

AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE TO THE BIRDWATCHER

And Other Stories



T. Vijayendra

SANGATYA

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Author: T. Vijayendra

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Post Nakre,
Taluk Karkala, Dist. Udupi
Karnataka 576 117
Phone: 08258 205340
Email: t.vijayendra@gmail.com
Blog: t-vijayendra.blogspot.com
Mobile: +91 94907 05634

**For Copies:
Manchi Pustakam**

12-13-439, St. No. 1
Tarnaka, Secunderabad 500017
Email: info@manchipustakam.in
Phone: 040 2701 8652
Mobile: +91 73822 97430

Editor: Sandhya Srinivasan

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PREFACE

My awareness about the environment began with the Bhopal Gas incident in 1984. I began to get involved in the organic farm movement and have stayed on farms on and off for the last twenty years with longer stays in the last ten years. My other sources of environment-consciousness are the field trips that I went on, with other members of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh and the Society to Save the Rocks.

These stories were inspired during my stay on the farms. I am grateful to Lorry Benjamin, Pradeep Patalay, Usha and Shreekumar for tolerating me because my contribution to farm work was practically nil. I am also grateful to various people I met at these farms, who helped me during my stay and listened to my ideas and stories.

I also spent a year at Belgaum and the Nora stories were written there. I am grateful to Nyla Coelho who made it possible for me to stay there and helped me to meet various people.

I used to feel guilty about staying on the farms and contributing so little. A friend has been very gracious and has written a short story about me which reassured me enormously. It appears at the end of the book.

Suresh at Manchi Pustakam, Upender at Ankush and Subbaiah at Charita Impressions have always been available for help in publishing my books. My stay in Hyderabad in the last few years has been possible mainly due to Usha Sriram and Sagar Dhara. Sandhya Srinivasan saw to it they were no gross errors in the text. I am grateful to all of them.

- T. Vijayendra

June 5, 2013

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VANAR JATAKAM

for Shalini

Once upon a time when Brahmadata was the king of Kashi, Bodhisattva was born as the king of the vanars (monkeys) in the forest near his palace.

The king's palace had a huge orchard with mangoes, guavas, bananas, pineapples, pomegranates, grapes and many other varieties of fruits. Every day the Royal Gardener used to take a huge tray of choice fruits to the king. The king sometimes tasted one and sometime tasted another fruit and sent the tray away. A lot of fruits were wasted.

One day the king noticed that that the fruits were fewer and not of good quality. He called the Royal Gardener.

King: Why are the fruits so few and not so good?

Gardener: Sir, the monkeys are coming and destroying a lot of fruits.

King: Why don't you drive them away?

Gardner: It is not easy sir. I and my assistants Hiru, Biru, Ramesh,

Narayan and Malini have tried everything. We shouted, threw stones, beat drums and vessels but nothing helped. Malini even danced with a mirror, reflecting the sun's rays at them, but to no avail. They seemed to be laughing at us.

King: This is a gross disrespect to our rule! Call the Army Chief!

The Army Chief arrived and saluted the King with his sword.

King: The Royal Gardener tells me that there are monkeys in the garden and he can do nothing about it. Go and capture them!

On hearing this Army Chief paled.

Army Chief: Sir! Our soldiers are not trained to capture monkeys. They may be able to kill some of them, though that is also difficult because monkeys can vanish into trees and we cannot pursue them. Still we will try.

Next day the Army Chief arrived with one monkey in chains and several soldiers with him.

King: Congratulations Army Chief! Now tell me, you monkey! Why have you been disobeying my gardeners?

Monkey: I am not your subject and I don't have to obey you or your servants.

King: Who are you then?

Monkey: I am the king of monkeys in Kashi, just as you are the king of human beings in Kashi. You are a king only of human beings. There are millions of insects, thousands of fishes, birds, and mammals who are not your subjects. We do not obey you.

King: But my soldiers have managed to capture you and I am going to punish you.

Monkey: Ha! Your soldiers capturing me! They could not have captured me in a million years, though they may have killed me. I voluntarily came to see you. But your soldiers are so scared of

me that they put me in chains.

King (turning to the Army Chief): Is it true?

Army Chief (sheepishly): Yes sir. My soldiers shot a few arrows but all the monkeys vanished, climbing up and hiding behind leaves. This monkey jumped down and came towards me. My soldiers moved to kill him thinking that he was going to attack me. In a flash this monkey picked up a spear from one of the soldiers and whirled round and round like a hurricane and my soldiers fell back. Then he threw the spear at my feet and ordered me, "Take me to your king". As a precaution I got him tied up with chains.

King: I see. (Turning towards the monkey) So how should I treat you?

Monkey: Just as one king treats another king.

King: Yes. You are quite right! (Turning to the Army Chief), Untie him and take him to the Royal Guest House and treat him as a Royal Guest. We will meet tomorrow.

Next day the monkey was brought to the Court.

King: Welcome Sir! I hope you had a nice rest and I hope my cooks have fed you well.

Monkey: Thank you. I have been well taken care off.

King: Now tell me why your people are raiding my garden?

Monkey: As I told you yesterday, you are only the king of human beings. The garden and all the Plant Kingdom do not belong to you.

King: But our people cleared the forest, planted the garden and have taken care of the trees.

Monkey: Yes. They violated the forest. The Plant Kingdom creates

food for itself and for all other living beings. Everybody has a share in it. Humans are trying to take more than their share by force and harming all others on the earth.

Yes you can grow the food you need. But only that belongs to you which you eat. Grow and take only what you need. But do not clear the forest. The forest and the Earth belong to everyone. You are not its ruler.

King: (getting up from his throne) You are a wise person Sir! I bow to you.

The whole Court got up and bowed. Slowly a haze grew around the monkey and they saw the monkey vanish and the Buddha sitting cross legged with a smile on his face. The whole Court bowed. The image vanished.



AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE TO THE BIRDWATCHER

for Usha and Anu

*If man grows wings and learns to fly,
it doesn't mean that he will become as intelligent as a crow.*

The Owl's Treasury of Quotations

It was sunset time at the old banyan tree. The birds were returning and the owls were flying out, catching their first mosquitoes for breakfast. The sky was changing colour every minute.

At the banyan tree there was a lot of excitement because the teacher of the day had not arrived and everybody was chatting. Yes, it was the school hour. The bird school starts at sunset and goes on till dark when everybody falls asleep including the teacher. Another thing about the school is that every bird irrespective of age attends it every day. The birds' working day begins at sunrise when they go out for breakfast and sometimes when their babies are young, they have to bring back food home also. The rest of the day is spent flying about, snoozing, and eating. In the evening, just before sunset they have a last round of flying and then they come to the school.

There was a lot of excitement as Uncle Kak, the crow was due to take the class. His subject was 'Manwatching' and he was going to talk about 'Watching the Bird Watcher'. Older birds, who had attended the lecture last year, had told the young birds that it was the funniest lecture of the whole school year!

Uncle Kak finally arrived. He apologized saying, 'I got delayed because I saw two young bird watchers. Since I was going to talk about them, I thought it would be a good introduction. And sure enough, one of them said, 'Look at the beautiful sun turning orange!' and immediately both of them raised their binoculars to their eyes. Within seconds they were howling, their eyes streaming with tears. I nearly doubled up laughing.

He continued, 'Binoculars are devices which concentrates light, making distant objects appearing nearer by magnifying them.. The golden rule about binoculars is that one should never look at the Sun through it as along with the Sun it also brings intense radiation, making the eyes water. It is like if the Owl or the Cat, the night animals, looked at the Sun with their eyes fully open, they would go blind. But the animals never do such foolish things.'

'And that brings us to our topic of the day, 'Watching the Birdwatcher'. As you know it is a part of the course on 'Manwatching'. So before we proceed let us say a few general things about Man.'

'Man is the stupidest specie as we saw from the birdwatcher with binoculars. Why study them? Because by studying them we can avoid being stupid. Also looking at stupid creatures and their antics is a very enjoyable occupation and I never tire of watching and laughing at them'.

'But stupid creatures are also dangerous and man is the most dangerous creature on the planet. What is more he is increasingly becoming more dangerous and may even destroy himself and in the process may destroy many of us.'

‘Every year in the ‘Birds’ Council’ somebody proposes declaring a war on Man in collaboration with other animals. This year one of them even quoted a film made by Man called ‘Avatar’. You see all men are not stupid. Some do know how stupid they are and they are wise’.

Every year the proposal gets rejected because of the ‘Golden Rule of the Animal Kingdom: Never kill unless you are hungry!’ Secondly who wants to eat Man? Even the vultures, most of them being destroyed by man, rejected Man., even though they are experts in eating dead carcass even after it has rotted. Even earthworms, who can handle large quantities, rejected Man. They said they couldn’t handle such large quantities of same food. They like variety.

‘So we are stuck with man. Let us hope, the wise among them may save them. Meanwhile we can enjoy them and learn to protect ourselves’.

At this point a female sparrow squeaked. ‘Sir, may I ask a question? Why do you keep on saying ‘man’ and ‘he’? How about ‘woman’ and ‘she’?

Uncle Kak replied, ‘Good question. As a rule the female of the specie is less stupid, though not always so. The wise among them that I referred to above are mostly women. Then many children are also wise. It is them, the women and children, who may save mankind. So the Golden Rule about Manwatching is, particularly when we are playing games with them to harass them, leave women and children alone. In this course I will introduce many games during our field trips to ‘watch the birdwatcher’, as I have done in other parts of Manwatching course.

So do we know why we watch men? We learn from their stupidity and protect ourselves. Why do we watch the birdwatcher? I am afraid there is no ‘educational’ value in it. It is pure ‘fun and games’. Among all the stupid men few are more stupid than the

birdwatchers. The only saving grace is that they are harmless. So in a sense they are 'wise' in their stupid ways. As a rule you don't have to protect yourself from them. And as you will see in your field visits, they may have to learn to protect themselves because they are visiting unfamiliar terrains.

Why do men watch birds? They think they do it for pleasure and education. But I think actually they are envious of us. All of them envy our ability to fly. It is evident in their sports. In all non team events, where there is no adversary, in sports like high jump, long jump, discus throw, javelin throw, archery and so on there is an element of flying. And of course kite flying is a universal sport!

Secondly they are envious of our colours. They and in fact most mammals are colourless – various shades of brown and grey. Men love to watch colours, be it flowers, butterflies or birds. They even adorn themselves with colourful flowers and clothes, though frankly they look quite ridiculous.

And finally they are scared of silence. Every silence in the wild means a stalking tiger or wild elephants moving. Birds, as you know, love to chatter, call each other, sing and are generally noisy – unless of course if they are birds of prey or owls who hunt silently. Men feel safe with birds. Birds don't come and bite like mosquitoes, slither silently like snakes or bite like scorpions when they are disturbed. Birds are nice, noisy and safe to watch. And they are beautiful!

It was dark outside and stars came out. All the birds began drooping. The younger ones were pleased to hear about how beautiful they were. Silence fell. Everyone was asleep.



NORA AND HER DOGS

for Usha Sriram

Nora is feral. Like Mowgli. When she was born, Lara, the family dog came and immediately adopted her. She licked her all over and was ready to lift her in her mouth and take her to her 'home' in the garden. She was finally persuaded that this 'baby' had to be inside the house.

In a few months Nora was crawling towards Lara. Meanwhile Lara decided to have her own puppies. Predictably, Lara moved her puppies to Nora's room. When the puppies were feeding Nora would also crawl to Lara and tried to reach one of her teats.

There was a succession of dogs in Nora's life. After Lara came Lobo the Labrador. Nora was walking around and was of same height as Lobo. They moved around the ground and she chatted with Lobo endlessly. Lobo patiently listened and once in a while replied. Then they began to explore outside the garden. The river, Chinnaprabha, a small tributary of Malprabha, was not too far. In summer it split into several small streams with sand islands in between and pools of water within the islands.

One evening Nora was missing even after it got dark. However the family was not unduly worried because Lobo was also missing. They went out with torches, calling Lobo. Near the river front they heard Lobo's reply from somewhere in the middle of the river. Every one apprehensively crossed the shallow river. In one of the islands Nora was playing in the pool and calling out to Lobo to join in. Lobo, forever dignified, refused to get wet and muddy.

Around this time Nora was given her own plate to eat from. She would take her plate outside and sit in a secluded corner of the garden. She had learnt this from the dogs and other animals that always treated eating as a private affair to be enjoyed alone. She wouldn't let even Lobo come near her. To this day she found it difficult to eat with people on a table.

After Lobo came Wolfie. By now Nora was seven and was wandering in and out of her class in school. Her mother was a teacher in the school so no one scolded her. She used to eat her tiffin alone behind a bush and refused to join other children. This way she avoided all fights.

After school, Nora would fling her bags and wander off to the forest with Wolfie. Bilgram reserve forest was within a kilometre and she and Wolfie would explore every corner. Nora had acquired a sling and she collected choice round stones from the



river bed. She soon became an expert at bringing guavas and other choice fruit down. Wolfie would faithfully bring it back from the bushes where the fruit was fallen and give it to her. Once in a while she shot a bird just to please Wolfie. Wolfie would bring it to her but she would give back

to him to eat. Then Wolfie would vanish for about a quarter an hour and come back licking his jaws satisfactorily.

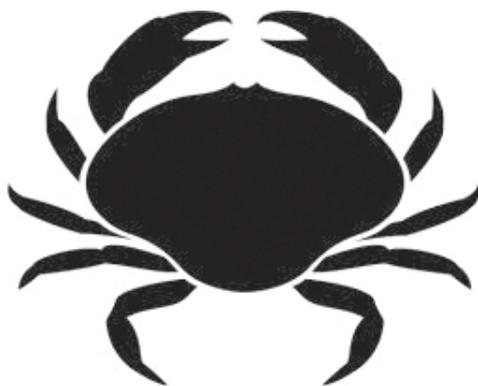
In winter they would pick up custard apples and Nora would put the pulp in one side of the mouth and from the other spit out the seeds expertly. Once, her brother traced her by the trail of custard apple seeds. She treated fish the same way. Sea fish would of course vanish completely unless her cat was sitting next to her. Then she put her fingers between her teeth and jaws and pulled out a wad of mashed fish bones. With river fish she would leave the entire back bone clean and give it to her cat.

Nora would often climb trees and stay up there for hours. Once she saw an important looking big man in a sola hat resting under her tree. Nora got curious and began to get ready to jump down. This frightened the important person no end thinking it was a panther or tiger ready to jump. To his relief he saw two legs dangling and then a girl of 8 jumped down. He was so frightened that he blurted out, 'Who are you?' Before he completed his sentence, wondering about whether he child would understand English, Nora rudely asked, 'What you doing in my forest, man? Poaching eh?' This surprised him even more. He explained that he was Professor Mohan Gaitonde of Pune University studying bio diversity of the Bilgram reserve forest. He went on to explain the meaning of bio diversity. Nora said, 'Why you wasting time man? Wolfie and I know everything' and she put her fingers in her mouth and produced a piercing whistle. The professor jumped back when Wolfie came bounding in.

Then the professor asked if she and Wolfie would help him. She said he would have to ask her mother. So they went to her home and the Prof. discussed the matter with Nora's mother. It was agreed that the Prof. would arrange a scholarship for her while she was in school, provided she was promoted every year, and would also later help her to join the university. The mother was

happy that this way at least Nora would study a little bit and pass her exams.

They finished the bio diversity survey in record time. The professor kept his word and wrote to her regularly sending a large number of children's books on nature and conservation. Today Nora has an enviable library on nature encompassing all levels, from children's books to professional books. Nora ended doing her M.Sc. in Zoology from the Pune University but refused to be drawn into a Ph. D. programme.



AUNT JESSICA'S VISIT

for Nyla Coelho

Nora's mother warned Nora about Aunt Jessica's visit.

'Aunt Jessica is visiting us from Mangalore. She is a very devout Christian. You be on your best behaviour!'

Nora's father fetched Aunt Jessica from the railway station. She had two bags, a handbag and a snow white crocheted shawl on her shoulders. She took out packets of cashew, coconut sweets, banana chips, and jack fruit chips for the children.

Nora's father also bought crabs because Aunt Jessica loved seafood. At lunch they had crab curry, rice, and dry Ladies Fingers and curd. Auntie daintily picked a piece of crab, sucked the juice out and put it on a side plate and ate a little bit of rice. With a satisfied grunt she looked up and started to say how nice the food was. Then she looked at Nora's plate. It was wiped clean! She was surprised and asked,

'Have you finished?'

'No I am waiting for a second helping'

‘Where did you put the bones?’

‘What bones?’ Nora asked very surprised.

‘The crab bones child.’

‘Auntie Crabs don’t have bones. They have exoskeletons. They are crustaceans.’ Nora explained patiently.

‘Ok. Bones or whatever. What did you do with them?’

‘Why I ate them. I always do. They have high calcium content.’

Auntie looked around. No one was surprised. Then she asked,

‘Where did you learn all this?’

‘Mama teaches biology in school. I have a nice colour book on crabs. It has nice picture of mating habits of crabs. Shall I bring it to show you?’

Auntie turned red and hastily said,

‘Not at the dining table child, not at the dining table!’

‘Why not? Mama says that the dining table is the family school.’

At this Nora’s mother took pity on Jessica. She said,

‘Nora, fill your plate and go out’.

She turned to Jessica and asked her to have more crabs, since she seemed to like them so much. But Jessica had had enough of crabs, their habits and for that matter of the family.

She said that she was tired and would like to retire early.

The next morning saw her setting out early to the railway station booking counter for a tatkal return ticket, so that she could return home immediately.



SAINT NORA AND THE MIDNIGHT MASS

for Sara Jolly

Nora was grumbling. Why should Christmas come! It was Christmas Eve and she had to get up at four in the morning. As she was dressing up for a trip to the forests, the seven dogs began to get excited. They knew by the smell of her boots that a trip to the forest was in the offing. They all set out with a couple of bags on Nora's shoulders to the Bilgram reserve forest, of which Nora was an honorary warden.

They reached the shrubs and Nora chose her favourite flat black stone slab and began to unpack. The dogs knew what they had to do. They surrounded a ten foot wide shrub, started barking and ferreted out a hare and triumphantly brought it to Nora. Nora got her knives and began skinning the hare while the dogs went for more. Within half an hour they had four hares skinned and bagged. The dogs got a few bones and Nora buried the skin and the offal. By six they were home.

Nora slept for an hour and then got up and made herself a coffee. Then she put two cauldrons on the fire – one for the dogs, with all

the bones and other pieces unwanted for humans. In the other she put an Irish stew also known as the Welsh rabbit stew. This done she went for another snooze because she knew it was going to be a long day and she had better snatch any sleep she can get. Little did she know how long it was going to be. After an hour she got up bathed, ate, fed the dogs and had another snooze. Then in the evening they all (all the seven dogs) went to the children's party. The dogs had great fun!

By ten in the night they all went to see the Christian Morality play and for the midnight mass. Nora told the dogs to stay outside and not to stir till people came out. The Father's drone in any case put the dogs to sleep. They woke when the father was admonishing the non believers not to take the communion. Then as the wine and bread was passed around he spoke about the blood and the body of Christ being represented by the wine and the bread and that for the true believers it was actually the blood and the body. This woke up the dogs and when the communion reached near the door, the dogs got the smell of the blood and the body and came yapping in, much to the dismay of the congregation. Nora understood immediately and asked the dogs to heel, quickly put her piece of bread soaked in the wine in her sample box and went home. There she took out a bottle of wine and dissolved the sample into it and then soaked a large bread with it.

She went out with the dogs to the forest. There was bright moon. With her back to the moon Nora did the communion with the dogs, because she understood that the dogs were the true believers. Then she told them the story of Jesus. The dogs sat patiently in a half circle bathed in the moon light and listened to the story. A passerby, who was drunk, later said that there was a halo around Nora's head. May be it was just the moonlight shining through her hair!

Christmas December 25, 2010



MOTHER TERESA

*for Keerti Jayaram and Rabia,
Ilina Sen and Pranhita and Aparajita,
Lorry Benjamin and Kuki*

Nora knew it was a Drongo call. There was a sense of urgency in it but it was not its usual alarm call. In fact it was imitating somebody. Nora again listened carefully. And her heart stopped. There was this faint other call – no it couldn't be - but it did sound like a baby crying. Nora became impatiently patient. She very carefully skirted the bush on which the Drongo was sitting. To her surprise the bird didn't fly away. In fact it was watching Nora. By the time Nora reached the back of the bush, the cry was louder. She found a new born baby wrapped in a torn sari with ants crawling over it.

Nora took out her water bottle and wet her small hand towel and carefully wiped the baby and removed the ants. But the baby was hungry and Nora did not dare leave the baby or take him to a village. She was on her way to her weekly wolf watch. Before she was conscious of it, she knew what she was going to do.

Nora reached the wolf lair. As usual the wolf babies were playing the attack game on their father who very patiently tolerated their bites. Nora boldly approached them. They stopped playing but did not run away. They had been seeing Nora for months though she had never come close to them so boldly. Nora carefully placed the baby near them and walked back some distance to her usual watching place on top of the rock.

She was at once apprehensive and sure. She had read Kipling's Mowgli as a child and loved it. As a grown up zoologist she was sceptical and scared. Then the mother wolf came out of the lair and it was as if the Mowgli story was all true! She picked the baby by the scruff of its neck and took it back inside the cave.

The baby was safe for the time being. But something had to be done for its future. Slowly a plan emerged in Nora's mind. Nora decided to go back to town to pick up some essentials for the baby.

She came back with a portable gas cylinder, baby milk powder and some bedding. She decided to camp in a nearby cave. Now the problem was to get the baby back. She went near the wolf cave and sat down patiently. Soon the mother wolf brought the baby out holding it by the scruff of its neck. Nora took the baby to her cave, boiled some water and made the milk and fed the baby. The baby was soon fast asleep. She again fed the baby in the evening and as the birds began returning to their roosting trees; Nora deposited the baby back to the mother wolf, telling her she would come back the next day.



Slowly a pattern emerged and life acquired its rhythm. The baby boy who was christened Michael to resemble Mowgli, played with wolf kids most of the day and spent the night in their cave. He came to Nora's cave only when was hungry.

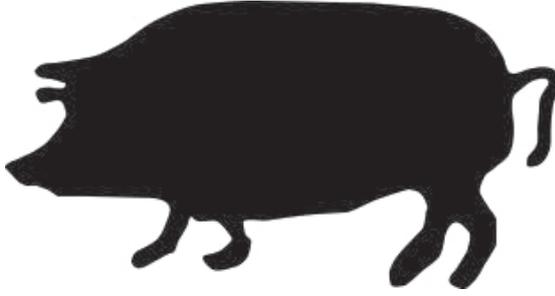
After a year Nora took the baby to the church and told the priest the whole story. At first he was aghast, but he knew Nora well and did not suspect that it was her illegitimate child. He agreed to christen the baby as Michael Nero Wolfe and organised a birth certificate with the Mission Hospital stating Carmen Wolfe as his mother and Nero Wolfe as his father, from the village Khapori. Nora told the neighbours that it was a poor cousin's baby and that she has decided to help bring up the child.

The baby began to stay at Nora's place in Bilgram but did not like to wear clothes. Nora put him in singlets in summer and winter and Michael was quite happy. Nora resumed her weekly wolf watch and took Michael with her, and he happily joined his cousins.

Michael joined school and soon was riding his bicycle everywhere and people began to call him Michael the cycle. Time flew and before any one realized it, Michael the cycle became Mike the bike, zooming around town on his 100 cc bike. Mike did his B.Sc. in environmental sciences and plans to work with wild life.

Easter

24. 04. 2011



HUMANURE IN BILGRAM

for Vinayak, Karnika, Chetana and Soujanya

World Environment Day

Somewhere in North Karnataka there is this taluk town called Bilgram. The town grew around an army cantonment during the British times more than hundred years ago. So it has tree lined streets, and bungalows with gardens having old trees. There is an 'Institute' area where there was once a club and a theatre which showed foreign movies and even had a bar. Near it there is a market where you could buy everything. There are many old churches, mosques and temples. The people here speak Kannada, Marathi, Dakhni, Konkani and English.

The town has an environmental group called Prakruti. Nora Caravallho is the secretary and is the heart and soul of it. Apart from her in the group, there is a naturalist, an animal lover, a photographer, a doctor, a trade unionist and a journalist. Prakruti does several things. They have environment education programmes in school and help run eco clubs in schools. In the

town they have an anti plastic bag campaign and a roof top rain water harvesting programme.

They have good links with the surrounding villages. They have adopted a few villages which have been involved in organic farming through some old Gandhians. The rural programme of these Gandhians also had some tank restoration programmes, planting trees etc. Prakruti buys all the surplus of the adopted villages and it is distributed among the members of the group and friends. Apart from grains etc. Prakruti also buys value added products like Ragi malt, chutneys and pickles that a village group produces.

On the World Environment Day they had a whole day programme. It was organised in the Kala Bhavan - the District Theatre building. Outside in the grounds there was a shamiana and it had a photo exhibition and stalls. The photo exhibitions had mainly enlarged photographs of nature taken by Murali, the photographer of the Prakruti group. There were also some photographs villagers harvesting millets and making pickles and ragi malt. There were stalls that sold organic grains, there were others that sold organic ragi malt, pickles etc. Food shops sold organic millet based food and one stall gave meat curries with organic food. There was a bookshop which sold books on organic farming and children's books on environment and wildlife.

Inside the hall inaugural songs, lectures etc. went on. They also had a carbon foot print workshop conducted by Katyayani, Chandirka and Lavanya from Apis Foundation, Hyderabad. These three young women were dressed for the occasion and every body's eyes were upon them. Katyayani was in pink shoes, tight black pants and a canary yellow top with wide collars. Chandrika was in riding breaches with a white embroidered top. Lavanya

was in a wide big black skirt and a pink top and sandals. They were fluttering about like butterflies and buzzing like honey bees.

Before closing Nora said, 'Among the guest today we have our friends from the villages who have been providing us organic food. I would ask Shree Keshav to give us a feed back and tell us what we city people can give to the villages'

Keshav said, 'I am grateful to Nora Akka for inviting me. I am very happy to be here among all you city folks. I have spent the whole day very happily watching all these clean and bright young people who are so concerned about the environment and village people.'

'I am very happy to see that our organic products are so popular among you. I heard about fair trade and that you people want to pay us good prices for our healthy organic products. Well that is nice. We can provide you as much organic products as you like.'

'Nora Akka asked me what the city people can give to help the villagers.'

'Today I looked around and tried to find what I can take it back from here. I found there is nothing. I began thinking what you people have that we may take. I find that you have something which is very valuable to us – almost as valuable as gold if not more. I am referring to what your school children call number one and number two (laughter). Why don't you send it to us? It is more valuable than the money that you promise as fair trade.'

'These bright young women from Hyderabad can tell us how many thousand litres of urine (piss) and how many tons of human excreta (shit) you people produce every day. Our village has only thousand people whereas you have a hundred thousand people. So you people produce a hundred times more this valuable source of fertiliser. But you city people do not recognise it. Almost all of it is wasted and goes down expensive drains to pollute rivers and lakes and surrounding regions.'

‘I also noticed that in the city you people burn leaf fall in the gardens. Then there is a lot of biodegradable waste that is put in plastic bags and allowed to rot. Now all that you have to do is to mix this biomass and your shit and piss and turn it into first class manure. Can you do it? This is the only thing that you city people can give to us villagers in return for the food we produce for you. Thank you.’

The Humanure Project

Nora was very upset by Keshav’s remarks on the World Environment Day in Bilgram. She could not blame him for it because what he said was quite true. Nor could she ignore it.

Nora called a meeting of two young people Eva and Raju who had done a project on solid waste management in their school. They told her that the solution lay in collecting urine and diluting it 20 times as it could then be directly used on plants. In making the shit available, the answer lies in composting it. They also added that urban middle class houses are connected with a drain and they will not change to composting latrines or collecting the urine. They said we have to go to the poor people who do not have latrines. Nora was acutely aware that once again the middle class does the awareness building whereas when we have to actually change the world we have to go to poor people.

They chose Kabir Nagar, the power loom weavers colony where they had been demanding latrines from the municipality. They contacted the municipality and got permission to build latrines in the city garden next to the colony.

The garden was in a bad shape. Its boundary wall was broken at places, goats and cows were grazing on what little grass that was left and people were using the ground as open latrines. Eva and Raju started with children’s festival and organised games and activities. They also started a mobile library where children exchanged books on a weekly basis. Then they started a children’s

eco club and explained their plan to build ecological latrines and urinals. They made work groups with children and began to start the work of sanitation step by step.

First they began to repair the wall and get the water connection to the garden restored. Slowly they began to plan the garden. They marked out areas for building the compost heaps, the nurseries and vegetable plots. There were old trees in the garden and had a lot of leaf fall. In the area marked for compost heaps they started collecting leaf fall. They brought seeds and planted some directly and some in nursery bags and watered them.

Then they constructed the urinals in such a way that all the urine was collected. Everybody who used the urinals was paid by a yellow plastic token that could be exchanged in a shop for 10 paise that sold sweets and school stationery. Initially some children even cheated by making frequent unproductive trips to the urinals. But soon other children reported this and it was discussed and gradually stopped.

They diluted the urine 20 times and began to sprinkle it on the plants and on the leaf fall. They also began to collect all the dog shit and even human shit after covering them with dust and leaf. This also they put in the leaf heap.

The next step was the difficult one. They consulted old latrine workers and Gandhians who knew the whole field of community latrines. The problem was that they wanted to make a humanure dry latrine where only a little water was used for washing and not for draining the shit out. The idea was to collect it in a bucket, cover it with dry leaf powder and transport it to the compost heap. Now a whole generation has gone through abolishing such a system in the name of removing untouchability. To reintroduce the system with all the precaution and good science was difficult socially.

So they first built only 4 latrines, two each for men and women. Within each set of two latrines, one was built with a seat for elderly people who found it difficult to squat. They bought 8 buckets, painted them white and fixed wooden handles on them. Each user was paid with a brown plastic token which could be exchanged in the shop for 25 paise.

Once again initially children used it. Then the elderly and women came. In the latrine there was pictorial instruction to put a handful of crushed leaf after the job was done from the wooden trough that was kept there. Since so little water was used the place was dry and clean. There was no smell because it was covered with crushed leaf.

The next part was the real difficult part. They had to remove the bucket, replace it with fresh one, put all the 4 buckets in a small trolley, carry it to the compost heap, remove a bit of compost from the centre and empty the bucket into it. Actually it was quite simple, but initially everyone was hesitant to handle shit. It was Nora, Eva and Raju who themselves took the initiative and did it. After emptying it was covered with more leaf and other biomass. Finally the bucket was washed and the water was sprinkled over the compost heap.

Soon people got used to this extra clean toilet without water and every one began to use it. Two persons (one man and one woman) were employed to empty the buckets and sweep the toilets regularly. After some time they built another unit of 4 latrines and one unit was exclusively for women and one was for men.

Meanwhile the compost heap was growing in numbers and after the first three months they began to 'harvest' one heap a week. At the end of the year the team and some children hired a small truck, loaded it with the compost and went to Keshav's village. They were given a warm welcome and a feast was organised for them. They came back with a truck load of fruits, grains, vegetables

and fresh eggs. They opened an organic shop in the garden and sold them.

Reading Aloud and Ping! Goes the plastic

The Humanure Project at Kabir Nagar Public Garden succeeded in many ways. The organic shop in the garden was stabilised and was run by the Makkala Sangha – the Children’s Association. The system of yellow and brown tokens stopped as people realised the value of a clean toilet. In fact outside visitors paid for the use of it.

The Prakruti group members began to visit regularly and spread the word about humanure toilets. Soon some people who had large gardens and were facing the problem of providing toilets for their servants approached them. They were asked to send their servants to study the system and if they liked it then the servants themselves should build it and run it. The house owner of course had to provide the money for it. The senior members of the Makkala Sangha took up the contract and earned Rs. 1000 per humanure toilet.

The children’s library had acquired nearly 3000 titles because one of the Prakruti members was a retired librarian and helped acquire the books. The books were acquired by starting a bookshop run by the children. The Library and the bookshop both were called Makkala Sahitya Bhandar (MSB). This enabled them to get discounts and they also sold a few books every day during the library hour. A children’s cultural centre came called Makkala Mane. This had one large hall which contained the books in shelves and surrounded by a covered space.

Eva and Raju often dropped in during the library hour and discussed various environment-related issues. The issue of urban food waste wrapped in plastic carry bags was often discussed. In Kabir Nagar itself children managed to stop the practice in a big way but in the town shopkeepers complained the people demanded carry bags. Only in medical shops they started using

small brown paper bags. Raju got the idea of making these bags with old news papers. MSB produced some samples of 4”*6” size and the medical shops said that they would pay Rs.10 for 100 bags. Within a couple of weeks many children were producing 100 bags in an hour and half and got paid Rs.8 for it by MSB. One day Eva suggested making the bags at Makkala Mane in a group. Some 7 children came and they produced 1000 bags in a little above an hour. All this was done while the children were chatting, getting up and coming back etc. Everybody was paid Rs.10 and MSB kept Rs.30 for future use.

One day Eva read a story to them while they were making the bags. Soon these read aloud session became regular. Then the senior members suggested that the person reading should also be paid RS.10 since they were saving Rs.30. On days Eva did not come some child would read or some time even just sing. They began to read everything that came, story books, newspapers, booklets and pamphlets on environment, corruption, on Save the Deccan and so on.

One day Nora, the secretary of Prakruti, came by and listened to the read aloud sessions. As the read aloud session went on droning, her mind wandered. She dreamt of plastic bags fly about lazily and the paper bags following them and ping! The plastic bag would vanish!

Enter the Grandma

Soon the group ran out of reading material. They tried out performances by children but it did not work. Then one child, Rahmet said that his grandmother could tell nice stories in Dakhni. So they called her and she told them so many funny stories with strong Dakhni flavour that children had to hold their stomachs while laughing. Reshma Chachi was also pleased with her earnings of Rs. 10 per session. No one had ever paid her for telling stories!

It was not long before they found story tellers in Kannada and

Marathi. All the children knew all the three languages and they had a great variety. Nora started recording these stories with the idea of transcribing them.

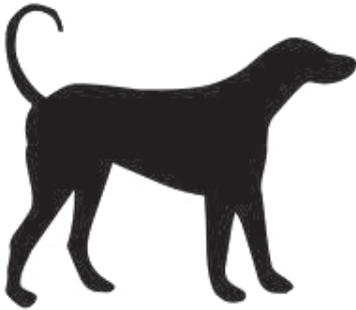
One day a wandering ventriloquist came and he was so talented! He could imitate dogs fighting, cock fighting, baby crying - anything you asked, he would perform immediately. He was very poor and in rags. The children decided to pay him double their rate, that is, they paid him Rs.20!

The Dog Department

Katyayani and Chandrika from Hyderabad heard about all these activities of Makkal Mane and decided to pay a visit. They walked in the Kabir Nagar Public Park and immediately several dogs surrounded them barking furiously at them. Nora, Eva, Raju and the children got a bit alarmed thinking that their guests would be frightened. But both of them were completely at ease and started talking and scolding the dogs.

Both of them moved to the Neem tree around which a platform was built. They sat on it and Katyayani brought out a pendant from her bag. She identified the top dog, called him Sheru and began to move the pendant slowly. Sheru got hypnotised and sat down on his haunches. Other dogs followed suit and sat down in a semi circle around Katyayani, very quiet and expectant.

Katyayani told the dogs about her first dog, a pup that was kicked very hard by a cruel man. She brought it home. Then she told



them all the stories of various dogs she had ending up with her current dog Noty. In the end she brought a pack of biscuit and gave one to each of the dog and told them to go and play. The dogs happily scampered away.

But where was Chandrika? She was under another tree surrounded by cats and telling them her story about the 70 cats that were born in her house. She ended up telling the story of Fanta and Pepsi, two of her cats. ‘Once Fanta’s sister Pepsi was tied up in a sack by my neighbour and abandoned in a neighbouring town. Imagine our surprise when it showed up at our door a few days later all wretched and howling! It was a heartening moment. Pepsi was a playful mischievous cat while Fanta was the sober motherly one.’ She also told them about Pepsi and its crazy games. She got up and the cats were around her legs, rubbing themselves and tumbling all over. With an effort she shooed them away.

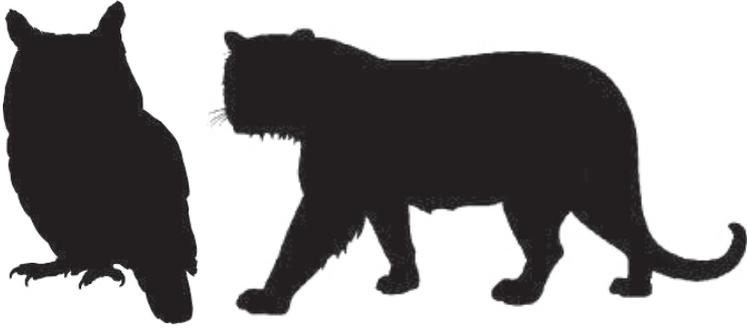


The guests finally entered the Makkal Mane Room and had a nice long chat. The children were very curious about their ability to relate with cats and dogs. They explained that they could make friends with any dog and cat because they had loved them since their childhood and had several dogs and cats as pets in their life. They explained that everyone should love them and have them as friends and pets. “The cats and dogs are domestic animals, like cows, buffaloes, horses and donkeys. Humans have separated them from their wild life origin thousands of years ago. Now they cannot survive without human help. So we cannot leave them on their own. If we do they will be starving and ill. There is also a danger that their illness can make us ill. So it is our duty to take care of them. If we cannot, or if they become too old or ill than we should kill them”, they said.

They also told the children to adopt a dog in their street. Then they would all have a friend and the dogs would be well fed and healthy, and looked after.

Then some children said that they already had a dog and it was great to have a dog. Then Eva talked about her dog and suggested that every member of Makkala Mane should have a dog. Everybody agreed. Some were afraid of dogs but were told, "Once you have your dog you won't be afraid". Nora said that she would arrange with Dr. Barpute, a dog doctor to have all the dogs examined and made safe.

June 5, 2011



THE TRUE STORY OF THE ENSLAVEMENT OF MAN

for Hope Rainbow and Shreekumar

Tiger went to the owl and asked: 'Why does Man drink so much water?'

Owl: 'Because he is so unhappy!'¹

Tiger: 'But why is he so unhappy?'

Owl: 'That is a long story.'

Tiger: 'Tell me.'

Owl: 'No! We will go the animals who know it better.'

Tiger: 'Where shall we go?'

Owl: 'We will first go the wolf whose cousin dog is Man's oldest friend.'

The owl and the tiger went to the Bilgram reserve forest and reached the wolf's lair. The wolf was lying in the Sun and his cubs were attacking him. Once in a while the wolf would lift his paw

and give the nearest cub a cuff on his ears. At the sight of the tiger the cubs fell silent and the wolf raised his head. The mama wolf came out of the lair and stood protectively next to the cubs. But when they saw the tiger leisurely walking down and the owl flying down they were relaxed.

The tiger asked the wolf: ‘Why is Man so unhappy?’

Wolf: ‘Because he is a slave?’

Tiger: ‘Really! Who is his master?’

Wolf: ‘There are several. But the first master was our cousin the dog.’

Tiger: ‘How did it happen?’

Wolf: ‘Long long ago Man was free. We used to hunt him sometimes, because he could not run very fast. But his meat was not very good. Then he invented fire and he himself hunted. We used to wait till the fire died and then attack his pack, kill him and take away his hunt.’

‘Once one of our cubs was left behind and the Man instead of killing him adopted him. At first it was good for Man because the cub barked in the night when any animal came close by. So Man began to keep several cubs. He fed them and they guarded him in the night. Soon the cubs, whom the Man called dog grew and multiplied. Man kept on feeding them. Before he realised he was working extra hard to hunt to feed the dogs. He and his children got very attached to the dogs. The dogs went everywhere with him and helped to hunt. At other times they played with the kids or just slept. Slowly more wolves found that it was easy living with man and more joined him. Man had to work extra hard to feed all of them. He drank more water and ate more to keep going.’

‘Over the years the dogs lost a lot of skills the wolves have. They became perpetual juveniles, always begging for food like our cubs.

They were also bad parents because they themselves were immature and could not teach hunting skills to their pups the way our cubs learn. They just became his friends and companions. We often tell our cubs, don't be like a dog, grow up!

'In the beginning we used to steal some of our cubs back. But with agriculture and growing abundance of plant food the dogs became pretty useless. After all we wolves are carnivores. Dogs eating bread and rice have hardly any pluck left in them.'

'Today a dog hardly does any work. He neither guards nor helps Man in his hunt. He just begs for food, plays and sleeps. We feel quite ashamed to call him our cousin. And the Man! He foolishly hunts more, gathers more and feeds the dogs. He has become a slave to the dogs.'

Tiger: 'Thank you for telling. I will keep away from Man. Who are his other masters?'

Wolf: 'As I said there are several and the owl can tell you more. As far as I know the next master was the horse.'

The owl and the tiger went to a wild horse in Australia because there are very few wild horses left in the world. Here the story was similar but the horse did not become as useless as the dog. He helped man ride him and move much faster, dragged his carts and his plough. In return Man had to work extra hard to produce food for the horse. However in the last hundred years with petrol cars and trains, the horse also became useless and now he mainly runs races for amusement and gambling for Man. And of course Man works extra hard to keep the horses, race track, gambling and so on.

The story of goats and sheep was different. They gave him meat and wool but he had to work even harder to graze them and later even produce food for them. With agriculture and cotton the

sheep wool became less important but the sheep remained with Man. Today in many places Man produces food for goat and sheep, feeds them in stalls, slaughter them in factories, tin the meat and then eat them after several days or even months! And all this means lot more work.

Tiger said: 'I still don't understand. It is all very well that man adopted the dog and the horse and then he had to produce more food and then he started agriculture and so on. But why did he do it? Why does man produce food? Why doesn't he hunt like us or just eat fruits like the monkeys and apes? Nobody adopts kids of other species, or drinks milk of others. What made him originally so unhappy?'

Owl: 'Very good question! You have finally learnt to ask good questions!'

Tiger was very abashed at this praise.

'We will go to Ishmael² the Chimpanzee,' the Owl continued, 'Ishmael is the greatest authority on Man.'

Ishmael was sitting on a tree looking very sad. On seeing the tiger and the owl, he welcomed them with a wan smile.

'I was waiting for you. I have been hearing about your journeys across the world trying to solve the riddle of Man.'

'You know,' Ishmael continued, 'the tiger began with a very good question. Why does Man drink so much water?'

At this tiger felt very embarrassed. No one ever praised him so much. He listened eagerly.

'It was the water that did him in.' Ishmael continued, 'No other ape took to the water as he did. It went to his head. Some

evolutionary biologists call him ‘an aquatic ape’! We warned him, but he was happily splashing in; he even learnt to swim. He caught crabs, prawns, even fish and gorged himself.’

‘Then one day he came out dripping and stretched himself erect. The moment he did and before he admired the new view, he said ‘ouch!’ because there was a grinding pain in the lower back.



Well, he took it in his stride and admired the view and himself. He had bifocal vision and could see a long distance away - in front, above, behind and below. But his two legs could not take his weight. They still can't. But he loved the view and practised standing erect and finally he succeeded though his lower back pain still continues. That was the beginning of his unhappiness. The world of apes first laughed their heads off, then pitied him and then gave him up for good.’

‘Days went on. He climbed trees, gathered fruits and tried every way to get back to the old pleasurable ways. Finally the full tragedy dawned on him and made him extremely sad. Thus began the primordial existential angst.’

‘Today I wish instead of laughing at Man we had thrashed him and brought him down to his knees and back to four legs. Alas, that was not to be.’

Once the hand and fingers were developed and the Man could hold things like a stone there was no stopping. He began by adopting the dog. But you already know the story. Then the horse came and then the sheep and the goat.

About 12,000 years ago some grass grains discovered women.

The woman thought she invented agriculture and with this man's enslavement was complete. There was no going back. Draught animals were brought in – the horse, the camel, the bullock and the water buffalo. Many animals were domesticated to feed the growing human race. Agriculture also increased human population. When agriculture began the population was a mere 8 million. In the next 10000 years, at the beginning of the Christian era it became 200 million and in the next 1800 years it rose to a 1000 million or a billion. The next 100 years added another billion and you won't believe it, in the next 110 year it became 7 billion! With so many of them and their domestic animals (there are some 40 species of them) they are eating out the whole Earth endangering the lives of all other living beings and finally including themselves!

At this Ishmael began to cry and sob uncontrollably.

'But there is more to Man's enslavement.' Ishmael continued, 'There is slavery within slavery. With agriculture Man had food which could be stored for months and years. To produce so much one group of men enslaved another group of men. Also with stored food rats came and they ate up a lot of the grains. Then the cat found it so much easier to go to Man and catch one rat per day without running about too much. So the cat domesticated itself partially! So along with exploitation of Nature came 'exploitation of man by man'. This slavery changed its form with such names as slavery, feudalism and capitalism! With each form Man produced more food, more houses and more animals were domesticated. Today man occupies several thousand times his share of the Earth's resources.'

The Tiger was also overwhelmed with this tragedy. He timidly asked, 'Is there any hope for Man?'

'At a fundamental level,' Ishmael said, 'there is no hope. Man cannot go back on four legs. He is doomed to have lower back

pain and be unable to satisfy himself on his own.

‘However there is hope for us. With the end of fossil fuels his rapacious plunder of the Earth will come to an end. But there is a danger. During the interval, he may destroy much of the Earth with increased Carbon Dioxide emissions, thereby increasing the temperature of the Earth. This is called Global Warming. This can reach a tipping point. That is, Global Warming itself may cause more warming and then most life on the Earth will burn out.’

‘There is another level of hope. Today the majority of human beings are slaves and their conditions are terrible. It is possible that the slaves may revolt and bring down the present era of capitalism. Also groups of ruling classes and nations are constantly at war. They may also contribute to bring down capitalism. But time is running out and only a small window of just 10 years is left for this to happen and save the world. Any continuation of present rate of exploitation of natural resource faces the grim reality of end of most life on the Earth. This includes you, the owl and me,’ Ishmael concluded grimly.

Tiger: ‘But if capitalism is brought down soon then isn’t there a lot of hope?’

Ishmael: ‘Yes and no. Yes in the sense that all life on the Earth won’t come to an end and we can look forward to it. But for Man it is a lot more complicated. He has to undo the ‘achievements’ of the last couple of thousand years of civilisation. Civilisation means agriculture, slavery and creation of rubbish. But without agriculture the 7 billion people cannot survive. So he has to develop an agriculture that restores the ecology at the same time. That is, he has to practise agro ecology.’

‘It also means he has to undo many other aspects of civilisation and most aspects of the modern society - the entire war machinery and the armies, the big factories, the cities and so on. All this

requires a fundamental change in attitude. Very few human beings are aware of the problems and fewer know the solution. So the future of Man is open ended. But yes, life on Earth may go on while human beings keep on fighting among themselves and suffering’.

‘And finally, who knows, may be after a chaos of few decades much of civilisation may break down and mankind may recover and come back to their senses. The work of small groups of visionary human beings may bring good results. In stages Man can restore ecology and reduce agriculture and have food similar to the hunter-gatherer stage, that is, no grains, sugar, milk, tea or coffee. Instead he should have fruits, nuts, tubers and vegetables and animal food – eggs, fish, fowl and meat. Some of them working on saving endangered species may succeed and the restored ecology will make all these tasks easier. That will be good for all of us.’

The tiger and the owl thanked Ishmael and the tiger walked back thoughtfully, with the owl on his back. Suddenly the tiger asked: Who are these visionary human beings?

Owl: ‘I was waiting for this question. You are becoming a good researcher! We will go and see them.’

This time their travels took them to the foothills of the Western Ghats and they reached the forest behind the Sangatya Farm. The owl had sent messages through the owl jungle post and everybody was gathered there.

Below in the house Shreekumar who woke up the earliest told Viju that he saw a lot of birds moving towards the hill very early in the morning. Viju sleepily replied, ‘Maybe they are having a conference of the birds!’

In the forest there was much excitement. The local Barn owl

introduced the visitors and explained the purpose of their visit. Then everyone was clamouring to have a say. There were monkeys, jungle fowl and rabbits. Among the snakes there were python, the cobra, boa and several rat snakes. And the birds – there were a large number of species - drongo, racket tailed drongo, tree pie, crow pheasant, jungle crow, white breasted king fisher, magpie robin, bee eaters, cattle egrets, small egret, cormorant and even the water hen had come all the way up.

The monkeys took the lead in explaining about the visionaries because they had watched them closely. They said that at present there were three of them. There is this young girl called Hope Rainbow and then there is Shreekumar who is the most hard working of them and there is this wise old monk called Viju. Viju has written a book called ‘Regaining Paradise’³ and these people are trying to build the paradise here.

They are a very peaceful people. They have a dog called Dasu who does not chase any animal, just eats, roams around and sleeps. They have two cats and two kittens. Birds go right up to their door steps and the old man Viju just keeps on observing them quietly. When monkeys go around plucking bananas or papayas they say nothing. In fact Hope even tries to talk to them and plays her Ukulele to them. She sings all the time, though she also works very hard. The python here ate up one of the puppies last year but they did not say anything. As you know after eating the python does not move for hours. Rat snakes move freely in and out of their attic and they are happy that some of the rats are driven away. They have lots of fruit trees – jack fruit, cashew nut, coconut, banana, papaya, mango, guava etc. and have a lot of rice, jowar and dals stored in the attic. And they keep on planting more trees.

The tiger felt very happy to see a forest where human beings don’t attack and destroy. He said he wanted to come and live

here. But the Barn owl said, there are other farmers in the neighbourhood and if they come to know you are here they will come and kill you. Unless all the farms become like Sangatya Farm it is not safe for you.

* * * * *

On their way back they passed a beautiful mountain river. The tiger drank deeply and said: The water is so wonderful. But too much of even such a good thing can cause such havoc! Look at Man!

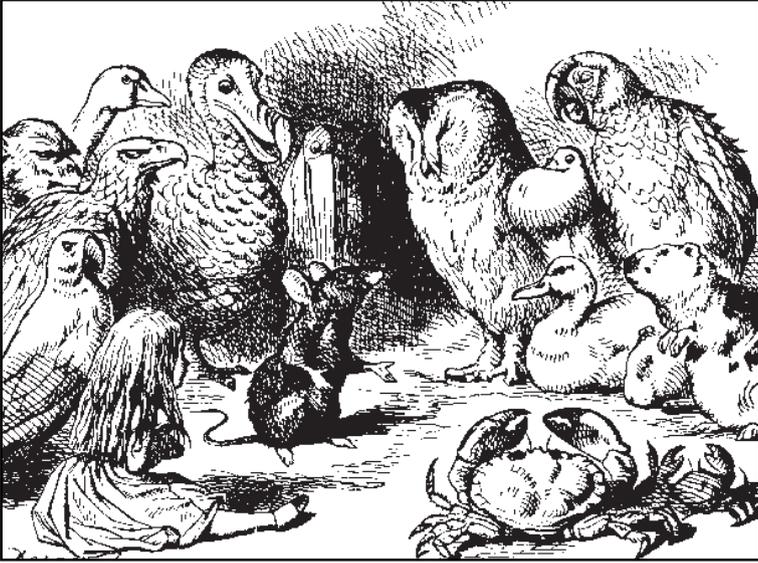
Notes and References

1. The first two lines are from a long Hindi poem '*Baagh*' (Tiger) by Kedar Nath Singh. There is however no owl in it.
2. Ishmael is the Gorilla, the main protagonist in the novel 'An Advance of the Mind and Spirit' by Daniel Quinn, where he, the gorilla, plays a similar role.
3. *Regaining Paradise: towards a fossil fuel free society* by T. Vijayendra, 2009, Sangatya Sahitya Bhandar, Nakre, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

24. 03. 2012

Nakre, Udupi, Karnataka, India.

About the author



THE STORY TELLER

Don't ask me who I am? Ask me what I would like to be.

There is this unusual bungalow, in which there is this commune - a group of people - who call themselves 'a free association of free people'.

They have a common stake - everyone wants to improve a small resource base and move towards collective self reliance.

It is a new path, a new journey. Have to move in step with each other. New projects, good projects keep on emerging. Have to understand new things, learn new skills. Some work has to be done urgently. Some need help in doing their tasks while others are engaged in doing something else. Occasionally important works get missed. After all, this journey to self reliance is not all

mundane work! There are difficulties and they have to be solved.

So in the process of stepping and joining steps, every one's internal turmoil and mutual turmoil keep on bursting like bubbles. Now the colour of some bubble gets stuck on some bubble and the colour of some other bubble lands on some other... Then someone has taken up responsibility for a task, the nerves of body and mind become tight to lift up the load. Some times while doing this, the 'challenged' or beaten up 'self' also gets strained - so this bubble, before bursting and vanishing, leaves a little colour. So thus, sometimes happy with one's work, sometimes frustrated, sometimes irritated, sometime just mad with the world, and all the while talking and arguing, this our group gathers together for the evening tea.

Now the story teller slowly starts his tune. Slowly, slowly, all the tensions start vanishing - of the body, of the brain, of the mind, of the need to keep one's 'self' together... Then it feels we have moved far away from the problems here.

And the tale moves and slowly it becomes easy to see, in the characters of the story, one's own good and bad actions. One starts laughing at oneself. The tale ends and everyone is in a mood to laugh and joke, relaxes, becomes light in spirit, eats happily and sleeps happily. Then in the morning, fresh and energetic and a shade wiser, they get back to their projects and tasks once again.

During the day when everyone is busy in their work, the story teller mingles with every one, listening and observing. He collects every one's news, their joys and trials, and chooses his stories, weaving and improvising for the evening. He readies himself to play his tune for the evening gathering.

If every day (and every moment), one gets a shade wiser, it is no great shakes to bring four moons on this small earth.

Why are monkeys taking over our land?
What does the bird think of the birdwatcher?
Why does man drink so much water?
What can the city give back to the village?
And read adventures of Nora, the girl Mowgli!
These are stories about environment
for the young readers and for those
who are still young at heart.

