

Think Globally Act Locally – The Family within the world without

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(This is dedicated to all unborn children in general and girls in particular: pro Life choices presuppose the condition of pro Choice first. As a corollary the unwanted child needs a home which foster care may or may not provide. There is a need for cultural upliftment for the children of today to be responsible citizens of tomorrow.)



The Global war on Terror and the Devil's advocate

Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to Comrade Ashutosh Bannerjee of Socialist Unity Centre of India who taught me that there was more to the Narmada than the Dam and to Prithvi Sharma, Jaspal Singh, S R Hiremath and Prof Ravi Chopra of Indian Community Activists Network who provided me the space to articulate issues related to Community Control of Natural Resources)



Part I

Terror Redefined

(Dedicated to my wife Anne Lobo who shows me the mirror, what I am and what I proclaim to be and to Dr. Leena Gupta of Habitat Trust whose has deeply felt women' issues and its relation to ecology)

Background:

My fourth play titled *The Global War on Terror and the Devil's advocate*. It was prepared as a response to numerous debates on the current rise of fundamentalism and the concrete way to deal with this. While it draws from real life experiences it deviates from them with the intention of looking for a way forward. The play has among others been dedicated to members of ICAN who inspired me to take up the issue of community control of natural resources, Habitat on which the whole theory of alternative women and child centered development is built, IELA (which is giving shape to the understanding I have) and PRATYeK which has facilitated the creation of National Inclusive Children's parliament around the 17+1 SDGs as a way of educating the citizens of the future.

The play questions the approach of blindly upholding the chair and compares this to the question of infallibility of the Pope. The play also shows how pandering to minority sentiment can lead to a situation where rationality is forgone. It is not an accident that BJP has come to power due to failure to get a handle on this blindness.

Can an organisation that repeatedly makes unjust decisions sacrificing one for the 'greater common good' be in a position to bring the cultural transformations needed to change society?

The play dissects the concept of local self governance and is categorical that without a radically different approach to patriarchy and blindly upholding the chair local self governance will work for vested interests. The dialogues have not been written up as the need to depersonalize exists. The failure to depersonalize understanding (*hate the sin not the sinner by Gandhi is one form of expression of this but does not cover the entire gamut and in the context of rabid communalization a very inappropriate form of expression for today's world*), plagues all organisation forms today. The breakthrough in collective knowledge as pointed out by Comrade Prasad in his letter to the SUCI emerges through individuals. Lenin in his work *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* in his analysis of Mach and Avenarius showed how such renowned scientists who had made great breakthroughs in the then collective knowledge still reflected the age old thought of Berkeley in terms of philosophy. Looking at the historical development of knowledge through history, while it may be theoretically established that it is the party of the working class that will lead revolution, the construct to me seems that revolution is party but party is not revolution, who the vanguard are at a given point in time depends on the set of individuals who could understand the need of the hour and respond to it. Fundamental flaws in Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's formulation of party have been exposed as also the party's attempts at correction. Despite this, his understanding that post independence a characteristically different type of organisation was required and that India for all its aberrations is a capitalist country still hold. If we are to seriously engage in change we need to recognise that truth is relative and hence propositions that might have been valid for a particular period are not so for all time to come. There is however a kernel that has longer validity if we can find the correct way to separate form from content. Learning from Comrade Ghosh, I understood that form and content go together to produce 'rasa' (essence). Art and literature is the science of producing 'rasa'. We have been mistakenly taught that the physical and biological sciences are exact sciences while social sciences are not. The history of the development of science shows a zigzag path where there were many periods of darkness in between. Why should the modern period be any different?

Act 1

In the name of God or the Devil

Act 1 Scene 1: The rebuilding of the temple and its aftermath

The Supreme Court pronounced its judgement
Ram Mandir will be built
Joy all around
But in pockets there was shock
What will happen to us they thought
Sure enough zealots with torches ran around
Jai Shri Ram they cried
An auto driver standing watched quietly
One zealot up to him walked
Jai Shri Ram you will say
Auto driver stood quiet
The zealots gathered round
More insistent was their cry
Silence still
Then the sound of beating and all was still
The zealots were arrested of course
But a cry of anger reverberated
Criminals do not belong to any religion was the reply
Let them be punished
The cry of anger became shriller
The response firmer
Violence does not beget violence it said
And the religious twist does not sanctify it
Whatever be its colour
The cry became belligerent
With support to be had too
The voice of the devil has to be stopped it said
I know who you are, a voice piped up
Using the democratic voice against repression of minorities
For purposes that destabilise and promote terror
Show the proof or off with your head
That I will not do said the voice
So off with your head
And anyone who supports you too
The house was polarised
In one corner
The devil smiled to himself
Let them extricate themselves from this one he thought
The war on terror takes a different twist
And I lost in the mist
Out he came shaking his fist
Unity for the oppressed shouted he

Aye came the reply
Supporters of the voice froze in their tracks
But now there was no turning back

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 2: Prisoners on death row and the silence of the lambs

Anthony, Omar and Raja sat quietly in their cells
Separated across continents they were
With one thing in common
Incarcerated for exposing the works of the Devil
In the name of the Global war on terror
Across the globe voices had risen up in protest
Free Anthony, Omar and Raja
But to no avail
The stakes were too high for this
All the bits and pieces would come apart
And campaign on war on terror a no go would start
Is there a way to unravel the knot thought Tushar?
No man's land came a voice from afar
Possible but not probable Tushar thought
Man can be bought
Banking transactions can untie some threads
And the links with terror deals in its bed
Money laundering hubs, a good place the pieces to part
And with it the arms in the mart
Far away in another continent the parents of Anthony, Omar and Raja reflected
What did we do that our country our honour fails to protect?
Do citizens not have any rights at all?
While money and muscle power have a ball
Tushar on his plan worked some more
Midnight oil burnt and body sore
Data by the reams he collected
And to various sources deflected
Nothing came to surface
The bomb had been planted deep
Would take a while to explode he guessed
As in his garden he messed
Later a call disturbed his sleep
Heelo whose there he said sleepily
Mohan: came the reply
I spent all right at the computer you know
Okay said Mohan but take care of this
Whispering into the phone
I will said Tushar
The phone went dead
And Tushar back to bed
Long after a call kept nagging
Till Tushar could get out of his drugged state

It was from across the seven seas
Wanted to know why Tushar had not surrendered
Tushar revealed a part of his research
My God what should we do said the voice
Send you something Tushar said
Ok crackled the voice and then silence
Tushar dragged himself out and drafted something hurriedly
A click and it was gone
Company now thought Tushar
Things are not so forlorn.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3: The Supreme Court of Bahubali and the case on contempt

The Supreme Court of Bahubali issued a notice of contempt

The Court was being mocked it said

Factual evidence from senior judges was the reply

Facts no one can deny

But making it public on social media?

Apologise for the transgression

No came the firm reply

I have the proof that I am only reporting facts

Facts be damned this is the land of Bahubali

The land of the Gods

The facts as they ordain

And anything contrary to be refrained

Tushar took it all in

And reflected on his case again

Looks like follow the leader he thought

And in the name of opposing the leadership

Can this bring about the change we desire?

Like fire to deal with fire

Shaking his head to his work he returned

Lot of midnight oil being burnt

Any respite in sight

From the principle of might is right

And the 'Pope' (one who sits in the chair), being infallible?

Why is the prestige of the institution brought into play?

When the contents need to be examined on merits

Innocent until proven guilty was the reply

Show the proof and prove your point

Will not showing the proof change the facts?

Why cannot they be investigated?

Separate from the person who speaks them

Why is confusion being created?

Why is somebody's innocence being protested?

Is there something more than meets the eye?

Really a case of minority being tortured

Or a ruse to paper something fractured

No answers to this as yet

Take out the fly, rose the cry

The ointment is tried and tested

Fundamentalism is to be bested

The Devil smiled again

Down with religious fundamentalism he cried

Down, fundamentalists down, the reply

Tushar merely watched
His silent supporters in horror
Looked like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah

Exeunt

Act 2
A Panorama on Terror

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Act 2 Scene 1: The Khap Panchayat and senseless Justice

Tushar put down the paper he was reading
A woman had been paraded naked through the streets of her village
Her crime
Sexual relations with her nephew
The Khap panchayat once renowned for stopping Nadir Shah in tracks
And now stooped to these depths to display its manliness
No modern day conception on women
Preserving traditions long redundant
A great stumbling block for village autonomy
To engage with science for progress
Many other ills assailed the village
Caste divisions, untouchability still prevalent
A nice way to corner resources and cower the oppressed
Village self rule for the privileged few
All the rest to wait in the queue
The trickle-down effect bound to take place sometime
When?
Drop by drop squeezed out surely one of these drops would reach
I wonder what Nadim will say now
Will he scream blue murder for the woman?
Or keep silent as usual
Issue not for the politically savvy
Hard work required to convince a community
Takes place unseen as well
Not the material for policy advocacy
Quick fixes wanted by the government
One order should do the trick
How do you rebuild brick by brick
And the tricky questions related to patriarchy and sharing of power
A world where women reach only by exception
Defying the laws of conception
My body is my own
A concept not recognised
Tushar agonised
Dinesh to his propositions did not agree
But there was Durga
And Mohan too
Others as well
The story of the seed he remembered well
The quality and where it was to be sown mattered too
It will multiply for sure
Important that it exists

Or in the process of being formed
No readymade answers available
Tired Tushar slept

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 2: Protesting the Burkha

A complaint at the police station was lodged
Am being forced to wear the burkha said Nadia
A sign of a self respecting woman the angry crowd said in reply
In the day and the age of the predatory eyes of the Emperor's minions
The burkha signified protection
But in a democracy symbolising freedom
Did the meaning remain the same?
My parents don't mind why should you?
Durga pointedly asked Mohan
Would Nadim now agree that force cannot be applied?
Or are his objections selective as usual
Mohan shrugged
The issue little tricky he thought
The more repressed a community more fundamentalist it becomes
Then to the Fiddler on the roof his mind turned
Tradition
What's that?
Years of protecting oneself from elimination he thought
Yet winds of change do come along
Use of force one way or the other was a sign of a society not healthy
But force is not always overt
It exists in language, in customs and the pressure to conform
So to smoke it out was the call
Fresh wafts of air needed from time to time
A cornered society, oppression will scream
The women bear the brunt as usual
A reflection of man's dignity
Or a prisoner of his pride
How will be bridge the divide?
Tushar butted into Mohan's reverie
Snap out of it he said
These thoughts only a reaction
To the story of the auto driver being publicised
So a communal flavour creeping in unawares
All in the name of secularism and democracy
This game drives me crazy
Keeping all of this inside me burns
And my stomach churns
When will people learn?
Back to work for me said Tushar
Need a lever to raise the bar
Change will then not be very far

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 3: Terror attack on Charlie Hebdo a product of pandering to fundamentalism?

Mohan to Durga the attack on Charlie Hebdo recalled

A fairly long time ago it was

Objection to the portrayal of community was the cause

A country which to liberty, equality and fraternity had given birth

Pandering to fundamentalism had started

Reaction bound to set in

As dwindling of sales standards of propriety declined

To base instincts it lay supine

Suddenly a rude shock was given

Straying from a path it had long striven

The result was positive on the whole

As to Xenophobia the country did not surrender

As had happened in other parts

How long would it last was the question

Nobody was ready to mention

The issue had other implications too

Global war on terror being a part

And indignation in its wake for being taken as upstarts

A proxy war was waging all around

As a convenient target had been found

Attention from the economy in recession

And strengthening of the Military Industrial Complex as the solution

Terror, terror everywhere

None were safe

Military and police stand to attention

Uncle Sam looking on

Target locked

Guns cocked

The earth rocked

Inside all knew it was hollow

The Emperor's new clothes

You follow

Mohan rubbed his face

The refresh button

Change of pace

A rocky path never used

Tanaji and the Ghorpad came to mind

Still a quick fix for problems now

Edward de Bono another option

Lateral thinking

The lotus in a pond of muck

The poison needs to be cleaned out first

For that water needs to be drained out

The soil exposed
Rains will come
A new day has begun

Exeunt

Part II

To Centralise or Decentralise governance which way?

(Dedication to the Institute of Ecology and Livelihood Action (IELA) and all those who have participated to give it the shape it has today. To Dr. Sunil Dubey in particular who has been instrumental in what IELA is today. Also dedicated to PRATYeK and Brother Steve Rocha who vision of a child friendly India inspired me to link my work with his).

Act 3

**Modern Day Local Self Governance, care for nature as we
care for human beings**

Act 3 Scene 1: Activate the gram sabha as the unit of local self governance

Democratic functioning of the gram sabha distinct from the patriarchal Khap
Exploitation of nature and human beings to stop
Can people rebuild broken threads?
To ancient tribal societies of yore
Minus the fear of divine retribution from nature
And use of renewable energy for decentralised governance
Can rational and sustainable use of nature's bounty be done?
With a blend of the traditional and modern
One where people themselves can evaluate what's relevant
Costs a fraction of the Bill submitted to the Paris Convention
\$ Seven hundred Billion as against \$ 53 trillion
Like the five loaves and three fish?
Possible says Claude Alvares if you do not think in NPK terms
Only 3% required, rest living soils will fix from the atmosphere
Nature's solution does not require supervision
But it does require an understanding of nature's laws
And Societies too (but not those made by man)
What's that asked Tushar?
The laws governing the development and progress of society
The conditions where man made laws controlled by few become no longer tenable
Eleanor Ostrom pointed out that communities that engage can prevent the tragedy of the commons
Internet, mobile and super computers make global communities possible
Why not the local?
Think globally, act locally
What does it mean piped in Durga?
Nature speaks
Nature's cycles encompass the local with the global
The food web pretty intricate
Birds from Siberia travel 6,000 Kms to reproduce
Quite a big chain of interconnections to resolve
Foundations have to be different from stone and concrete
Yet mud is made from stone too
Years of action by water and wind can transform a country side
Both are global acting on the local
I think I have said Durga
Federations that capture historic cultural traditions and nature's connections
Makes it easier to engage with centralised administration as well
Top down and bottoms up meet
Each other with different perspectives to greet
Concerns of Capital from the top and labour/struggling masses below
Will the trickle down now begin to flow?

We ask for only one and half percent so should be possible
To make this work we will do the impossible
Without natures help a no, no
To the drop we say go (wo) man go

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 2: National Inclusive Children's parliaments – Citizens of the future

A big plan this Jan and Feb at Delhi unfolded
Children's parliaments in every constituency
Centering around the 17+1 SDGs
Federating local children's parliaments locally the plan
Engage with Local, State and Nation the van
Started with a representation to the UN
And moving forward ever since
The agenda is huge
Many have started to wince
Not so Fenai Mata
And many others in its wake
A follow up of the Mahayatra
And a flavour of its take
Corona caused a set back
But with a promise too
Man versus nature
Requires thought that is mature
Gathered over centuries of struggle
Some embedded in the genes
The ability to make nature work for humankind
Is not just a dream
If they work for each other that is
Friday for the Future
Greta Thunberg's call
Reverberates at Jantar Mantar as well
The children of YASH and the children of JASHN will willingly tell
The New Education policy is bound to discriminate
If low carbon footprints we do not emanate
Forest dwellers, fishers, pastoralist and small farmers
Have the blue prints we want
With renewable energy in their pockets no one can daunt
Children too can engage through an environment education programme
The four parties above can do the Grand Slam
A meeting in Udaipur in January 2017 did deliberate
Programmes across the country it did reverberate
Enthusiasm tempered with patience is our motto
Zooming around on the motorcycle is good for a photo
Consumerism panders to the ego
Not fit for a world that has gone slow
Like the earthworm we dig deep below
Overturning barren soil with the fertile
The dragonfly's offspring mosquito larvae will eat

And to fresh water we can begin ourselves to treat
One thing leads to another
What we will then achieve is no big feat

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 3: Women's collectives and the relevance of the mid day meal to bridge consumerism with consumption

Feed soybean for improving protein diet in Chhota Udepur
Why so when many protein foods available locally
Gone out mass production and consumption as well
Aping the rich man's diet has turned turtle
When the rich man buys minor millet for a song
The poor man's diet now adorns that of the rich man
And vice versa as well
Scarcity determined the price not its intrinsic value
Paper money did the transition
The value of this paper during demonetisation was found
What constitutes real value is not that profound
It was a Rupee to the Dollar at the time of Independence
What is it now?
What does the Dollar buy for us apart from petrol and the made in China brand
For the village we eat fresh not what is canned
So for an experiment at revival we now need to try
Yet market cannot be ignored for now so that explains why we shy
The individual for the collective
What does she get?
Government subsidy for us not the Capitalist
Applies to all programmes in our name
The cream to the capitalist
And we get defamed
For trying to survive
So with our objections we will go live
Not titles and papers our desire
But real value that will douse our fire
In our stomachs that is
And meeting our desires
The product of our labour is not ours to enjoy
Destroy our countryside to produce new toys
Bullet train and what have you
Right now for us it is the cows that moo
Protection of pasturelands one of our goals
And diversity of nature as well
Creation of local seed banks to that end
Put an end to the rules that you bend
Then we for ourselves can fend
Suicide deaths in Vidharba and the tiger widows of the Sundarban
Lots of stories we can tell everyone
Story telling time is over

We look for the four leaved clover
Just to show that we are no push over
Not for the lawn mower
Or the land rover
But basic implements that to food can create value
Reduce the cost of transportation
Bring down pollution
And improve overall well being
We women have a different way of seeing

Curtain Closes

The Story of Denis from Nagavalli – Denis the Menace or Gift from God?

Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to all those separated from their parents for whatever reason. The refugees of the world who pay the price for policies and power games of those in a position to decide the destiny of others)



Part I

From Nagavalli to Udaipur via Hyderabad

(Dedicated to Amritlal Vaid and his son Shyam; without whom the story would have taken an entirely different turn. It is a confirmation that talent and effort does get recognised if we have the eyes to see)

Background:

My fifth play titled *The Story of Denis from Nagavalli – Denis the Menace or Gift from God?* A challenge posed to me by my wife Anne as a response to my four plays. Write the story of her father whose life has inspired many. The challenge first required that I figure out the way I (Viren Lobo) wanted to deal with the story. The first thing I faced was that many issues were blurred so a biography was out of the question. Hence I decided that the focus should be on the journey with the things that withstood the test of time (remained in the memory).

As pointed out above the following stand out

- a. The conditions which resulted in the journey from Nagavalli to Hyderabad and from there to Udaipur.
- b. The twist of destiny, the persons who made the difference happen.
- c. Denis himself the constant factor in all the conditions faced.

The interplay between the three is what the play is all about.

I have decided not to write up the dialogues as those would shift the focus from Denis to the others in the play. If at some time I can figure out a way to keep the centrality on Denis I certainly will. Till then, wish you happy reading.

Act 1

From Nagavalli to Udaipur via Hyderabad

Scene 1: Early childhood at Nagavalli

Denis the menace
Or from God was he blessed?
Born on 9th October to Anthony Dominic and Bernadette
He was the third after Damien and Catherine
Followed by Rosamma, Emmanuel and Albert.
Nagavalli a dryland village in the then Mysore State
Grew maize, pulses, ragi and a little rice too.
Cash economy almost nonexistent at that time.
For food all was fine.
Denis around the house and in the fields played
Quite some talent and mischief too he displayed
Damien and Catherine studying in the hostel nearby
What to do with Denis, Rosamma and Emmanuel?
A priest from Hyderabad came one day
Along with Anthony Dominic and Bernadette others he convinced
Hyderabad was the future for all
Freedom from poverty the call
Bernadette with Rosamma could not part
So with Denis and Emmanuel they made a start
There was crying all around and then all was still
A few years later joy
Albert was born
And over him his parents and siblings did fawn.
Damien married and went to the fields of his in-laws to work
Katherine got married soon
Rosamma too did so later
For Albert a blessing came from somewhere
His education paid for somehow.
Damien later found work at the Cooperative in Mercara
Life for the family changed
Not so much for Katherine and Rosamma
Will get back to this story later
For now what happened to Denis?
Was it bliss the family had expected?
Or something else
To Hyderabad we all must go
And for now in Nagavalli we close the show

Scene Two: In a corner of the kingdom of the Nizam of Hyderabad

The scene shifts to the Kingdom of the Nizam
The padre to different families the children divided
Denis and Emmanuel separated too
The story of Emmanuel we will continue later
As for Denis the story had many hues
Getting up early
And sleeping late
Yet studies and personal welfare not part of the routine
Washing up dishes
And keeping the table
Busy as ever as long as he was able
No time to rest and always on test
Denis to this challenge did his best
He did try to study though
From posters and papers people did throw
How he did it I do not know
But learning from nature as he did grow
Very observant he was
As connections he could see
Good with his hands and cooking was he
Singing tunes he learnt in passing
Quite a repertoire he kept amassing
One day he bumped into Shyam
From Udaipur he had come
This talented boy had him quite impressed
So to Denis a shift he proposed
To this idea Denis was well disposed
So from the nest of the Nizam of Hyderabad he flew
The Maharana of Udaipur was home to him anew

Scene three: The owner of Sewa Ashram and Sewa by Denis

Amritlal Vaid watched this talented boy his son had brought
Could make himself very useful he thought
Always around when needed
And to orders he heeded
So like a son he was to him
As many dimensions to his talent unfolded
Opportunities to be had and a lot to be learnt
Denis was one prevented others fingers from being burnt
Entertainment
Cooking
And a host of experiments followed
The Buick he bought was one
Atal Bihari on Ellis Bridge did push
Many other stories too
But business to Denis did not come
As for friends his heart was open
Cash flow soon got broken
Amritlal before he died insisted
That Denis is allowed to keep his faith
So to a Catholic his marriage arranged
The daughter of an engineer was she
Water works was his trade
As from place to place his life he bade.
Another time, another place what happened to Denis
As his new life he did grace.

Act 2

Beginning a new Life for the fourth time

Scene 1: Marriage to Bridget

Amritlal Vaid, foster father of Denis died

Denis kept his shoes in a place above his head while he sleeps

This is a traditional belief with your feet touching my head my whole body is blessed

In line with his foster father's wishes Denis went to meet the priest to bless his marriage

You are not a Christian said the priest

And you not a priest Denis was quick to retort

Denis found another priest to bless the marriage

Went to Partapur with his friends

On return he found things not the same

You are not one of us

You married a Christian

So Denis sought shelter with his foster sister

Home is where the heart is

Not wealth or riches

What happens to Denis now?

Turn the page

For now take a bow

Scene 2 From Chand Pole to Alipura to Comrade Cottage and home sweet home

Chand Pole found Denis and Bridget struggling anew
Frying chips to make ends meet
Cooking skills now not just for pleasure
It was a hard slog to fill the belly
Selling freshly made chips on his cycle
In all of this Anne was born
The series of skirmishes with Pakistan had just ended
So Denis thought he was highly blessed
This birth he remembered forever
The birth of the others had different stories
Flora was born during the floods of 73.
The names given start with A and end with H
Eight including the parents B and D in between
Evelyn was the lucky one
Lottery in her name was won
The scooter came as the prize
By that time Claude had learnt to drive
So to Partapur on two scooters became an expedition
With cousins from Ratlam joining in the fun
A lot of tales from Partapur can be spun
Denis meantime had become a technician
And across the country participated in many cultural renditions
Another story, another time for now the night bells chime

Scene 3 Meeting with Phoolan Devi

Denis in the night the bus did drive
While the team of Kala Mandal slept
More than six lakh Kilometers of the country were criss crossed
Bhutan for one
And visits to many factories another
So production and culture
Observed quite closely
Denis worked from behind to ensure the show was a success
Giani Zail Singh as President to Udaipur came
Denis was engaged to ensure others did not lose fame
But the story of stories is the one from Chambal
And how Phoolan Devi robbed the troupe of their Kambals.
Travelling at night as usual
The bandits the bus looted
Passengers asleep so did not know
Empties provisions left in the store
Denis however braved the Lioness
Into her den he went
Pleaded with the Sardar
Mistake was realised
Boxes returned
Happy journey wished
End of the sojourn

Part II

Home is where the heart is

(Dedicated to Anthony Dominic and Bernadette, Denis's parents whose faith united the family once again)

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Act 3

The Home Coming

Scene 1 Ashok Nagar and the Garden of Eden

The expenses of big family had Denis flummoxed
Children were growing up so ready to accept a new challenge
Make the Garden of Eden hospitable once again
Not an easy task
Crocodiles from the lake came there to sunbathe
And the occasional leopard from Sajjangarh too
The Garden of Eden was the back of beyond
And Rani Road not safe at night
But Denis not one to be daunted
God was always on his side
So approach road to Eden he did make
And additional rooms as well.
With his own hands of course
The well he dug
And living there pretty snug
The occasional snake did trouble
George and Harsha teamed up together on the double
One the snake's tail caught
While the other with the snake fought
Living like this close to nature
The D'souza's lost all fear
And with it others too
Many a party there was held
Place for all and for children to enjoy
Eden got transformed slowly
As Denis faced the high and low boldly

Scene 2 The great reunion

Albert on getting settled decided to enquire
What happened to Denis and Emmanuel?
While Emmanuel he found pretty easily for Denis the rounds were pretty tough
Through round about sources the deed got done
A girl from Udaipur unfolded the trail
The rest was the holy trail
In September 84 Damien, Albert and Fredrick in Udaipur landed
To Ashok Nagar they went first
From there to Eden directed
Dead of night
Heavy downpour
And the croaking of the frogs greeted them
Denis was astounded
And praised God for the miracle
Forty four years it had been
So Denis and family to Nagavalli made the trip
Indira Gandhi had been shot
And there was a eerie silence greeting them
Yet full of hope
Sure enough the family they did meet
A great reunion it was
Tears all around
Of joy of course
Other families also about their enquired
Not sure if answers found
But hope all around
Of that I'll be bound.

Scene 3 Home sweet home

Viren and Anne were to be wed in May of 87
So happened the girl from Udaipur had married Viren's cousin
Just a coincidence
The wedding of Viren and Anne was not connected to this fact
Though Viren used it for their honeymoon in some way
Connecting a bee in his bonnet regarding Nagarjuna Sagar
Another story so will keep for another day
For now what was important was Emmanuel, his wife Sapna and little baby
Bonnie
Or Christina
Emmanuel had the Gun factory in Ichchapur joined
And love marriage to Sapna was on the cards
This reunion across the country from East to West and North to South
reverberated
As Albert and Fredrick too joined in
It was joy with joy
Like the peeling petals of the rose
All were very well disposed
Bridget's family from Indore and Partapur had come
From Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata, Viren's family also in attendance
Time for stories
And many story tellers too
So for now will not keep you.

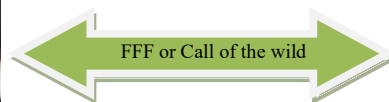
Our Common Future – Call of Friday for the Future or Call of the Wild?

Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(Dedicated to The Brundtland Commission report of the same name and to the vision of Especioza trust started by my late Aunt Marie whose conjured back the family spirit though her untiring efforts to keep the spirit of her great grandmother Especioza alive)



Part I

The Story of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a twist

(Dedicated to Mallala Yusafzai so you know what the twist is to be. To the rapes that never happened, criminal acts unpunished and in general to the thing in itself one that Lenin rescued from the darkness in his book on Materialism and Empirio Criticism)

Background:

My sixth play titled *Our Common Future – Call of Friday for the future or Call of the Wild?* It is a response to a request from Brother Steve Rocha to stage a play on the seventeen SDGs. The challenge was posed to me when I was asked to evaluate the impact that PRATYeK as an organisation was having. I found it difficult to separate it out from the movement of which it grew out of namely NINEISMINE and the movement within the Christian Brothers which lead to what they called Our Way into the Future. In February 2016, while delivering a lecture on Laudato si in memory of my Dad, Francis Lobo, the process being followed by me got meshed with theirs. I was asked to do a location study for the brothers. Silence for a as the two paths diverged, only to come together again as the ripples of waves do.

My take was that Brother Steve was caught in a whirlpool very much similar to the Chakraview that Abhimanyu found himself in. Having personal experience of the same I felt I could lend a helping hand, so I threw myself in, like Abhimanyu knowing how to break it but not knowing how to come out. I figure that two instead of one provides a different kind of space from the one that Abhimanyu found himself in. Possession football till a real chance to strike at goal is possible.

In between I have had a chance to exchange views deeply with my Aunt Hazel Cardoso my father's cousin. They had both imbibed the vision and spirit that my Aunt Marie had instilled. Before his death my father wrote, *normally properties divide, but Marie has united*. This is the Common Future we seek, our common heritage.

As pointed out by me to Vikalp Sangam which is engaging with collecting the sum total of experiences and examining their implications, there is a requirement for waste disposal and for processing waste into wealth. This is something my father had written about and a vision that had inspired me to join Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development where I first came in touch with the Brundtland Commission report through the eyes and ears of two of my colleagues Rajesh Ramakrishna and Depinder Kapur. The discussions that followed made me believe that indeed a new world was possible. From the Utopian Socialism of Robert Owen to Scientific Socialism, to the need to question 'science' as we know it has been a journey. It was Hardeep Singh another colleague who provided the markers to this journey a dialectic response to what all of us had learnt from Socialist Unity Centre and its founder Shibdas Ghosh. My first foray was to attempt a very simple model of how Capitalism worked in rural India. That self sustaining economies had been broken forever became very clear.

The market which united the globe is only for those who can pay. The study on the Sustainable Development Goals being done by Anjali D'Cunha interning with Institute for Ecology and Livelihood Action points to the large number of people deprived by the fruits of this development. Making a jump, in the words of Claude Alvares, *it is because you are thinking in NPK terms, nature is living, only 3% nitrogen is required in the soil, the rest will be fixed from atmospheric nitrogen if the soils are made living again*. This is the basis for my challenge to the Paris Convention. The world can be fixed with \$ 700 billion not the \$53 trillion they sought.

Act 1

The SDGs and IELA is there a connection?

Scene 1: What are the SDGs?

(A meeting of the National Inclusive Children's organizing team, somewhere in India. Due to lockdown the meeting was held on Zoom)

Pemkit Lepcha: Let's call this meeting to order Ram. What is the meeting about?

Ram: Madam Prime Minister this is about getting a hold on how NICOT should respond to the slides on the SDGs sent to PRATYek by IELA.

Pemkit: IELA what's that? I heard about the cyclone Aila which hit the Sundarbans destroying half a million hectares of agricultural land. I have also heard about a fish by that name but what is this.

Ram: Mam their logo has both but it is Institute for Ecology and Livelihood Action.

Pemkit: Call me Pemkit Ram, our slogan is equality for all and Sociocracy our method for achieving it. All this formality will kill it.

Ram: Yes Mam, I mean Pemkit.

Pemkit: Shekar, you have anything to say about this proposal put up by Ram.

Shekar: Yes Mam, I went to the IELA web site and saw the slides on the SDGs put up by IELA it looks like their intern Anjali has done a very thorough job of placing them in the Indian context.

Pemkit: Good, but you are not an ordinary member of the National Inclusive Children's parliament, your organisation PARA has done a lot of work educating the children of your region on the SDGs so let me ask Kajal what she thinks.

Kajal: Pemkit, I have seen it too, I agree with Shekar but then Ranjana Mam of Social Action Research Centre, Varanasi has trained us well too. However I have heard that those not as exposed as we are have difficulty responding meaningfully to this.

Vinod: We in Rise North East have also gone through and think it is a good start. However what is missing is how to translate this into the local context.

Sakshi: We discussed this matter in our Children's parliament at Darjeeling, I agree with Vinod, not just the contextual placement is missing, it not at a level which children can relate at all. We need to see how it can be made child friendly.

Pemkit: You guys seem to be in touch, but we in Sikkim are totally in the dark. Ram can you educate us further?

Ram: I think we need to do a modified version of the SDG submission we gave to the UN under the Universal Participatory review (UPR) on Human Rights undertaken from 2102 to 2106 by the UN. IELA can help us with this.

Kajal: IELA is very strong on action research but Viren has a fancy for theory which goes beyond the grasping ability of the common child.

Pemkit: Such as.

Vinod: His organisation is talking about the food web. How many children know the meaning of that?

Shekar: They have a game for children, very simple really. Everyone stands in a circle. Each person is given a name of an animal and they are connected by a thread on their finger. When the name of an animal is called, it dies; along with it other animals that depend on it die too. This is the interconnection in nature.

Pemkit: Very interesting, we must ask IELA to teach our children this game.

Sakshi: There is another one, where the children have to collect leaves from a selected area in a given time; they have to explain all they know of the plant they collected it from.

Kajal: I hear IELA has done this with children in quite some detail in Chhota Udaipur.

Ram: That is Habitat whom IELA is working closely with, but yes IELA has played this game in other parts of the country. They have played this game with the children of Delhi for instance.

Shekar: Habitat and IELA are advocating an eco system approach to development with a Federation of gram sabhas as a means by which communities can engage with it. (*looking around*). Don't ask me what that means. I do not have a clue.

Ram: Lock down to blame. They were planning an exercise with St. John's School Chandigarh but COVID19 changed all their plans.

Kajal: Heard Viren wrote a play on COVID19.

Ram: Yes, titled *King Lear and the Dragon of Shaolin*. The Habitat approach and its relation to communities are described there.

Vinod: Too complex for children to understand. Even adults have difficulty I am told.

Pemkit: Okay Shekar, let's ask IELA to give us a simpler version that we children can relate to.

Ram: Am not so sure of that Pemkit. Anything done by Viren is far from simple but let's give it a try.

Exeunt

Scene Two: A rape that did not happen, a criminal act for which there were no perpetrators

(Somewhere near the river Neelgagan in Bahuab the most populated State in the country of Mahishmati).

Ayesha: *(looking pensively at the papers)* Look at this news Snehal. It says that no one was found guilty of destroying the historic archaeological site of the Aulia Mosque. Are these photo shopped videos?

Snehal: No the news does not say that. The news says that it was not a conscious act of destruction. A spur of frenzy so to speak, no one instigated the destruction.

Madan: I find that strange, the devotees of Bajrang Bali went all the way to Mahua just to look at the structure. See it says here we will build a temple on that very site. So destruction was preordained. Did they think that through their political actions the court would automatically allow for its destruction?

Brinda: The court verdict does not show any proof of a temple ever having being there.

Ayesha: There you are it is the work of the spirit and the spirit leaves no temporal proof. A matter of faith you see.

Gopal: *(rushing in)* Yes, yes I know, like the faith we must have in our beloved Chief Minister Radhakrishna. See this one. It says the rape of the Dalit woman in Mithapura did not happen. It is all cooked up by those anti nationals to destabilize the State.

Ayesha: Jagat Mithya, Brahma Satya I tell you Gopal. The spirit is upon us it will give us eyes to see how all this will make Mahishmati into a land of milk and honey.

Cut, Cut shouted a voice, the stage darkens and suddenly we are back at the NICOT team meeting

Ram: Can any one of you tell me which SDGs have been covered in this scene.

Kajal: Looks very close to something happening in my State of UP, let me see SDG 16 Peace and Justice.

Shekar: SDG 5, Gender Equality.

Sakshi: SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities SDG 15 Life on Land and SDG 17 Partnerships.

Ram: You guys are stretching the meaning of some of the SDGs but I will let it pass. Let's go back to the play shall we.

All: Yes lets.

Scene darkens again and we are back near Neelgagan river

Ayesha: (*pacing up and down*) The fact finding team was stopped from entering Mithapura. Cooking up a story to destroy the country they say.

Snehal: Not for long Ayesha, not for long, facts can't be hidden under the carpet.

Gopal: See this report, says it is the marking of a Fascist State, I do not know what the hell that is.

Madan: All in due time Gopal, neither do I.

Ayesha: It is a State where there is Centralisation of command and control.

Brinda: Like the Soviet Union you mean.

Ayesha: No like Germany. Soviet Union was a Socialist State.

Brinda: Cannot see the difference between these two.

Ayesha: Later perhaps, for now in Germany, Capitalists united with the State to consolidate power. Those that resisted were put in jail. In the Soviet Union the consolidation was for the people as a whole. Those that resisted were either shot or sent to Siberia.

Brinda: (*shaking her head vigorously*) I can't see any difference still.

Ayesha: Never mind.

Sneha: But I can certainly see some similarities with our land Mahishmati.

Ayesha: Good.

Scene darkens and back at the NICOT meeting

Ram: Any comments guys.

Pemkit: I think this is where our method of Sociocracy and power of recall shows a way forward.

Shekar: Yes indeed it does. Centralisation in the hands of a few to do as they please is not in our interest.

Vinod: We in the North East advocate a decentralised model.

Sakshi: Sociocracy takes care of that Vinod.

Kajal: I agree lets join hands on this.

All form a circle and join hands by putting one on top of the other. The lift them up one by one and join them again crying all for one and one for all

Exeunt

Scene three: Maharashtra Government modifies FRA guidelines to give land for housing of tribals

(Scene is the NICOT meeting once again, Sandhya Saroj a former NICP member from Mumbai is also participating).

Sandhya: I say guys, just got this from my tribal friends in Mazha Maharashtra, Mazha Sahbhag. It says the Maharashtra government has modified the Forest Rights Act guidelines in order to approve the sanction of land for housing of twenty two thousands tribals living within the forest.

Ram: Sounds like good news Sandhya what do you say.

Sandhya: Yes it is many ifs and buts go with it. The news reports say that forest dwellers migrate because they do not have secure housing in the forest. I am not so sure.

Pemkit: I have my doubts too but say some more.

Sandhya: We have many tribals living in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar in Goregaon; they are not there because they do not have housing in the forests.

Vinod: I agree there are many tribals in the tea gardens in the North East; they were brought in there by the British to provide cheap labour for the tea owners.

Sandhya: That is a different story, I am not so familiar with the issues related to tribals but I do know that some of my tribal friends told me about the large number of famine deaths (including those of children and infants) in Melghat due to the destruction of the forest and closure of the forest due to the concern for protecting the wildlife within. If I factor this into my understanding my take is that this permission is going to lead to further destruction of the forest and related pressure on the traditional livelihood system of the tribals.

Shekar: Yes the government believes in quick fix solutions. The Andhra government too has suddenly woken up and distributed a large number of forest rights pattas to claimants. I am told that Chhatisgarh has issued a lot of Community Forest rights pattas recently as well.

Ram: Looks like something good emerging out of the pandemic, rights of tribal and forest dwelling communities being recognised.

Sandhya: Am not so sure. Recognising rights without a road map for livelihood from the forest is sure to end in disaster. This is a convenient way for the government to discharge its responsibilities and put the onus on the community themselves.

Sakshi: You have a point there. There are problems in our tea gardens too. It relates to the larger market for tea, the status of the competition and other factors as well.

Pemkit: Guys, guys let us look at this from to angles. One relates to the rights, the other relates to the wherewithal for sustainable livelihoods from the land. Let us not throw out the baby with the bathwater guys.

Sandhya: I agree Pemkit my take is that we need to have a more comprehensive and balanced picture.

Pemkit: Ram can you arrange for IELA to give us a low down on some of the issues facing the country so that we can see where the children fit in.

Ram: I heard that Viren is busy in discussions with Gayatri Seva Sansthan from Udaipur. They participated in the NICP remember. One point that he shared with me was the relevance of livelihood security for the family so that the children can go to school.

Sakshi: Udaipur was in the news recently. In the Karamveer Programme of Kaun Banega Corepati, Rajiv Khandelwal and Krishnavtar Sharma of Ajeevika Bureau pointed out how they have rescued Child labour from a restaurant an integral part of their work related to dignified employment. As you guys know Tej has done a lot of this work here as well. It is one of the reasons for his high popularity and the active engagement of the Sikkim Government in the NICP.

Kajal: Don't forget the work done on POCSO and child marriage a forte of the work done by Ranjana.

Sandhya: We are not here to pat ourselves on the back. We have a long way to go and the purpose of our discussion was to understand the relevance of the work done by IELA in review and modification of the House of Kidizens project being run by PRATYeK.

Ram: So can anyone tell us what SDGs have been covered in our discussion.

All: SDG 1 No Poverty, SDG 2 Zero Hunger, SDG 3 Health and Well Being, SDG 4 Education (what do we mean by education has to be spelt out first), SDG 5 Gender Equality. SDG 6 Decent work, SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities SDG 11 Sustainable Cities SDG 12 Sustainable Consumption SDG 13, Climate Change SDG 15, Life on Land SDG 17.

Ram: What has been reported here is not the whole discussion we had so I will let our response pass by giving this information as well.

Pemkit: I am beginning to understand the relevance of the work being done by Anjali on behalf of IELA. I think we should ask IELA to elaborate on these connections as well.

Ram: Sure Pemkit, we have arranged a whole show for that purpose.

All: Good, bring it on Ram.

Exeunt

Act 2

Recent Developments: Any relevance for children?

Scene 1: Farmer's agitations on the agriculture produce bills

(Scene: Zoom meeting of NICP members across the country)

Pemkit: Anybody would like to throw light on the significance of the farmer's agitation for children?

Ashok: I don't about children as yet, but the agitation hardly affected our area in Chhota Udepur.

Shikha: Why?

Ashok: Our famers are not dependent on the Mandi per se. Very little produce to sell anyway and whatever there is, is gobbled up by the local moneylender who also doubles up as a trader/ shopkeeper.

Rajalaxmi: We are trying to develop our own markets for organics, ragi in particular. This deregulation would in fact help us.

Shikha: The agriculture produce bills are going to hurt us badly. Farmers fear the Minimum support price will be withdrawn.

Ajay: Rot and nonsense, Minimum support price will continue the companies who purchase will have to buy over and above this price.

Shikha: I really hope so. As we have seen for produce not regulated by the government, the companies resort to hoarding, they have the storage ability. They buy when the prices are low, create artificial scarcity in the market and then sell when the prices skyrocket pocketing a bomb.

Sandhya: Yes we saw that with the onion prices. In sugarcane too, the companies piled up sugar stocks and there were no takers for the fresh sugarcane in the market.

Shekar: If the Public Distribution system is curtailed, we could be badly hit. We depend on it a lot for cheap food grains.

Kajal: Yes the famous Two Rupees/ Kg rice scheme.

Sundar: We have that in our State too. This was a gift for the toiling people of Tamil Nadu from our darling Amma.

Rajalaxmi: Your two Rupee rice scheme destroyed our millets. Farmer's started growing groundnut instead and then disease and crashing prices due to Palmolien imported from Malaysia caused the farmers to go bankrupt. There were many suicide deaths as a result.

Shekar: The Chandra Babu government the darling of Bill gates suddenly found itself out of power. Cyber cities did not save the government.

Ram: Looks like we have two distinct opinions here and both counter posed to each other. What consensus of opinion can be reached?

Sandhya: Some things are now making sense to me though. The market does not always determine the analytics, am thinking of Melghat and the Forest Rights movement which is an assertion in the direction of autonomy.

Pemkit: I think this applies to many aspects of my State as well.

Vinod; North East too.

Sandhya: I think we will have to see this in the concrete local context, that is the generalisation not the one cap fits all.

Pemkit: I think the local children's parliament federated at the block/ district level will provide the way forward.

Sakshi: The tea plantation workers will have to have a separate federation to deal with their issues.

Kajal: Agreed looks like area perspective and themes will require different treatment.

Rajalaxmi: This is a division within the theme too.

Sundar: Let us simplify, self consumption a focus for backward rural areas.

Ram: Market orientation a must for the backward urban population. The availability of cheap grain, water and electricity some of the essentials for slum dwellers in urban set up.

Kajal: Some sort of consensus emerging after all.

Pemkit: A people oriented one. Simple yes and no not the answer it seems.

Sakshi: Discussion essential for consensus.

Sandhya: The Sociocracy model.

All: Yes.

Exeunt

Scene 2: Covid19 report of Azim Premji University

(Scene: The same cross country zoom meeting of the NICP)

Pemkit: Anyone read the Azim Premji report on COVID19 impact across the country?

Purushotam: I have, the report is very alarming it talks of most of the migrant labour returning back home running out of cash and running out of supplies as well. Problems with the implementation of the schemes designed for them as well. I could give a presentation on the summary.

Pemkit: Not required, anyone seriously interested can go to the report itself, the report however confirms our worst fears. The impact has been disastrous but kept under wraps as usual.

Ram: What is not seen or heard does not exist.

Shekar: What kind of logic is that? Just because the ostrich buries its head in the sand does not mean the sandstorm does not exist.

Sakshi: Recent research shows that the ostrich does this to protect the egg.

Kajal: So now you are telling me that proverbs have a life too. New findings obliterate the meaning of the old.

Sandhya: All things have a life, words and meanings too. The democracy comes from the Greek word Demos and Krato meaning people and rule. It was in a period when there were slaves too. The people did not include these slaves.

Sundar: As we saw with the agriculture produce bills the context needs to be defined to understand who gains and who loses and why people are saying what they do.

Ram: Big words Sundar, the government apparently does not have time for that.

Shikha: Our time will come, at that we will turn back and say thank you NICP, for giving us the vision and the wherewithal to put into practise governance of the people, for the people and by the people.

Vinod: Here's to that Shikha, don't curse when we in the North East choose to go our own way.

Ajay: Fat chance that, this process will not happen on its own. NICP will have been instrumental so the collective would have taken care of your concerns by then.

Vinod: Will you be able to take care of the large scale immigrants into our region from Bangladesh in 1971?

Rajalaxmi: Maybe not but certainly through dialogue we will know the way the issue it can be solved, not without taking Bangladesh into confidence, certainly it cannot.

Ashok: Guys, we are working on a method to engage the local community with the culture and biodiversity. During COVID 19 these principles certainly came in useful at the time of providing local home grown health care systems.

Sandhya: Good for you Ashok, we in Mumbai are following what Viren is sending us. Good work a very different perspective from ours.

Gayatri: A process is starting up in Udaipur too. We have already created children's parliaments here. We are waiting for Viren to show up.

Ashok: Viren has not shown up since the lockdown, though he did initiate the process, we are carrying on the momentum of the Mahayatra, Viren was not present for that too.

Gayatri: So this is what decentralisation means, look forward to the process then.

Pemkit: Looks like we lost track. Anyone has anything to say on COVID19.

Ram: Pretty depressing it seems to me. HOK facilitated COVID kits and relief across the country on a massive scale.

Pemkit: Yes we all have benefitted.

Ashok: I can vouch for that from Chhota Udepur.

Pemkit: Enough of the mutual backslapping, any serious issues we can engage with?

Rajalaxmi: Our education is in tatters, who has the resources to have multiple mobiles and have them all working 24/7 in the rural areas?

Ram: There are schemes we can look at?

Purushotam: Such as.

Ram: Go have a look at Anjali's slide programme on the SDGs all the relevant schemes have been listed out. We can set up a show right now if all of you have the time.

Pemkit: Looks like you have hit on a core issue Ram. Concerns are diverse and can best be handled in a decentralised manner. Is there some way we can get a handle on this so that people are equipped with the basic wherewithal for this?

Ram: I hear that Anjali is working on this. It will first be tried out in Chhota Udepur.

Sakshi: Good we look forward to getting the report. Keep us posted.

All; Yes, please do.

Exeunt

Scene 3: Sushant Singh Rajput and the furore that followed his suicide

Scene: The same cross country zoom meeting of the NICP

Pemkit: Why did you bring up this topic Ram, people are dying from COVID19, unemployment everywhere and the country is sitting glued to the TV to watch the drama on SSR. What a farce.

Ram: I would not say that. There is the drug mafia connection and the highly paid film stars getting the once over by the CBI, the government means business.

Shekar: Bihar elections on the cards and Rhea has been released on bail, Arnab who has been on the attack is now on the defence.

Rajalaxmi: Kangana, strangely silent on the Hathras rape case, just Maya being raked up by disgruntled nay anti national elements?

Vinod: Will the drug nexus get finished?

Sandhya: Certainly not but as they say diamond cuts diamond. There is a method in the madness.

Sakshi: that's interesting; I know in West Bengal, didi got a run for her money.

Shikha: Democracy works in strange ways. Even in such repressive and depressing conditions, issues are certainly being aired. The problem is that there is no clear cut political process leading the show.

Purushotam: Down but not out certainly. There is a dissenting voice and there is a definite alternative emerging as well. We are looking in the wrong place that is all.

Ashok: A hunter would like to have all its prey in one place, the bird we call the seven sisters flock in one place, easy prey for the hunter.

Rajalaxmi: Very good insight Ashok, the principle of united we stand does not work in the same fashion we are traditionally used to thinking.

Vinod: The value of decentralisation, am beginning to see the light of day for the North East too.

Kajal: Good for you Vinod, give us the benefit of that light when you get it. In Varanasi, what we see is convergence not divergence.

Sandhya: The situation in Mumbai too. Yet the tiffin from so many homes gets to the right person day in and day out. Works like clockwork.

Ashok: Our clock works differently not linked to the railway system but the sun. Though I admit, it was a good experience to come to Delhi and meet you guys.

Pemkit: I will go by Ashok's version, the mountains make for decentralisation.

Gayatri: The reason why the Mughals could not conquer Mewar how much they tried. We have the tribal standing side by side with the Rajput in the Mewar emblem. The mountains have their own language and there are people who do understand it.

Kajal: So do rivers have their own language, but we have stopped listening.

Sundar: Fascinating, our state has a bimodal rainfall pattern, makes a world of a difference to the ecology.

Sandhya: Somebody told me about the world of the pastoralists and the fishers. Quite different from the one we are used to. Home under the stars and many nights on the boat, or with the flock as they go from place to place.

Shikha: Yes, these pastoralist come over to Punjab from Himachal too. It is the differential in the climates and the related production systems. There is snow where they live. In summer they go back to their lush green fields high above the tree line. Wonderful fodder to be had I am told.

Pemkit: (clapping excitedly) Looks like we are getting close to the ecosystem approach talked of by IELA.

Shekar: Is that so. Pretty simple I say.

Sundar: You can say that again.

Sakshi: I endorse.

Pemkit: Ram, you know the brief to give Viren?

Ram: Yes I guess. This report will be enough I think. We have recorded all of it.

All: Good.

Exeunt

Part II

Multiple futures – Is integration possible?

(Dedicated to Greta Thunberg and Friday for the Future)

Act 3

Modules for change

Scene 1: The Rural Module: Back to Nature with a difference

(Scene: The same cross country zoom meeting of NICP members)

Pemkit: I assume all of you have gone through the IELA presentation and related policy briefs on the rural module for change focusing on the Forest Rights Act for starters.

Shekar: No we have not, can Ram give us a short overview.

Ram: Okay I will try. Since it is brief it might pass. Firstly the rural module makes the presumption that renewable energy in the control of local communities will help to industrialise the countryside in a sustainable manner through appropriate value addition maximizing local recycling processes which include nature's cycles as well. The Second aspect relates to two different types of forums to address decentralisation of governance issues. The first one is the gram sabha federated at the landscape level. The second is the thematic form also federated which will deal with the specific issues facing the thematic area. The two will engage independently and collectively with the district administration the unit at which the current top down model is currently decentralised in terms of decision making. The agenda will be the relationship with the people and natural resources on one hand and the twenty nine subjects which have been listed for decentralisation in article 11 of the 73rd amendment.

Shikha: That is quite a mouthful to swallow but thanks Ram for putting all those complex issues we read so concisely. I could not do that.

Sakshi: Where does the ecosystem fit in Ram?

Ram: The landscape level is a part of the ecosystem depending on the ability of the local organisation to engage. Actually Viren is toying with a term Socio Ecological system as this relates to how cultural consciousness has developed. Fenai Mata Revakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal in Chhota Udepur is something like that.

Ashok: Yes Fenai Mata refers to our local mountain deity and Revakhand refers to the larger region on Narmada of which the landscape is a part.

Vinod: I see that the module acknowledges that things may work a little differently in different locations. Jharkhand Mazdoor Kisan Union is not organised at the landscape level but is working with tribals, fishers, small farmers and unorganized sector labour in the Daltonganj Commissary which has the districts of Latehar, Palamau and Garwah.

Gayatri: GSS is also not engaged at the landscape level but is working in parts of Udaipur, Pratapgarh and Rajsamand Districts. As mentioned we have already started Children's parliaments in Udaipur District. We will incorporate the lessons from Fenai Mata into our module later.

Kajal: All this is part of the work being coordinated by IELA I presume, other members of NICP are working very differently.

Ram: Yes, this was part of the impact assessment done by Viren where he used the opportunity to integrate his work with ours. SDG17 on partnerships remember? He has also proposed a leadership forum which will actively guide the work of NICP by trying to integrate the strengths of the partners.

Shekar: Yes I saw his suggestion on the Regional coordinators as these have selected based on their contribution to the whole process.

Purushotam: As a start it is okay, but there will be questions as more expertise gets engaged and the Regional Coordinators will themselves have to create regional leadership.

Gayatri: Yes GSS has a number of core strengths which will be useful to NICP not just at the regional level but at the National level as well. Viren has currently advised to develop the Rajasthan module based on the work being done in the three districts only and work on the other skill sets a little later.

Ashok: Lockdown has created a set back to our whole plan for development and expansion but we will catch up soon. Anjali is working on the rural module to be applied in Chhota Udepur. After field testing it will be opened up to understand the commonalities which can be universally applied.

Gayatri: GSS is already applying what has been developed so far. We will be looking forward to Anjali's work so that we can see what modifications we have to make to the district module for application here.

Ashok: Viren has been engaging with people across the country as well. Currently he is trying to see how the approach developed in Gujarat and Rajasthan can be applied to Maharashtra and from there to Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and the whole country thereafter.

Pemkit: So we are all set then. It is a matter of time and resources I guess.

All: Yes.

Exeunt

Scene 2: The Urban Module: Back to nature with a question mark

(Scene: The same zoom meeting of NICP members)

Pemkit: I see the urban module presumes a fully operational rural module, is that realistic Ram?

Ram: If we want to get real with SDG 7 Energy, this is a necessity Pemkit.

Shekar: There is more, the urban module is looking at different typologies. There is the natural historic process of urbanization and there is the recent push over the last twenty to thirty years. The two are different. While the former does keep the natural resource flows in mind, the latter is based on the modification of nature to suit the pocket/demand.

Vinod: I think the module currently does not deal with the latter. There are already experts engaged in cyber planning for the same.

Shikha: Yes, they think they can grow food with artificial light as well. So the office space will also grow its own food as well.

Sakshi: Really Shikha you do have the propensity for exaggeration, these are experiments taking place in Japan and elsewhere. Land is scarce in those parts. But yes, there is a method in your madness; you have made your point. NICP does not deal with the \$ 53 trillion modules except at the interface and only where necessary.

Sundar: Brilliant, suddenly there is a lot of clarity on the fuzziness in yesterday's discussion. This reminds me of permaculture design. In essence it says that in the initial stages there will be a larger number of nitrogen fixing species but as the soil health improves these will be cut back to facilitate production.

Rajalaxmi: I am a little wary of this. We had the bitter experience of windmills creating havoc in our land after a twenty five year struggle to make the soils living and healthy again.

Kajal: There is a world of difference between production and reproduction I agree and reproduction of the means of production, quite a different ball game altogether.

Ashok: Let us put it this way, we are talking of training children to be the new generation leaders with comprehensive vision on the seventeen plus one SDGs. Our grandparents did not have to think so deeply with respect to the upbringing of their children. It just happened.

Gayatri: A generation with no faith in their own knowledge and depended on what the world/society had to teach them.

Sakshi: I would not put it quite like that, but yes you are right.

Shikha: For a simple yardstick, yes. In Punjab we are dealing with the issue of how GMO/ Pesticide has affected the reproductive cycles of the younger generation so I know where this thought came from.

Ram: Am only now getting exposed to these ideas so it will take time for me to correlate theory with practise.

Purushotam: An issue for a lot of us. Not articulated as frankly as you do Ram. Thanks.

Sandhya: I am now a lot clearer about the issues I raised vis a vis housing been constructed in forest areas. Looks like my sense as in the right track but due to lack of exposure could not examine in totality, thanks guys.

Ashok: We are looking at housing too. Made of locally made material but having modern comfort and sustainability parameters. However we have kept on hold for a while a whole lot of restructuring necessary to ensure that it becomes a part of life. Today most youth in my region look at the lucrative opportunities elsewhere. It is the kind of mentality that brings moths to the flame. I cannot blame them though.

Gayatri: Girls have much more complex problem to face. We have not even touched the surface of those. Only the basic ones dealt with so far.

Vinod: I wish some of our North East girls were here to hear this. They would have taken off.

Kajal: I can too but right now I am restraining myself. This serial Barrister Babu is very interesting. It is highlighting quite a bit.

Gayatri: Not the vision we are dealing with here but yes, quite a bit and useful to start with.

Pemkit: I see that the girls have all suddenly become very vocal, a natural by product of the vision we have unfolded. On this matter I hear that IELA is heavily influenced by Habitat which is a woman led organisation having this kind of vision.

Ashok: Yes Dr. Leena is the visionary behind the use of historical knowledge on the natural resources for empowerment of women. She has had many animated discussions with the women of our region and trained a number of them too.

Pemkit: So we all endorse this two module approach to the SDGs proposed by IELA?

All: Yes we do!!

Exeunt

Scene 3: Back to Nature with a question mark: A tribute to T Peter of the National Fishermen's Forum

(Scene: The final session of the NICP zoom meeting)

Pemkit: Can we stand up and observe two minutes silence as a mark of respect to the great fisherman leader T Peter who died of COVID19 recently.

All stand and observe two minutes silence

Ram: For the information of all, T Peter was the general secretary of the National Fisherman's forum, created about thirty years ago to struggle on the issues of small and traditional fishers across the country.

Shekar: I heard that T Peter told Viren once that the struggles of fishermen across the country was varied and depended a lot on the local conditions they faced, hence the need to have a vision embracing the fishermen as a whole but providing space for its concrete local expression.

Rajalaxmi: I heard that the fishermen of Kerala did a wonderful job during the floods last year.

Sundar: Yes but see how they are being treated. The fishermen of Tuticorin were among the foremost to protest against the pollution to the water bodies by Vedanta.

Ram: Yes I heard, but I also heard that Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal had written to the Prime Minister that it should be reopened in National Interest. A lot of investment has been pumped in.

Sundar: The lives of six lakh people not important but an investment of Rs 13,000 crores is. That is the twisted logic that money economy imparts. It is as if money invested is equal to employment given.

Shekar: Laughing, we have the case of a Rupees 14,000 crore factory in Anantpur. Employs 7,000 people so Rs Two crores per person. How many livelihoods has it destroyed?

Sakshi: No wonder Nandigram put an end to the left front government. Quite a contradiction, the government that had come to power on the strength of land to tiller movement was removed because it had drifted far away from this slogan.

Ashok: The government of Gujarat also came to power on the farmer question; now see how far away they are from farmers.

Shikha: You can say that again. I got to see the agony from close quarters.

Rajalaxmi: We are working on an approach with a difference. No largesse from the government for us.

Ashok: You are downplaying the relevance of MGNREGA Rajalaxmi and a number of hidden costs as well. But yes, it is an approach with a difference.

Purushotam: Speaking of the fisherman's struggle once again, export orientation and consequently port construction and the Sagar Mala are destroying our precious mangroves and the small fishers with it as well. SR Hiremath had put the Chief Minister in jail as a result of the long struggle initiated by him to take the Republic of Bellary to task.

Sundar: This case impacted Goa and Odisha too if I remember. The spurt in exports due to the Beijing Olympics had come to an end and miners began fighting with each other for the spoils. S R Hiremath helped then to unravel. It takes guts to do that.

Purushotam: The approach he followed was non violent direct action inspired by Gandhi.

Ram: Yes violence would only give an excuse to the government to unleash repression.

Sundar: The government does not wait for excuses, it manufactures them. The people of Tuticorin know that only too well.

Shikha: Speaking of struggles there was the long Khichdipur struggle which culminated in victory around the time of our NICP in Jan/Feb. There were children of six schools involved in that struggle.

Ram: Yes. Viren put that into his report. He was trying to work out a model where NICP could engage with such movements. COVID19 put some breaks on this process.

Ashok: COVID 19 has put brakes on a lot of things but forced a rethink as well.

Gayatri: I endorse that.

Pemkit: I could do the normal, try to summarise but I will not. The essence of decentralisation is think globally act locally. There are many ways to skin a cat.

All: Yes there are!!

All take a bow.

Curtain closes

The Red Lotus of Shalimar – Gene splicing or a process of Natural Selection, Investigation into the role of the foreign hand

Part I and II

By Viren Lobo

An Especioza Trust Production

(This play is dedicated to my daughter Genevieve who puts up the mirror to me, showing me the difference between my desires and reality. To the serial Bones which apart from showing the relevance of forensic anthropology also showed how team work could help provide the support structure to cover each one's back and the relevance of psychology in showing the relationship between life experiences and consciousness)



Background:

My seventh play titled *The Red Lotus of Shalimar – Gene splicing or a process of Natural Selection, Investigation into the role of the foreign hand*. While the play takes a cross section of happenings in Kashmir, it mixes up the metaphors so to speak. I the sense that incidents are superimposed on each other in a mix that helps to unfold the many peels of the onion rather than specifically dwell on what the onion looks like. In that sense it reflects the logo of my Alma mater Irma and what I see as my responsibility as student from here. The conventional approach to management is passé. We are now talking about the resources of the country, nay the world. It is a world where a teenager Greta Thunberg, made a passionate speech to the UN. It is a time for reckoning. Do we respond or do we ignore?

In discussions with my colleagues passionately working on questions of ecology, I pointed out that when nature knows no boundaries our analysis of nature cannot allow our biases to creep in. We have got to take things from where they are if we ever hope to take them to where we want them to be. The challenge of the Himalayas posed by us in Delhi in April 2018 is in a way a challenge of civilisation. Our visit to Kashmir immediately after that sparked off many passionate discussions in each place we visited. There were no solutions only sharp questions posed from either side of the fence. The fortunate part is that the questions were so sharp that sitting on the fence was not an option. We were sharply asked, is Kashmir anything like what you see portrayed in other parts of the country? Our answer to this had to be a clear no, yet we posed a counter question too. Our experience showed that be it Ireland or Palestine or any part of the globe violence did not provide the answer. This point raised by us was proven to be correct more than a year later when government cracked down heavily on stone pelters.

In the events that followed I was struck by a somewhat eerie silence to the arrest of the political leadership in Kashmir. This had something to do with the role they had to play in the sell out of their homeland. I wondered what would emerge. There was a somewhat familiar flavour to how Khalil Gibran had described the angst in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Suez Canal but very different too. Did numbers matter? Did the possibility of being wiped out become very real? No answers for me anywhere. However reflections of this emerged in different contexts across the country. Assam, the tribal belt and now the farmer's protests point to disconnect between the concept of India and its regional/local manifestations. A movement for local autonomy mooted in ICAN by a member of ABMKSS seemed to provide the way out of the maze. Steering a path through this has not been easy but something or the other has come up to illuminate the way.

And then I saw parts of the serial *Bones*, being watched by my daughter Genevieve. The serial showed a deep recognition by science of local peculiarities confirming my hypothesis that people's knowledge of reality reflects in it the specifics which are uncovered by science at some later date due to advanced in technology and improved ways to connect the dots. The play between the traditional and the modern as reflected somewhat in the interactions between Temperance Brennan and Seeley Booth (as also others) showed the relative

importance and relevance of both. How does one handle the unknown? This was a very powerful underlying thread in many conversations that took place. The serial however presumed as given the political economic structure but very useful if one can pick the threads correctly and what they point to as the future we could have in store for us.

Part I

The Thesis Unfolds

(This section is dedicated to Lubna Qadri who helped me explore the process of National consciousness from a perspective very different from my own. What are the common points that emerge for humanity as whole an approach which is consistent to whichever vantage point you look from: There are no readymade answers only lenses that need to be got rid of as one peels the different layers of the Onion).

Act 1

The Problem defined

Scene 1: The Investigation

Inspector Arnab examined the evidence
The lotus a glittering red
Something was not quite right
Did it fit with the rest of the surrounding
Like the red cheeks of the women of the Himalayan mountains
Something very different
Amit had come up with evidence of something foreign inserted
Root it out at any cost Arnab
Expose it for what it's worth
Line up was arranged
Rajesh asked to identify the culprit
Rajesh hesitated then pointed to Atmaram Gujjar huddled in the corner
An exclamation escaped the watching crowd
Atmaram Gujjar not even on the list of suspects
Why this sudden turn of events ?
No reply
Later something leaked to the press
Source unknown
Something to do with the myriad passes in the mountains
And brothers of Atmaram in the West
Sponsors named as the owner of the garden of Gulzar
Seventy two years earlier these raiders had come pretty close to Shalimar
At that time Atmaram's father had helped to stop these raiders
A cry rose all around Shalimar
Treachery and treason they cried
Rajesh was nonplussed will root out the traitors of our motherland he cried
Curfew was imposed a lockdown signed by Amit
Squeeze the enemy till he cried for mercy said the army chief
Incarcerate all those that protest
This is an emergency
The nation is in danger
Foreign hand looming large
Smoke them out from the barge
Those in the lake close to Shalimar
What had this to do with red Lotus no one knew
What was clear was everyone in the stew
Amit and Arnab cooking the brew
What was cooking no one knew

Scene 2: A dip into the past, anthropological roots

Mohan found evidence of Persian culture in Udaipur
The residence of Pandits from Kashmir
Was it an indication of hybridization or indoctrination.
The former he thought as he observed similar cultural roots in Kashmir as well.
A trade route he had learnt about in school
Brought other things with it as well.
A reflection of ties built up over years
One which did not depend on fears.
Other stories too
The Afghan Pathan and the Punjabi
A different sell out to the British in 1848
Watermarks, or Watergate
From somewhere within the origins of hate
Was that a reflection of giving up Buddhist conversion
Or merely a perversion
To suit those in power on both sides of the Mountain ridge one called a border.
Genetic progression knew no man made borders thought Mohan
So this perversion is societal
Like the tiger marking its territory
Something different than that thought the Bhopa
Tiger is a tiger no matter what
But artificial GM changes the genes
Reproduction put to a halt
Like curing with salt
Not exactly, this is like salt to wounds
Affecting deep to the core
Wait and watch Mohan thought
Soon there will be more

Scene 3: The pony and the Yatri

Bashir took his ponies out to graze
The snow was melting and the lush clover was beginning to show
The lakes were glittering blue in the sun
As the mountains blended with the heavens
This is Paradise on Earth he thought
Even as with civil strife his nation was fraught
His throat caught
A lion caged
Or rather the snow leopard
One that blended well with the surroundings
Now in clear sight
Fear of it lurking in the shadows was gone
But in its place another unknown fear gripped
One that has you paralysed
When after a fall the spine is crimped
A once free people enslaved
Was this just a thought or in the bones engraved
Bashir shrugged
For the yatra he needed to prepare
Pilgrims galore
And deep wishes in this embedded
If the surface can be shredded
Surveillance had increased
Security all around
For whom and for what Bashir thought
These pilgrims are a part of family
Going back centuries
Can ties like these be buried overnight
The power of Capital
It's need to control
Can it fight nature and its might
Very different from might is right
Or is it so
To get at the truth all I have
Am prepared to forgo

Act 2

The Solution in place

Scene 1: Ownership of the garden of Shalimar changing hands

After much hardship and travail a solution was found
Change the ownership of the garden
The local community which had been granted autonomous rights to protect the garden was
considered incompetent
Central ownership would provide the controls and protocol needed
That too was not enough; the park had to be divided in two
One where the red lotus prevailed
The other where the pink indigenous breed was prevalent
Contamination would now be kept in check
But soon it was found that another took its place
The dragon of Shaolin
So lockdown had to continue
The brew soon turned into stew
Difference of taste would be the privilege of a few
There was another opinion though
One that said welcome to the world of gardens
Valley of flowers for one
And the cactus of the desert joined the refrain
And end to the purdah
That kept beauty within was very much acclaimed
There was a backlash in Shalimar though
It was still gated and very much protected
The chowkidar just doing his job
So the mobs that thronged were fobbed
What happened to the red Lotus will be found out later
For now it was round up the hater
All ring leaders put behind bars
While for Atmaram and Bashir they were left to count the stars
Open blue skies
And the lush meadows
Beckoned with renewed vigour
There was no one to pull the trigger
Skirmishes however did take place
Not to be talked about though
Unless you wanted the nation to be disgraced
Could history be defaced
Or was this the price for the dawn of a new era
Mohan slipped over the pages
Summer fires raged
And more and more from hope disengaged
In the Centre all was still
The Cat had had its fill

Scene 2: Passing the FRA bill

Now that Central ownership imposed
Central laws were imposed of course
Those who once protested the passage of the bill
Now took credit for ushering it in
Atmaram and Bashir heaved a sigh of relief
Illegality of occupation now would be a thing of the past
A nod in support had to be given very fast
The law was one thing though
And the situation on the ground another
Legality/illegality had another colour
Green it seemed was not the only one
The skies were blue of course but the colour of the rising/setting sun
Take your pick
The rainbow not yet in display
As the clouds still held sway
Black ones bring rain they say
Not good when you are making hay
Will leave this for another day
For now the promise that democracy held
As tired eyes looked over the veldt
Expectant eyes kept looking at you
Whose side are you on
Piercing would be a better expression
As the conversation carried on
Had time stopped
As options were shopped
Or was it only a matter of time
Before the pretence of normalcy would be dropped
Cat and mouse
The Tom and Jerry show
Not very exciting though
As only one side could be seen
Jerry where are you
Peeping through the cracks
Expecting a few whacks
The stomping of the elephant
Stopped everyone in its tracks
Far away on yonder hill
Atmaram and Bashir were very still
Flocks to keep
And wolves kept at bay
The Ides of March or was it May

Scene 3: Forest clearances

A slew of forest clearances followed the change of ownership
Was it to promote more of the Red Lotus or a sign that things had really changed
As money changed hands
So did the landscape
Concrete, concrete everywhere
As soil was laid bare
The forests and wetlands
Did they have long to live
Of course they will
That is where the money from tourism comes from
But money can wait
To whom the money will go to needs to be clear first
Bashir and Atmaram not on that list for sure
The middleman had been put in jail
Would their sins be washed clean
Time would tell
Punishment for crimes does play a role
It depends to whom the ball is bowled
The silence of the lambs did have a meaning it seems
As two elephants fought each other
Would the snow leopard live on
Or would the concrete be his swan song
Wait a minute
The snow leopard is endemic to the land of yellow lotus called out Bashir
Not anymore was Atmaram's reply
So the segregation did not work
Does not look like it
But let's wait and see
Watch the bee
Pesticide will kill it
Yes that's for sure
The land of milk and honey is no longer very pure
Adulteration the name of the game
A quick buck the way to fame
So will we now be a home of pimps
Or will natural genetics put its crimps
The story not very clear
As Mohan put away the file
The mountains stretched out for miles
Reaching out to Bashir and Atmaram would take quite a while

Part II

Reading the tea leaves – What do they say?

(Dedicated to Subash Mohapatra and his struggle to end Corporate Abuse)

Act 3

A new world unfolds

Scene 1: The census and its implications

Enumeration of the plants and different species took place in Shalimar recently
The results not as the centre wanted
Though they tried to paint it so
There was evidence of sins being washed away but not quite
Enough room for the centre to play with the facts as well
What did emerge quite distinctly though, was that the fact that the red lotus did not survive in
polluted waters
Room for the thought for the scientists analyzing the implications
Though this fact is very well known
Why was it ignored
Deliberate was the pronouncement of one
Disastrous said another
He pointed out how enemies were beginning to pile up
The dragon of Shaolin knew its way around it seemed
Was that the way Shalimar would be redeemed
Did not seem likely though
As the gates clanged shut
Chowkidar did have a way of keeping all engaged
Elsewhere in the land that was once Jehangir's
Fires burned outside the city
Keeping farmers parked in tents warm
While their anger burned
Their demands were spurned
And then a sudden turn around
A mediator it seems had been found
Foul cried the farmers
Impartial was the reply
Impasse with a bypass so it seemed
In another corner of the world a vaccine had been tested
The dragon of Shaolin could now be bested
The doctors had their doubts
The power of Capital however does have clout
Could it with the laws of nature combine
And provide a solution that replicated the divine
Mohan looked at his peacock feather
And wondered who invented leather
Can the skin be flayed while keeping the animal intact
Or did different forms of capital now have a pact
Mohan looked around for a pact of a different kind
One where the red, yellow and green could live in harmony
The prism he thought
A process of triangulation

Would it get rid of present frustration
Or simply lead to castration
Lost in thought Mohan was
Not lost though was the Cause

Scene 2: From Jehangir to the tea gardens of Darjeeling

Mohan and Durga quietly sipped tea at Bashir's house
Atmaram was also there
As were a host of others
Zaffar was quizzing Durga intently
We have been to your parts too said Zaffar
It's nothing like it is here
What do you mean
I have two PhDs yet unemployed
Army came and got my brother
Beat him up they did
What have we done
Examples kept pouring in
Durga kept pointing out
Violence is not right
Not the way to stop a fight
Women listening in closely from afar
Whispering among themselves
Later
Farah whispered to Durga
Your point very correct
We wish we could be like you
Yet, it is a though the murder in cold blood unleashed our soul
Dead if we do, dead if we don't
Is there an answer
We face that too said Durga
Rape, torture nothing new
In homes too
Freedom for women
The fortune of a few
The men here like to talk to me
Yet the women still in purdah
Behind closed doors is that all to nikah
Keep in touch Durga
We look forward to your provocation
Time is however not right
For us to leave our stations
Durga for long with Mohan did argue
Am not working under these conditions
Atmosphere very oppressive
Do we have an option Mohan asked
Not yet but will find a way
No deal in a world where men hold sway

Okay

Far away in the tea gardens of Darjeeling

Tez looked at his family

Unemployment was rampant

Crisis deepening

Was the government sleeping

Scene 3: The Royal Tigress of the Sundarban and the widow

Shanti looked around the room
Her cheeks puffed by the tears that had come streaming down
Wailing all around
But there was no body to be found
Maity had reported how Krishna her husband had been dragged away
By the tigress while for crab they were fishing
Did those who relished the dish even know the sacrifice that brought it to their table
Not the time to surmise
Caught in a bind was Shanti
Report the death and be quizzed
What was he doing in the jungle
Do not report and wonder how to live
It seemed the two parties had found a way
Tigress had strayed
Compensation allowed
No further questions asked
A life of loneliness in which to bask
The story was very much the same in other Parks and Sanctuaries too
Different flavours though
Reflecting the diversity
Mohan looked at the file on the red rose of Shalimar
What had all this to do with that
The colour red filled them all
Yet other colours had their own space too
Green, yellow orange
Across the spectrum flew
Did the centre even understand
How red has coursed through
Water finds its own way
But blood is thicker than water
So will it not get congealed
There is a place for this
Allowing open wounds to heal
And the ones inside what about them
The turn the body blue
Different hues marking different states
What colour they finally take decides one fate
Shanti stared out into the stars
Looking at a part of the Milky Way
Just specks they were puncturing the darkness
Yet in them hope one did see
Just like the story of the ant and the bee
The forests of Sundarban still yielded up honey

As did other forests too
The Soligas of BRTS had a story to tell
Does it ring a bell
Not the time to say all is well

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