on a chair staring out at the people milling by on the street. Across the street children were playing in the park. Jason's house had pictures of his old home in Zanzibar. Jason sighed and looked at the pictures wistfully speaking to himself.

Jason: Oh how I wish I could turn the clock back twenty years, back to those carefree days and singing on the streets of Zanzibar. The colour of the sea as it kissed the shore and the people taking the day off from their work.

(Zita coming in suddenly)

Zita: You know that is not possible dear, why not think of someplace else. Somewhere you really belong.

Jason: My heart is in Zanzibar you know that. Home is where the heart is.

Zita: Yes you can say that, but Zanzibar no longer what it once was and your friends no longer what they had been. Why are you still that little playful adolescent?

Jason: Not true that's not me, I am talking of the freedom I once enjoyed, freedom to listen to my heart.

Zita: Freedom was given a different meaning by the people of Zanzibar: it said Zanzibar is for the locals. Outsiders get out.

Jason: A product of colonialism I guess. Never thought the locals felt that way. That was taught to them.

Zita: Oh sure! Indoctrination the name given in common parlance has to resonate with the locals as well you know. Tell you what why don't you go to India and marry that sweetheart of yours?

Jason: You mean Meera? She has vowed not to break her fast till her people are free.

Zita: What? Are there people within a people? I thought India was one Nation.

Jason: Nationality, sub Nationality what difference does it make? An artificial nation created by the British as we have here too. The cultural ethos of the people cannot be broken so easily. Look at Bangladesh, it was language that separated them from West Pakistan, religion was not the primary factor.

Zita: I think you should give it a try though. Am sure Meera will realise that sixteen years is long enough. The government resorted to blockade to make the locals surrender.

Jason: Okay will see, expect me when you see me.

Lights dim; someone comes to the front of the stage to say. So Jason made the trip to India and convinced Meera that the struggle was not for one individual alone, let the people decide what they want. Here struggle would remain as part of the annals of history.

Jason: So you lost the election lock stock and barrel. The people were not inspired as you thought. So what! Let's get married and live life anew.

Meera: yes let's maybe our children will be part of a larger struggle that wins the day.

Lights dim again: someone again comes to the front of the stage. Jason and Meera were wed. They had twins.

Meera: *(holding one baby while Jason the other)* aren't they cute?

Jason: yes they are so here's wishing they did not have to do what you did.

Meera: I agree, yet I am certain the memories will carry down; they will find their own way to express the kind of nation they want.

Jason: Do you know the story of Canute?

Meera: yes I do but you can tell me again as you have done so many times these last twenty years.

Jason: Well the courtiers convinced King Canute he could do anything. Even tell the sea to go back. So along to the sea they all went. As the waves came in King Canute Imperiously waved them back. I command you by imperious decree to go back. The closer they came, the more furiously he shouted. Anyone can guess how this one ended.

Meera; yes the black days shall disappear.

Lights dim

Act 2 Scene 2: Global Cauldrons

Scene: A busy street in Baghdad. Ali was flitting through the crowd looking furtively behind all the time. Eyes watched him as he went by Ali shivered as he stared into them. He disappeared into the folds of a curtain. Light dim and back on again

Ali: (taking out a folded paper from his gown) I was asked to give you this.

Hussein: (opening the paper and nodded)

Ali: I take your leave

(Hussein nodded again, lights dim and come back on again. Ali again on the streets of Baghdad a new man more confident as he walked returning the stare, eyes dipped this time: to those that laughed Ali smiled back in return greeting those that wished him too. Lights dim and come back on again).

Hussein: (looking at the paper again and again and then as if making up his mind tore it to shreds). Get me Bond.

Adjutant: Yes sir. (Going to phone, picking it up and dialing: The line crackled to life).

MI 5

Adjutant: Sergeant Major Ali wants to talk to Bond.

MI 5: Not here said the voice stiffly

Adjutant: leave the message with Q *(the line went dead. Lights dim and come back on again. Bond was being ushered in).*

Bond: you asked for me.

Ali: yes indeed I did. *(Whispering into Bond's ear)*, operation Black Thunder.

Bond: Oil Politics?

Ali: yes, we need you to deal with it.

Bond: What you need is Soil not Oil.

Ali: What's that?

Bond: Have a look at the play The Seed. The Bhopa Mohan and Durga are the guys you want not me.

Ali: Get them for me please.

Bond looks on his watch and then dials something.

Bond: Sent your message.

The lights dim

Act 2 Scene 3: Kashmir, Assam and the Red Corridor

Scene: Deep inside the jungle. Sehmat, Mithun and Rajalaxmi were relaxing on cots.

Sehmat: My country not my country, my people not my people anymore. Can this happen with one stroke of a pen?

Mithun: You talking about abrogation of article 370 and 35 A. I am talking about the reneging of clause 6 of the Assam accord.

Rajalaxmi: Rot and nonsense both of you. The constitution says that article 370 was only temporary; the people of Kashmir are to be absorbed into India as full citizens of this country. Surely 72 years was a long time for that to happen. Pandering to the locals, providing special favours why this discriminatory treatment.

Sehmat: Precisely, why this discriminatory treatment all this while. Those benefits you talk of did not reach the people; the leaders swallowed it all up in return for selling my country for a song.

Rajalaxmi: Don't say that we are all part of one country. And all of us have been shortchanged. See what has been done in Scheduled 5 areas, tribal land handed over to Corporates on the pretext of development, infrastructure name it you have it.

Mithun: Getting us to fight in whatever name. Cleverly fighting the Assam elections on the intruder plank and then the intruder is no longer an intruder. Since when did religion decide who an intruder is?

Sehmat: Not in Kashmir certainly, after removal of Article 35 A, women of Kashmir being welcomed by Indian males, a very lewd spin being given to discrimination of those being forced to wear the purdah.

Rajalaxmi: Yes I know, I found those posters horrid. Sexual perverts, goes to show they don't respect their own women either.

Sehmat: You can say that again. Colour of the skin has a lot to do with the enthusiasm I guess.

Mithun: I endorse too. North East women are available; men do not know the meaning of freedom of the sexes.

Rajalaxmi: Don't tell me about liberation of the North East women. The about of wife battering, flesh trade that goes on there! No wonder a separate department is required to deal with it.

Mithun: Poverty and unemployment can make strange bedfellows you will be surprised to know.

Rajalaxmi: Am not surprised, it happens in our parts too this is with the connivance of families as well.

Sehmat: All this talk of liberating Kashmir is rot then. What you are basically saying is that now all of us are sailing in the same boat.

Rajalaxmi: Any doubt about that? All these words country, liberation, emancipation, and freedom they mean different things to different people. Ram Rajya, a license to kill those that do not believe in the same.

Sehmat: You mean lynching in the name of the Cow?

Mithun: The Cow did get some votes in Assam but the same has tied them in up in knots now. It is very difficult to get out of the noose.

Rajalaxmi: Yes I know of the article that called it lollipop politics. Keep the people sucking the lollipops? Have others kill/ attack those that do not believe in the lollipop. The leaders are free to go about their business of looting this country.

Suddenly all three get out of their cots putting their hands together

Curtain Closes

Act 2 Scene1: A revolution gone wrong

Jason looked out of his window and wondered
What is paradise?
Zanzibar
The archipelago off the coast of Tanzania
Archaeology has it those humans existed 20,000 years ago too
The rulers over the years changed
Till the revolution
That promised freedom
But destroyed it
Freedom for the local from foreign oppression
What about those foreigners who were also slaves?
All had to leave Zanzibar
Colour of your skin, surname mattered more than who you really were
Was this freedom Jason thought?
In a far away land Jason struggled with this
Thought that India would provide the answer
So later there he went
Shweta was on fast
Sixteen long years it was
No result as yet
To break it and live her life again was Jason's task
In a small hill station South of the country they were wed
Many questions still unanswered
Many stories still unread
Jesus too before Pilate had said
My kingdom not of this world
If it was my soldiers would have given you a fitting reply
But my kingdom not of this world
A world of oppression he meant
A word where the greatest was the least
In the service of humankind
The early Christians to this message gave up their wealth
And to the commune dedicated their lives
Where did this all go?
Do we have nothing to show?
Such a life is being born everyday
Its name is not what we think it is
You never know the day or the hour that it will knock
So be prepared
Bhagat Singh in why I am an atheist this dilemma defined
How is spiritualism different from religion?
Read between the lines

Vested interests uphold the status quo
Read up history if you want to know more
Terms have got polluted
The tower of Babel for you
Everyone speaking a different tongue
Shouting out loud that it is good for the lungs
Maybe so
But what about the heart
It now has a hole
So has to pump faster and faster without respite
Yet purification is very far from sight
Jason saw the sun go down
The red turning to a gentle pink and slowly fading away
Jason smiled
There would be another day

Exeunt

.....

Act 2 Scene 2: Global Cauldrons

Ali flitted though the crowded streets of Baghdad
Watching over his shoulder the whole time
Eyes popped out from amongst the crowd
He was being watched he knew
But what to do
Message had to be reached
Within the fold of the curtain he disappeared
He was now beyond all that was feared
In front of him Husain stood
Enquiring look on his face
Ali took out the folded paper in his pocket and handed it to him
Husain opened it and nodded
The moment passed
Ali took his leave
It was now he who confidently returned the stare
As eyes dipped in front of his
Fortune favours the bold though he
His smile lit up like a Christmas tree
And in this mood many smiles he saw
And laughter too
Back within the curtain folds Husain pondered
Looking at the paper again and again

Then as if making up his mind
Tore it to shreds
Get me Bond he said
Yes sir, replied his adjutant
The line crackled
MI 5 here, what can we do for you?
Sergeant Major Ali wants Bond
Not here the voice replied
Leave the message with Q
The line went dead
A while passed
Bond was being ushered in
You asked for me Sergeant Ali
Yes I did said he
Have a look at this
Operation Black thunder he whispered
Control of Oil
The name of the game
A bogey enemy in place
So that intervention justified
Conflict to be multiplied
Spy versus spy
And God versus God
What a mess thought Bond
Get me the Bhopa and Durga said Bond
Why so asked Ali
This is not the place for the Guns of Navarone
But a need to recreate history from the day bygone
Wrong said Ali
These guys can slit your throat
Heard of Soil not Oil asked he?
No said Ali
Bond dialed on his watch
Have sent it
Okay

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 3: Kashmir, Assam and the Red Corridor

Sehmat, Mithun and Rajalaxmi were relaxing on cots deep inside a forest
It could have been anywhere

Kashmir, Assam or Telangana
The topic of discussion varied
One common thread
The number of people who had disappeared or put away in jail phenomenal
None had made the headlines
And none had any one to take up their case
Stories had come up from time to time
Hence the fact that was the case was known
Personal examples of people taken away for questioning never to return also there
What would be the fate when the CAA, NRC and NPR became operational they wondered
Certainly camps were being set up
Reports from camps already in place indicated that common citizens of this country were not
in a position to furnish proof
Would that be a saving grace or a curse?
Time would tell
The jury on these acts has been divided
Meant for the welfare of the citizens of the country said some
Certain to be misused said others
A sense that the country was being polarized was expressed by few
Rot said others; this only corrects a wrong done for ages
Unconstitutional approach to the issue was one voice coming through
Another said, due process of law followed to make the change
Government in power does have that right you know
The conferring did not lead to a specific conclusion
However one thing was certain
These laws had not been introduced by the current government in power
The previous one had set it in motion
Only a twist had been given
A right that every government in power had
So the question that begged an answer
Is the government representative of the people?
Does a process of seeking votes do the needful?
If so how come over a period of 70 years since Independence the promise to the people
systematically violated
Divisions between people intensified instead of lessening
And majority rule the slogan of the day
A majority defined by a label not by character
A society that promised freedom to the individual curtailing this more and more in the name
of National emergency
One that seemed to be a permanent feature
Ease of business one in which all rights flouted
So for whose benefit would this be?
Mother Nature no longer respected
Is this the history we want to uphold?

Yet Mother Nature's name taken ad nauseum
When land from communities to be snatched away
In the name of the tiger, elephant or what have you
That the crocodile can actually cry is objected by only a few
Due to repercussions of course
Those that did so incarcerated in jail
Or demonized in a number of forms
Luxury for a few
For the rest there are dorms

Exeunt

Part II – A twist to the tale

(Dedicated to my cousin Stanley Menezes who went missing on the high seas and till date he has not been traced. His zest for life reflected in his passion for boating and surfing. A void in my heart remains)

Act 3 Scene 1: Tuticorin Struggle

Scene: An urban centre along the coast. Selveraj can be seen dragging his boat to the shore. He then slowly limbered up to the tea stall nearby where his friends were.

Selveraj: I say, does anyone know about the recent petition to reopen the Vedanta plant?

Vijaylaxmi: Yes I do. Apparently over the last three years copper shipments from Pakistan to China have increased 400% from \$106 M to \$ 550 M.

Selveraj: Oh! (*Thinking*) that means anyone opposing the plant is soon to be branded as anti National!

Nicholas: Not so fast Selveraj, exports to China! Get real.

Selveraj: (*smiling now*) the two faces of Nationalism: Jekyll and Hyde. No questions to Vedanta?

Nicholas: If four lakh sixty thousand people are affected, no matter. That is the price we must pay. Investment cannot go waste. \$1.2 Billion worth of imports cannot go waste.

Selveraj: Not the first time the company has been hauled up, will it be the last?

Vijaylaxmi: People and Investment cleverly mixed up with each other, nationalism for each are two different things altogether.

Nicholas: The assumption being that Foreign exchange earned is good for the country. Do we even need that foreign exchange?

Selveraj: To buy petrol, diesel we do.

Nicholas: What! International prices are going down but Indian prices are shooting up why?

Selveraj: government pocketing the difference. Need it to prop up all their expenses.

Vijaylaxmi: Army dying on the border. Tears being shed, yet it is business as usual with China. Dealing with what? Serving whose interest?

Selveraj: Pakistan filling the space don't you see?

Nicholas: Yes the ends justify the means, can't let Pakistan steal a March over us.

Rajesh: Read the article by Krugman anyone? It says that the interlocking of economies not factored into calculations related to National Interest.

Arul: Be Indian, buy Indian is erroneous in today's world. Many Indian's will be out of jobs if globalisation is shut down.

Rajesh: Yes, look at Britain after Brexit, they are hurting.

Sushil: Where there is a will, there is a way. Those affected can be reabsorbed. Provided...

Vijaylaxmi: ... Training is provided to those rendered jobless so that they can respond to new opportunities provided.

Sudha: Look at what happened in Maharashtra in the 80s, many returned to their villages after the textile industry was shut down in Mumbai.

Sushil: Any studies to show what happened to them?

Vijaylaxmi: I know that SOPPECOM tried to show how these could be reabsorbed in the agrarian structure by improving the social distribution of land and ensuring equitable rights to water.

Nicholas: You mean the struggle of Mukti Sangharsh for its larger political relevance?

Vijaylaxmi: Yes, that too.

Sudha: However studies show joblessness increasing.

Rajesh: And COVID 19 has magnified this many fold.

Sushil: Mind blowing in fact.

Nicholas: Stagnation in urban centres too.

Selveraj: (*who was getting bored by the conversation*) Looks like much ado about nothing.

Why destroy the lives and livelihoods of four lakh sixty thousand people when you have nothing to offer in return.

Rajalaxmi: Wow! Hot, hot pakoras! Thanks Indira.

Indira: You are welcome. It's your conversations that keep my business alive.

Selveraj: (*smiling now*) you are a sly one Rajalaxmi.

All: (*smiling and busy eating pakoras*).

Lights dim

Act 3 Scene 2: Shaheen Bagh

Scene: A street in Delhi with posters and placards all around on one side a crowd had gathered. Salma with her dupatta wrapped around her can be seen making her way towards the crowd. There were boys staring at her unusual gait she simply avoided it. Not so Kanchan her friend striding alongside with the dupatta draped over her neck, boys looking at her dropped their stare. They came to the crowd and stood quietly on one side

Kanchan: Salma, all this does not seem right to me. Women are not very comfortable here.

Salma: First time protest for them. Used to being confined to their homes protected by the men. Now all of sudden have to voice their protest.

Kanchan: Don't you think they should have a say?

Salma: Look at the stage; most of the articulate ones are there.

Fatima: It will do our community good. The men will realise that women are not just baby producing machines.

Mariam: Fatima! That is a very general statement; there are many men here who allow their women freedom.

Salma: Yes, but circumstances are such that ghettoism is taking place. It makes the men more conservative too.

Alia: We do not have a choice. The constitution is being compromised need to assert our identity.

Kanchan: All very well but what about the anti National tint to some of the slogans.

Salma: Can't be helped entirely. However it is much better to voice this in a democratic protest than become violent.

Kanchan: (thinking) I agree partly but not entirely, such a thrust is bound to become violent sooner or later. If the violence is not being done by you, it will be done by those who will get provoked by such slogans.

Alia: Partly right Kanchan, you mean what happened in North East Delhi.

Salma: I think Shaheen Bagh is an example for the future. It is a peaceful struggle, one that could not be busted despite all the ploys.

Kanchan: I am not so sure. Let's wait and see what happens later.

Suddenly a woman came to the stage and gave a fiery speech about what they had done to her son. How can we sit quiet said she? How can we believe this government? My son was nowhere near the arson that took place. The crackdown prompted by blind hatred towards a particular community. The woman broke down while speaking. Someone had to carry her away from the stage.

Salma: Kanchan, coming here is the first time for me. See for yourself the depth of emotion that came through.

Kanchan: (holding Salma's hand) Yes I understand Salma. Not easy but a step in the right direction.

Alia joins in holding hands followed by Mariam and Fatima lights dim.

Act 3 Scene 3: George Floyd and the spark that lit the prairie fire

Scene: A scene within a scene. Street theatre, the scene of the police pinning down George Floyd was being enacted. The scene ends with an ambulance taking George Floyd away.

Mohan: This certainly set a chain in motion across the world. The statue of the racist Scout Baden Powel was taken down. The Church came out in strong protest on the misuse of the Bible and its premises to promote violence. Not reflected in the teachings of Jesus said they. High time it happened I must say.

Durga: Racism and discrimination not very different from each other

Kapil: The constitution says no discrimination irrespective of caste, colour or creed.

Durga: Add gender to that too.

Kapil: (*smiling*) It is the promise of equality that has sharpened the gender platform too.

Mohan: never thought of it that way, but put like that yes.

Supriya: Have you seen the making of the Indian constitution by Shyam Benegal?

Durga: You mean the TV serial Samvidhaan which premiered on Rajya Sabha TV?

Supriya: Yes the same.

Tushar: I heard you used it in training programme for Social Justice.

Supriya: Yes, how did you know?

Tushar: Mohan here told me.

Supriya: I should have known. Well the point being made was that the decision to allow universal franchise to a people not yet ready for it was a conscious one.

Tushar: So we have no one but ourselves to blame for the current state of politics in this country.

Mohan: On the contrary if it were not for this the situation would have been much worse.

Tushar: Being a lawyer, fighting cases on Human rights and having people behave as if having my services free of charge was their right, I know what you mean.

Kanika: Well the recent developments show that the constitution can be put aside at any time. It happened during The Emergency too.

Supriya: This is a National emergency as well.

Durga: If it was dealing effectively with the emergency then yes but what does arresting people protesting the abrogation of the constitution and releasing criminals and other violators mean?

Tushar: That the crime of sedition is worse than any other.

Mohan: Which type of crime is the most heinous changes with time. The aberrations we see means that the time for change has come.

Tushar: Amen to that, but I am a lawyer, I make a living by upholding the law and defending people who have been wronged according to law.

Mohan: You must have heard this quote from the Bible said by Jesus "*The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath*"

Tushar: Meaning?

Mohan: The law is meant for man, not man for the law.

Supriya: So I guess what that means is that we use the constitution as it is a promise to the people of this country and ditch the leaders who chose to use the constitution to defend their own anti people acts.

Salma: Happened to the people of Kashmir. They ditched their leaders who had sold them out.

Durga: Not so fast Salma, the arresting of those leaders and keeping them in jail for so long seems to have washed their sins a bit.

Salma: I would'nt depend on weather cocks.

Durga: (smiling) # Me too.

Supriya: You guys are a different breed, will provide a refreshing twist to my Social Justice Programme.

Durga: Look forward.

All: Get into a circle, first look inwards then outwards, then one inward and the other outward.

Curtain closes

Act 3 Scene 1: Tuticorin struggle

Selveraj dragged his boat to the shore and limbered up
A little over two years since the Vedanta Tuticorin plant had closed down
A petition had been given to reopen the plant
Had a National tinge to it
Pakistan Copper shipments to China had increased 400% from \$ 106 M to \$ 550 M
India in deep trouble if permission is not given
Selveraj's face fell
Wait a minute thought Selveraj
Was not India to have no truck with China?
How come the country even entertains such a petition?
Selveraj shook his head
Business and people are two different things altogether
Think clearly Selveraj
Four lakh sixty thousand affected people do not matter
What matters is investment lying idle
The destruction of investment of the people around Tuticorin not important as the \$ 1.2
Billion imports lying waste
Not the first time the Company has been hauled up
Will it be the last?
What is National interest though Selveraj
Some piece of equipment lying idle
The potential foreign exchange we can get?
Or the people of this country
Do the people of this country even need that foreign exchange?
He thought of the petrol and diesel prices soaring upwards
Even as International prices went downwards
The difference for the government to cover the deficit
The RBI profits paid out to the government as well?
Is being competitive in the market place in our National interest
Army dying on the borders
Yet there is business as usual with China?
Serving whom?
Doing what?
Pakistan?
Pakistan business which China should crash
Maybe that was it.
The end justifies the means as they say
Explains something at least thought he
Let us wait and see

Exeunt

.....

Act 3 Scene 2: Shaheen Bagh

Salma wrapped her dupatta around her head as she huddled along

Many eyes watched her as she made her way
Something strange about her gait
Not secretive or furtive at all
Yet unwilling to meet the stare that faced her
Determined
Yet knowing her limitations as it were
A crowd had gathered at Shaheen Bagh and speeches were being given
Wall writings all over
Not all she was in agreement with
Neither was she in full agreement with some of the speeches as well
This form of protest was not usual
But one that was necessary too
One to express solidarity in the insecurity one felt
One to express that the source of the problem was not the people gathered there
But in the policies of discrimination that were being perpetrated
There were women not in the burkha too
Some boys not used to such women congregating here in this attire were staring
Something suppressed in their eyes could be seen
Expected for someone like Salma
But not so for her friend Kanchan
Patriarchal domination for her was anathema too
Women not having been educated in the process of making up their own minds
Suddenly thrown into a process where it was their opinion that mattered
Why this contradiction?
Men suddenly finding that it was necessary
This process quite like any other they had seen
And lasting for days on end too
Quite unlike the brief flare up in North Delhi
And dying almost as quickly as it was lit
It was as if there were people prepared to teach them a lesson
The retaliation had not gone unnoticed
Loud noise was made
Reverberating all around and in Shaheen Bagh as well too
So the importance of the Shaheen Bagh struggle spread far and wide
And care was taken after the pandemic had been declared as well
The government could not by brute force or the court make it budge
The pandemic suddenly came in handy
To forcibly close the protest
And arrest the leaders as well
Women hitherto not known
But lot of courage they had shown
There was one whose eyes stay with me even now
Begging a question
What option had she
Son brutally killed needlessly
No way part of those who had created damage
Others as well were passionate about what they had to say
Was dialogue not the way?
There are propositions and counter propositions
Right now no end in sight

Salma clutched the dupatta tightly
Might is not right

Exeunt

.....

Act 3 Scene 3: George Floyd the spark that lit a prairie fire

I can't breathe
A video that went viral
And sparked protest across America
Other reverberations too
Racist Scout founder Baden Powel's statue taken down
And in India too stop discrimination
Found a new voice
After Vermula, Una, Bhima Koregaon and other incidents
As with most movements anger goes out of control
And violence ensues
An opportunity for the State to crack down
In India, so called masterminds behind Bhima Koregaon have been incarcerated
US president cracked his whip
After going to St. John's and holding the Bible
The Church distanced itself from this anti Christ
Anathema to the teachings of Jesus they said
Two officers have been freed on bail for \$7,50,000
In the meantime Indians are being held up a model minority
That does not help Black lives matter movement
Long after slaves were freed
Long after the Indian constitution provided equality free of race, religion or colour
Discrimination continues
As if another species altogether
Theory of white supremacy long debunked
Yet not yet filtered into practise
Even the adivasis consider themselves superior to Dalits
Was a feeling that was misused to massacre Christian adivasis in Khadamal
Fanned by Naxals and taken advantage of by the RSS
A similar thing purportedly happened in North East Delhi
Seething rage against impotence on the Shaheen Bagh struggle
Erupted given a chance
The perpetrators of the crime not being brought to book
They have their alibi
It was Abel that provoked me Cain said

And so and on the story goes
Will discrimination and violence emanating from it ever stop?
Ask Khashoggi
Jamal or Adnan?
Maybe the Swamiji can answer
Stella Morris looked at Gabriel and Max
And thought of their father Julian in Belmarsh
The wall stood before Thomasa Rivas
Had not disappeared yet
The Bhopa Mohan, Durga and Tarun took this all
All three took each other's hands and formed a circle
Then bowed within
Twisting bowed without
Then one inside and two out
Makes sense anybody?

Curtain closes

About the author:



Viren Lobo who was influenced by liberation theology during his college days did an MBA from Institute of Rural Management Anand. He has been working the development sector since he passed out from there in 1985. Employer, employee and other contradictions observed by him during his thirty year stint at Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD) forced him to examine the relevance of Marxism as a way of looking at reality in relation to change he sought to bring. During the course of his work covering more than twenty States, he noticed a link between the livelihoods and ecology which he pursued strongly as Executive Director SPWD. The limitations of existing organisations to deal with the complex questions society posed motivated him to set up Institute of Ecology and Livelihood Action as the transition needed to address issues he was looking into at that time. The contradictions arising out of the a series of Bills that were passed during the last five years encouraged him to use the enforced sedentary life imposed on him to use his creativity to write plays. These were the first of a series which have helped serve the purpose of putting on paper the complex dilemma and diverse social opinions he came across.

About Especioza Trust:



Especioza Trust is named after my great, great grandmother who widowed at an early age brought up her only son Aogustinho (seated in centre). Shortly after a family reunion in December 2013, we got news that the family home at 84 Porvorim had been illegally sold to a builder. My aunt Marie stepped in and after getting the required mandate from the family not only got the family home back but the previous ancestral home of 85 Porvorim as well. Since then it became her project in memory of her widowed great grandmother till her death on her mother Amy Lobo's 117th birthday (25th July 2019). Since the informal trust set up by her could not achieve fruition I decided to keep the struggle and memories alive by carrying on her mission to bring unity within the family and dedicate the work of the Trust to all widows and single women of the world. My Aunt/Cousin Hazel Cardozo the daughter of Liban Pinto one of the two brothers born on my birthday (6th September) has helped me to give this project shape. The other brother Lucian in whose name the house was, also happened to be born on my birthday as well. The spiritual connection and the necessity for me to step in also come from a lot of other quarters which need not be documented here.

Viren Lobo