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कृपया इस स्थान
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SECTION A

“A man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd.” (Q4)

On one fine day in early 20th century South Africa, life was going on as ordinarily as any other day. However, one brown lawyer and some of his countrymen were playing with their lives as they publicly burned their immigration certificates. They were flogged by the British officers, but they kept going, until all the certificates were in ashes. This was just one event - a spark in comparison to what ~~was~~ lay ahead. The brown man was none other than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. His orchestra was the minority of Indian population. And the crowd was the gargantuan British empire on which the sun never set.

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M.K. Gandhi set an example of steadfastness in defiance and he showed the future leaders of the country that the world may see and believe one thing ; but if it is wrong, one must have the courage to turn away from judgement and use his resources to show what is right. Had Gandhi allowed the crowd's judgement to influence him, India may not have been free. Instead, he, like the other leaders of India, turned towards their countrymen and lead this orchestra to the most spectacular performance in Indian history : independence.

Society : Shifting Dimensions

most social transformations have resulted from a defiant act of disobedience against unjust social norms. Women empowerment has been one such work in progress. Beginning from India's history - women like Raziya Sultan and Rani Jhansi faced constant opposition to their 'ability' to rule, attributed to their

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supposedly 'inferior' genders. But both stood out as capable leaders, feared and respected alike. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Ray stood up against age old practices like sati, going against the vast majority and finally abolished it in 1829. Similarly, Jshwan Chand Vidyasagar and Muslim leaders like Syed Ahmad Khan advocated for girls' education. For Jyoti Ba Phule, his orchestra was his wife Sanitibai Phule whom he educated post marriage, turning his back to an orthodox, rigid, patriarchal social structure.

Similarly, caste rigidity in Indian society was countered in the most creative ways. From temple entry movements led by Periyas in South India, to the christening of 'lower' castes as "Harijan" (or "the children of god") all the way to Gandhi's ashrams (Phoenix & Tolstoy Farm) where all forms of work were done by rotation so that each would be valued: the orchestra was diverse and very impactful, while the crowd of orthodox Hindus looked on.

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Today, the same defiance continues as women stand up and stand in solidarity against sexual exploitation and gender discrimination (eg: #MeToo movement). The Shah Bano Case questioned Islamic divorce procedures while the Sabarimala Temple situation pitted religious practice against women's right to equal treatment. Similarly, in the Naveet Singh Johar case, section 377 of the IPC was abrogated, decriminalizing homosexuality. The LGBTQIA+ community continues to fight for legalizing their marriages while women now march on towards criminalizing marital rape. Thus, it has been proven time and again that the crowd can look large, threatening but after all, they are spectators. When one knows what is right, they must lead themselves without fear of judgement, and soon change will come.

India's Symphony in International Space

Since Independence, India and the USA have been seen as the mothers of democracy. When it comes to

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international politics, this role is taken seriously by India. The leaders of the nation have always had an understanding that the citizens come first. It is thus that during the Cold War, when the world was divided in two, India turned away from the crowd and carved its own unique way: the Non-Aligned Movement. Trusting its independence, India refused to acknowledge the subtle judgement and pressure that came from both sides. Soon enough, it became a leader for 3rd World Nations. Recently, the situation arose again as Russia and Ukraine clashed in war. Once again, India refused to take sides - advocating for peaceful dialogue and non-violent means of resolving conflict. By turning its back to the international crowd, India has not only established its sovereignty boldly but has also emerged as a respected and powerful nation, in the midst of rising bipolarity.

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From Buddha to Kalam : Symbols of Defiance

Gautam Buddha and his courageous transformation stand out as on the walls of Ajanta and the toranas of stupas. Not only did he leave his princely life and duties, he also left a grieving wife. In his search for truth, he disregarded all judgement from the social crowd. In a similar way, Mirabai left her palace with her bhajans out of love and devotion for Krishna - defying society's glances of disapproval.

Similarly, scientists of all time defied social and religious norms by their discoveries. Whereas Copernicus was sentenced to death for saying that the Sun was the centre of the universe (not the Earth according to the Church). Socrates was poisoned for speaking similar reason. The same zeal continues today as Elon Musk pushes the limits of space technology by endeavouring beyond the current limits of science. It was this same zeal that

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Homi Bhabha, Vikram Sarabhai and A.P.J Abdul Kalam held that transformed India's space advancement. It made India a nuclear power in the face of a discriminatory regime. And thus, from the beginnings of Buddhism to the modernization of science, the crown has been oppressive and discouraging but everyone who turned their backs to it has emerged victorious, bringing the benefits of a peaceful religion and scientific achievement with them.

The Orchestra of the mind

It is often assumed that all of one's enemies lie in the real world, outside and distinct from themselves. However, some enemies lie within.

Deepika Padukone, Indian Bollywood actress, suffered from severe depression at the most eventful and thriving part of her career. Her crown was not a judgemental society or strict social norms. Her crown lay within: the

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constant and unavoidable voice in one's mind that tells them they are worthless, useless, incapable, undeserving.

^{disorders}
mental health, coming to be recognized now, ^{are} one of the most severe of all diseases. It can debilitate invisibly, and crush potential. It is harder to turn one's back to one's own mind. So the way is to play the instrument louder, more often. Mental health is a constant fight between an active, angry crowd (the voice of despair) and the instruments of the orchestra (one's talents, interests, the voice of good & reason). It is the individual's job to lead that orchestra and defeat the crowd.

There will, after all, always be a force and a counter force. To bring change and prosperity, one must be courageous enough to turn away from judgement and rigid majoritarianism & focus on the resources at hand. Soon, the orchestra will play and the crowd will hush as its beauty, elegance & symphony finally break through.

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SECTION B

"Nature is neither a servant
nor a master, but a necessary
partner."

"Ecology is the best Economy."

~ Sunderlal Bahuguna,
(Chipko movement)

In a historically unprecedented and
defiant move, the women and girls
of a small village in the Himalayas
stood boldly in front of machinery to
prevent the cutting of trees. The tree-
hugging was so widely covered that it
was coined "the Chipko movement".
This was one among the many
movements taking place to save the
environment, another being Rachel Carson's
book "The Silent Spring". Such move-
ments have led to a revolution in
the definition of economic growth and
garnered focus on sustainable
development taking human and environ-
mental needs hand-in-hand.



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However, this was not always the case. For a long period, ~~or~~ nature was revered as the master of all. When mankind learnt how to wield it to its purpose, it made the mistake of considering nature its servant. It was after much trial & error that mankind has learnt that nature is neither master nor servant, but a necessary partner.

Nature As Master

For much of the history of human life, man was a servant to nature. Men and women would hunt and gather where nature provided them with bounty. They would perish in extremes like the preserved man found in the icy north. Sea levels decided where man would travel and determined the spread of one species over another, still felt today in the DNA of all humans. However, over time, man learnt how to bend nature to its will. Fire was discovered soon after, agriculture was practiced by domesticating wild plants. In addition, animals were reared - the dog being one of the first to be domesticated. Despite these changes, nature still determined the course

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of human life. Bhimbethka cave paintings show drawings of bulls, elephants while Indus Valley seals ~~show~~ indicate the worship of a Mother Goddess and a Pashupati seal (king of the animals). Similarly, the mesopotamian and egyptian civilizations worshipped nature while the Aztecs and the Incas celebrated the Sun and the Moon.

Similarly, nature was the not only the cause of civilization (most establishments were set up near rivers), it was also the cause of demise of the same civilization through drying up of the rivers, earthquake or flood. Thus, nature was a master for long, but soon the industrial revolution reversed this equation.

Nature as Servant

With the beginning of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution was showing signs of emergence in Britain. The steam engine, coupled with other advancements like the spinning jenny led to a race towards production which necessitated extraction of resources from the Earth.

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with an unparalleled speed, colonial powers spread to resource-rich nations and meticulously extracted all resources to send as raw material for production and capitalist growth in Europe. In India, agriculture became commercialized and mono-cropping prevailed while railways were laid by vast deforestation in the country. Tribal lives (which were usually in sync with nature) were disturbed and their lives trampled upon as forests became a state asset. Urbanization and industrialization demanded further deforestation while more land was claimed to expand agricultural output. Mines were dug up in African nations to harvest for gold as well as black gold. And soon, pollution from carbon emissions led to global warming and ozone layer depletion. Nature was effectively turned into a slave to human whims and the drive for profit. But this exploitation had its repercussions felt in the form of extreme weather phenomena and rising instability in global climate today.

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with movements like Chipko Movement, Save the Narmada (Narmada Bachao Andolan), etc. mankind has come to terms with the fact that nature is neither master of human fate nor servant of human fancy. It must be treated as a partner if the planet is to be saved from self-destruction.

Nature as Partner

With the understanding that nature is a global or common good, countries made the effort to come together on international platforms like the Conference of Parties (COP) of UNFCCC, Ramsar Convention for Wetland Conservation, Vienna Convention, Stockholm Convention, etc. Agreements like the Paris Agreement push countries to make Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to commit to their shared responsibility towards the environment. The Kunming Protocol, 30x30x30 agreement and International terminology like Blue Economy and One Health tie the various aspects of the

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environment together, like land, marine ecology and zoonotic stability. The world is thus moving towards a more ecocentric and anthropocentric approach of development where nature is treated as a stakeholder rather than a liability.

Age Old Systems of Nature Friendly life

The monsoons - unique to the Indian subcontinent - taught Indian communities the value of storing water. As such, erripatti or tanklands became common in Tandyan Pallava society on which tax was levied for the sole purpose of tank maintenance. Similarly, temples had watertanks attached to them while other regions used khadins and johads. In Meghalaya, bamboo pipes are used to transport water downhill. Sacred groves mark the ancestral religions of various communities while Hindus continue to worship the Tulsi tree and the cow as divine. Thus, Indian heritage itself has been an epitome of striding with nature & not against it.

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Nature & Development

The same approach of taking nature in stride must be applied in the process of development. Urbanization needs to be planned, taking nature into account. For instance, creation of sponge cities through greener roofs, permeable roads, and miyawaki plantation and vertical farming can reduce flooding. Additionally, schemes like MISHTI aim to conserve coastal mangroves while enhancing local involvement thereby contributing to both economy and ecology.

Agriculture can be revolutionized through PM PRANAM, enhancing use of organic inputs, Zero Budget Natural Farming, use of geospatial technology for groundwater mapping and cropping accordingly. Harmonizing horticulture alongside livestock rearing can supplement farmer income while preserving environmental norms. PM Matsya Sampada Yojana excels in enhancing the returns to fisherpeople. Conserving

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inland and outland fishing grounds and promoting Blue Economy. Schemes like PM MITRA can take farm to fibre to fabric to fashion to foreign (5F) thereby bringing Indian indigenous agricultural production to the export market. Recent declaration of Year on Millets has raised awareness on sustainable & nutritious crop choice.

Similarly, use of carbon reductionist approaches in output production (like carbon market and carbon tax) can result in greener growth while focusing on CSR (corporate social responsibility) and ESG (Environment, governance and social) can create a beneficial bridge between private and public goals.

Thus, environment is neither a toy to be played with, nor a restraint to human aspirations. Instead, it is a talisman, an asset and a stakeholder in human endeavours. It must be treated as an equal and respected partner to achieve sustainable development in the truest sense.