

Restoring Draupadi's Dignity: For the Church and the Nation

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1. Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam

“Ayam bandhurayam neti gaṇanā laghucetasām
udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam”¹

*Only small men discriminate saying: One is a relative;
the other is a stranger. For those who live magnanimously
the entire world constitutes but a family.*

Isn't it appalling that the spiritual masters from India have had a deep insight into the world-citizenship? It is, and rightly so; because we've been bombarded with nationalism stuff ever-since the BJP has come to power. The Upaniṣadic text also sheds plenty of light on 'xenophobia' and 'parochialism' inviting people to live magnanimously in the world that constitutes just one family. Were our ancestors so generous as to accept any stranger into their family? Did they have no fear of being betrayed or cheated by the other? Were these spiritual masters naïve? No, they were not. They were simply 'enlightened' and lived in the bliss of 'world-citizenship'. They knew so very well that the unity of the world had to be maintained and sustained for the generations to come. The intellectual elites are re-

discovering this treasure of inter-connectedness, and inter-dependence of the past. This profound understanding of the world as a single family of the eastern scholars make our head put down in shame when we think in terms of serving the Church, and serving the nation; which is a parochial understanding of the world. Be that as it may, parochialism can indeed help us in focussing a particular region, section of the society etc. So, it has its advantages. It does not matter whether you serve the Church or the nation as long as you have the ‘good’ of the world in mind; and one doesn’t lose sight of Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam. The principal reason why Jesus came to earth was “not to be served but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many.”² The emphasis ought to be laid on the word ‘serving’ rather than what follows it, be it mother Church or Nation, the Bhārata Mātā.

2. Bhārata Mātā: The Draupadi

The eastern scholars use down-to-earth analogies, they have used Kuṭumbakam (family) for world, then there ought to be a mother. A family is incomplete without the mother. Very often the nationalists call India, Bhārata Mātā, the goddess. Many wouldn’t like it, if I call Mahābhārata’s Draupadi, the Bhārata Mātā. But that is the truth Draupadi is the Bhārata Mātā. Mahābhārata was fought for this lady. She was the prettiest among all women (nations), the Queen. She was bestowed with the honour of Queen of Indraprasta, and at the same time was publicly disrobed (vastraharana). In the dice-game the Pāṇḍavas were tricked into losing all that they had, even the Queen. What constitutes the country is the lower-castes and the Tribals, the upper castes are a minority. The Kauravas have reduced the Queen Draupadi, the dignified Dalits and the Tribals, and the low-castes to slavery. As long as Draupadi was the Queen they couldn’t abuse her, they did when she was reduced to a slave. Deg-

radation of royalty to slavery. The Church in her pristine form is of the poor and the ordinary. The Church is where the poor are. So, serving the poor is serving the Church as well as the Nation. Would the Hindu-nationalists agree to this sense of serving the Nation? Definitely not. For them 'serving the Church' and 'serving the Nation' are incompatible; because of their Hindutva agenda. Now this calls for disrobing the Hindutva agenda. Before we do that let us know what Christians think about their identity in India.

3. Purva Pakṣa I: External Challenge:

3.1 The Starting Point: Christians in India vs Indian Christians

The roots of Christianity in India could be traced back to Thomas, the apostle. Christianity did not originate in India. It was brought from outside and offered, given, and even forced by the colonizers/missionaries. Though the arrival of Christianity in India has apostolic origins it could never be called Indian territorially. We '*are*' Indians by birth; but we '*become*' Christians through baptism. The former gives citizenship while the latter gives membership of the organization called the Church; or theologically one becomes part of the mystical body of Christ. Therefore, we are Indians first, then Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Agnostic, or an Atheist. Serving the Nation is prior to serving the Church. The Nation ought to take precedence over Church. Article #25-28 of the Indian Constitution enshrines and guarantees the freedom of religion, to flourish, to profess and to propagate one's faith in India. We are Indians, and have embraced Christianity; that is to say we are Indian Christians. The Indian Christians today are alert as ever, Julio Ribeiro came heavily on the intolerant attitude of the government towards minorities; on the other hand,

Hilda Raja wants Church to introspect as to what they've done for the poor. The RSS also need to know this; for they keep making derogatory remarks such as, "the minorities have no place in India, it belongs to the Hindus." So, it is clear that when the obligation towards one's Nation and the Church are in conflict, one ought to go with the Nation. The territorial belonging precedes the religious. But Savarkar thinks otherwise, for him religion is the deciding factor for one to be a nationalist.

3.2 Pitṛbhumi Vs Puṇyabhumi: Nation Vs Church

"Hindutva rests on racial features, i.e. possessing pure Hindu blood or 'inheritance of the Hindu blood',³ geographical unity where one considers India as his or her 'Father Land' and 'Holy Land'.⁴ In order to establish the fascist ideology of Hindutva and to keep the Muslims and the Christians out of this nationalism, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar cleverly constructed the terms Pitṛbhumi and Puṇyabhumi (Holy Land). The Muslims and the Christians qualify themselves in every aspect of Hindutva but 'Puṇyabhumi'. So, Hindutva is incompatible with minorities, which is why they become a 'misfit' according to Savarkar's Hindutva and hence detrimental and dangerous to the 'Hindu-Rashtra'. Whereas, patriotism on the other hand has nothing to do with one's religion or culture, it takes into consideration only the 'Pitṛbhumi'. Patriotism can stand its own ground, it does not need a religion. But the nationalism the RSS propagates is one that links the patriotism with religion.

3.3 Pseudo-Hinduism and Pseudo-Patriotism

Hindu-nationalists associate religion with patriotism to serve their purpose of cultural nationalism. Lancy Lobo writes: "My analysis shows that Hindu nationalism is in fact

the nationalism of upper-castes or middle-classes. The loud cry ‘Hinduism is in danger’ should be interpreted as the fear of upper castes and middle classes saying their economic interests are in danger.”⁵ Or rather a foul-cry to maintain a *status quo* of the Hindu-social order. When they speak of Hinduism they never speak of Philosophical Hinduism one that is pluralistic and accommodative of the other, instead they propagate Hindu-pride, cultural-caste elitism that re-instates Brahmanical supremacy. Savarkar’s was the time of socio-religious reforms which was an after effect of the British rule and the missionary activities coupled with prior Muslim invasions. This is where Hindu-cultural nationalism originates to save the Brahmanical Supremacy.

3.4 Hindu-Nationalism

The greatest challenge that India faces today at this crucial juncture, especially when the 2019 general elections are approaching, is Hindu-nationalism. Right-wing politics has gripped the world, and India is also party to that movement. The Vedic Sanātana dharma is in no way fascist, rather it is pluralistic. “Hindu-nationalism has been a reaction to the anti-Brahmin movement. The pendulum has swung to the other extreme and in Hindu-nationalism, Brahmins are re-asserting their hegemony once again.”⁶ Today’s intolerant, shattered, and fragmented India on the basis of religion, which is an outcome of Hindu-cultural fascism termed as nationalism; and often misconstrued as patriotism of the majority. So, going by the ‘Hindutva Agenda’ serving the Church and serving the nation are not compatible; the Church has extra-territorial allegiance. Need we subscribe to this view or we have better examples in the past?

3.5 Serving 'Hind' vs 'Hindutva'

Bhagat Singh's name is synonymous to patriotism for a reason, every Indians' heart, irrespective of their caste, creed, culture and religion bled when he was executed by the British-Government for murdering Saunders during the freedom struggle in 1931. Bhagat never sought a mercy petition though he was just 23 then, instead he asked the British-government to execute him by firing squad rather than by hanging; for he thought the former was most respectable and valorous. Through his heroic execution he inspired thousands of youth to participate and liberate the country from the shackles of the oppressive British Government. Bhagat fought for his Pitṛbhumi till the last breath, thus united all his fellow-Indians under the banner of 'Hind', Jai Hind were his last words. Whereas Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the proto ideologue of 'Hindutva' before his final release filed a mercy petition stating that he would never betray British government again. "Savarkar was an atheist, which possibly explains why Hindutva is stripped of Hinduism's admirable pluralistic religious ideals and ethical principles".⁷ Bhagat too was an atheist but a sound patriot who united India under 'Hind', and Savarkar divided India with his 'Hindutva.' The choice is with us whether to serve the 'Hind' or the incompatible 'Hindutva.'

3.6 Territorial Nationalism vs Cultural Nationalism

The RSS didn't participate in the freedom struggle, only because the minorities were part of this struggle, and preferred to support the oppressive British government, undermining the heroic anti-colonial struggle. Deendayal Upadhyaya, an RSS theoretician, writes: "territorial nationalism implies that the Indian Nation is formed of all those people who reside in this land. An effort was consistently made

to look upon Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc. as ‘nationals’ and forge them into an integrated force against the foreign rule.”⁸ The RSS rejected the ‘territorial nationalism’ and propounded the ‘cultural nationalism’ just to suit their Hindu-fascist motives. ‘Territorial nationalism’ is the right form of ‘nationalism’ for India, given its multi-religious and multi-cultural ethos. The territorial nationalism makes serving the Nation and serving the Church compatible. If they are compatible, how has the Church served the Nation in the past?

3.7 Serving the Church, Serving the Nation:

Mixed Motives: The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary,⁹ which means Church was predominantly implanted by the Missionaries. The colonial patronage was a great boon to the spread of Christianity in the new world. All the good work these missionaries took up was solely for ‘soul harvesting’, be it dictionaries, study of the Vedas, putting up of educational institutes, framing the grammar of Indic languages, so on and so forth. Be that as it may, India as a Nation was the beneficiary of those motives. The English education opened the plethora of opportunities and the freedom struggles of the other nations. This in turn helped the Indians organize themselves to fight against the oppressive British Government. The literature of Indian languages was enhanced, preserved, and propagated, because they wanted to be proficient in those languages. Besides they gave us classics like *Christa Purana*, *Bulcke’s Hindi Dictionary* and its ilk.

Purified Motives: When the colonial powers withdrew, the poverty and the devastation caused by them were exposed. The missionary activities took a new turn, justice. Social-justice motivated the Church to reach-out to the

poor and the marginalized. This was the era when Church ripped itself of its mixed motives, conversion was just a by-product, focusing on the dismantling of the unjust hierarchical social-order. This in turn empowered the marginalized and the Tribals, but unfortunately threatened the high-caste of their Vedic hegemony as spoken before. Fr Jerome D'Souza had a great role to play in framing the constitution of the Church to safe-guard the rights of the poor and the marginalized.

Countering Hindu-Nationalism: As the RSS brain-washes the country in believing that Hindu-culture is the Indian culture the Church has the following response in rooting out the anti-national elements.

- The recent arrests of a Jesuit Priest Fr Stanny and other human activists throughout the country is a sign that Church is active in putting up a fight.
- The Church has to look at the present situation of atrocities of right-wing politics, as the unfinished task of freedom struggle.
- Mahatma Gandhi wanted to make India a fundamentalists free India, a task that Church can take up.
- Fight against Love-Jihad; it has Christian origins sadly.
- Focus on constitutional values as central tenets in contrast to the agenda of the communalists.
- Having a think-tank (professional group) to continuously monitor the current socio-political situation and recommend ways to effectively respond to it. Counter every post that put on social-media.

- Promote a rural/agriculturally based economy as against Modi's market-based economy.
- Creating networks with Church bodies, maintain good relations and collaborations with government institutions/bodies, bureaucrats, professionals etc. who share a vision of a pluralistic society.
- Conduct programs and activities that stand by the victims of injustice and marginalized people irrespective of caste, creed, race etc.
- Promote programs and activities that sensitize students and teachers to the plight of the poor and victims of injustice.
- Forming a team of professionals that would go to the people, to schools, parishes etc. and talk about constitutional rights, and history.
- Foster diversity – multi religious, multi caste, multi class etc. at our institutes.
- Changing our social action approach from Project based to people's right based approach.

Socio-ecological Justice: The Church has not been oblivious to ecological crises, she has plunged into this realm with all her might. The *Laudato Si* speaks extensively about everything is connected, and the social justice is linked to ecological crises. The poor are always caught off guard with meagre means to cope with the ecological crises. This is where the '*ecological debt*'¹⁰ exist that the rich owe to the poor. Gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.¹¹

3.8 Ecological Crisis: Vastraharana of the Poor is the Vastraharana of the Mother Earth

Leonardo Boff uses the analogy of social fabric and cosmic fabric and how the respective wounds of poverty and ecological degradation weaken the common fabric. Though India is a third-world country there exists a first-world, methodically structured and perpetuated by the clever caste construct by the first-world or rather the high-caste. The indigenous and the Dalits are

pushed to the margins and confined at the peripheries perennially with no or little hope of getting to the center. The third-world is created to stroke the ego of the first-world, at the expense of the

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poor. Poor are not born poor they are made poor by the rich. Draupadi, a Queen is reduced to a slave, just like the dignified aboriginals and the Dalits are reduced to slaves by the upper-caste. Pāṇḍvas and the Kauravas play the dice and Draupadi has to bear the brunt. She has no voice, utterly helpless pleading for mercy.

Disrobing Draupadi was an act of adharma, gravest of grave breach of dharma in the presence of the elites and the elders. The poor are condemned to die before their time. Letting the Vastraharana take place was also the adharma. Vastraharana, an act of adharma, has a direct impact on the cosmic order. So, the Vastraharana of Draupadi had a direct connection to the cosmic fabric. Exploiting the poor is also the exploitation of the mother earth. Today we are pierced with the acute cry of the oppressed, the excluded and the mother Earth for action. The social injustice towards the poor has its repercussions on the environment. The envi-

ronmental crises have ripped the poor apart from the little that they had; the nature is cruel to the poor. The *'throw-away culture of the rich'* abuses the natural resources and deprives the poor of their resources; the resources of the earth belong to the poor too. This is where the *'ecological debt'* exist that the rich owe to the poor. Gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest. The day the rich realize this debt and start paying the poor what belongs to them, there will be environmental social justice, justice done to the poor is justice done to the environment.

Hindu-nationalism is a challenge that is external the Church is facing the internal challenges of universal nature, the child-sex abuse, moral corruption and dwindling numbers of the faithful. Having delivered the justice to the poor in India, let us introspect a bit and see whether we have delivered justice to our faithful.

4. Purva Pakṣa II: Internal Challenge:

4.1 Caesar's Wife Must Be Above Suspicion:

In 63 BC Caesar gave no evidence against Clodius, who disguised as a woman and entered into Pompeia's closet intending to seduce her, at his trial; and he was acquitted. Nevertheless, Caesar divorced Pompeia, saying that 'my wife ought not even to be under suspicion.' Caesar's life event has two lessons for the Church, the bride of Christ, as it sails through the turbulent waters of child-sex abuse.

1. Never spare the person who breached the code of conduct
2. The close associates of the Church ought to be

above suspicion

There is a cancerous growth of sex scandals and child sex abuse by the catholic clergy. A Church-commissioned report in 2004 said more than 4,000 US Roman Catholic priests had faced sexual abuse allegations in the last 50 years, in cases involving more than 10,000 children - mostly boys. The image of the Church has undergone an irreparable damage devastating millions of children and their childhood. To all this India is not an exception, Indian clergy too is sexually active. There are cases which come to the fore and others do not or they are just put under the carpet. The taboo factor has been protecting the predator priests in India. The way the Church has been protecting the pedophile priests and the scamsters is deplorable, especially for an organization that preaches faith and morality. Today the Church needs to have the audacity to dissociate herself with the perpetrators and never to protect them, rather have them arrested and prosecuted by the civil authority. Because the Church is the bride of Christ it ought to be above suspicion. Caesar knew it very well that his wife Pompei was not guilty but he left no room for people to tarnish his governance and the empire. That is how a Pontifex Maximus protects himself from moral corruption; for he is the high priest.

4.2 The Church is Lagging Behind 200 Years

It might shudder the heart of a faithful to know that the Church is 200 years behind. It is incomprehensible because the organization that is responsible for educating the elites of the world is herself behind time. As the world is progressing and achieving new heights, the Church on the other hand achieving new milestones one after the other in child-sex abuse. Cardinal Carlo Martini gave a deep blow

to the slumbering catholic Church posthumously. He isn't wrong when he says "The Church has been left 200 years behind. Why doesn't it rouse itself? Are we afraid?"¹² Our empty Churches, dwindling vocations, sexual immorality among the clergy and nuns alike, exodus of the faithful from the Church, conservative views on marriage, abortion, divorce, family life, homo-sexual relations, ecological crisis, etc. are signs of Church being an outdated organization that will die her own natural death if it doesn't catch up with the world that she is supposed to serve. Pope Francis is actively doing the clean-up but the truth is that Francis would need one more papacy to do that, such is the expanse. The globalization, materialization and the consumerism, scientific revolutions have changed the face of the earth of which the Church needs to keep track of. The Church has to introspect her present state of affairs. What could be the possible reasons? Have we neglected Vat II?

4.3 The Spirit of Vat II is Long Forgotten

The hierarchical Church still relies heavily on the council of Trent for its doctrine and governance; she hasn't yet embraced the Vat II fully. Pope John XXIII had great vision to take the Church forward with the changing world, he called the council amidst strong opposition. He stood his ground firmly leading the Church to a new horizon. The reforms of the Church are implemented gradually; the Church has been accused of being retrogressive because of this. the ultra-conservatives have been watering down the fruits of the Vat II by just 'memorializing' it, and unwilling to reform. The conservatives are of the opinion that all the councils are to be taken into consideration. The Vat II does not cancel out its previous councils. The conservative participants, Ratzinger and John Paul etc., of the Vat II council came out with the magazine called '*communio*' and the lib-

erals had the ‘*concillium*’ of which Karl Rahner and others were proponents. Not letting the spirit of the Vat II perpetrate into Christian living is the reason why the Church has regressed that too by 200 years. Karl Rahner once said, the 21st century Christian will either be a mystique or nobody. The choice is ours.

5. Uttara Pakṣa: Opportunities

Every challenge is potent with opportunity, it depends so much on one’s attitude towards it. The Church has felt the unprecedented heat from the BJP-led government. It posed a challenge; but hasn’t that led us pull up our socks? Have we not become a little more transparent? Every challenge brings with itself an opportunity to grow. We can either go through it or grow through it.

5.1 Formation: Incubation and, the IIT’s and the IIM’s

Incubation is the lingo of the academic world these days when it comes to excellence. The IIT’s, IIM’s provide the best facilities, infrastructure, resources, international exposure, novel avenues, to their students so that they excel. Their basic needs are taken care of; they just have to focus on the academic task at hand. They are grilled and ground so well in their academic pursuits that they are raring to go in the world and make difference. Isn’t our formation an example of incubation? Why can’t we train world-class leaders? We have everything at our disposal; the only thing lacks in the formation is proper motivation. The IIT’s and IIM’s have cut throat competition and thorough screening. The mediocre will never make it to any of these prime institutes. Our men and women are under-trained, and under-performed, the human resources of the Church are not utilised properly. The world is full of opportunities, the

mother earth is expectantly waiting for her able children to make a difference in the lives of her people. When our men and women serve the under-privileged we serve the Nation in its truest sense.

5.2 Right Based Approach: Tapping into Government Resources

The expanse of the government policies, schemes, and projects is enormous. Their out-reach is praise worthy. The Church personnel need to tap into these resources especially when the foreign funding to our missions and projects is curbed. If we can collaborate on some projects with the government we can work wonders and marvels given our expertise. Government schemes and projects are great sources of opportunities to serve the Nation. Economic wellbeing and development of the rural populace as against Confrontational Social Action. The former is suitable for rural masses whereas the latter is apt for the city crowd. To lift the rural economy from sustenance economy to sustainable economy would be a great challenge and opportunity to build the Nation at the same time. It is time for our Church social-activists to work along the right based approach rather than the project based.

India is the second most unequal country in the world. Fortune, the agriculture sector, lies at the bottom of the pyramid. Does the Church work for the farmers and contribute her might in the agricultural sector has the most labourers? Agricultural GDP has gone down of the country that has 50% agricultural population. Agriculture's contribution to the GDP is just 12%. The solution to GDP problems lies at the agricultural sector. This sector poses a great opportunity and challenge to the Church. That is our calling today to go the regions where the others find it difficult to.

5.3 Going to the Frontiers: Trend Setters

It would be interesting to recall a student movement that began in 1960's in Germany and they rose to national politics with their ecological crisis agenda and called themselves a Green Party. They ruled for about two terms and then they were not in the politics at all, because by then all the parties had taken up the ecological crisis as their agenda and all had become the Green parties. We get to see similar trends when we see the works that the Church used to do, be it empowerment, advocacy, education, or health-care are taken up by laity and other NGO's. Isn't that an amazing development? Our work of so many centuries is bearing fruit. The Church had taken up those activities when no one else did. Is that why we were so relevant then? Why is our presence, to an extent, redundant today? Isn't that a sign that we need to do something that is relevant for the contemporary world and the generations to come? Our times are full of opportunities, we just need an eye that spots and capitalises them under the guidance of the Spirit. Our future lies on the frontiers, the works that no one else is doing has been crying aloud for attention. The Church ought to move or else it will stagnate and die a natural death.

5.4 Occupying Spaces vs Participating in Processes

The Church has structures all over India, be it edifices of the majestic Churches, towering colleges, reputed schools, active social centres, 24x7 health services, and other significant institutes. They occupy prominent places in the cities, educating the elite, and serving the middle class which are still unapproachable for the poor. We could participate in umpteen number of social movements led by the lay people. Some are even government sponsored. Can we be participating in the processes rather just have the pres-

ence institutionally. Have we the audacity to enter into the unknown. The opportunities lie at our door ever knocking to be opened and be part of the change. We being an organisation that runs educational enterprises for the elite of the society can have such a great impact on the young minds and root out the fascist ideologies from the face of the earth only if we could participate in these processes.

5.5 Bearing Witness vs Preaching the Gospel

St Francis of Assisi once lovingly told his friars to proclaim Gospel all the time and preach only if need be. Let our lives proclaim the Gospel. How true it is for a pluralistic country like ours. It is true that we need not be aggressive with conversions as the 16th century missionaries. But instead follow the advice of the saint and bear witness. That is the true test of our Christian living. How easy it is to give a scholarly discourse on what Jesus said as against putting into practice what Jesus said. That is the true proclamation. What a privilege to be surrounded by the non-Christians, all the more reason for us to be more like Christ and bear witness to the Kingdome values without even preaching them. Only then we would be in a true sense the salt of the earth and light of the world. Or do we find ourselves like the rich young man who went away sad when Jesus called him to be his disciple?

5.6 Spirituality is Our Fortress

Poverty is not an opportunity to do charity, instead poverty is an opportunity to see things from the perspective of the poor, let God reveal himself through the poor to us. Developing an inner life of spirituality is far more important for a Church personnel than anything else. Spirituality ought to be the priority everything else falls in place,

including our heinous scandals. The secular world is getting spiritualised. The secular people seek spiritual depth while the clergymen go after secular things. There's a kind of role reversal. In the past the religious, the monks made policies, they were the pioneers, the secular world imitated them. Today the religious world imitates the secular and longs to be like the secular in the garb of a religious. That is the point of crisis. The Church has enormous challenge to renew herself and reform for the laity are seeking the depth in spirituality. Can we leave them unattended in our secular pursuits? They are sheep without the shepherd. But Today India has just two do we have the shepherd major concerns: the poverty and the ecology. Lau- who are out there to shepherd rather than exploiting dato Si' precisely focusses the sheep using the power of on these two concerns. being the shepherd. Spiritu- ality is our fortress and we ought to guard it.

5.7 Melting Point: Bridging the Gap

The Church's prime educational institutes are at the service of the Nation. Though the Church is guilty of being exclusively for the urban rich; lately, she has opened herself up to the oppressed and the poor. The ecclesial institutes are committed to an extent where she reserves the 50% of the seats for the underprivileged.¹³ Our schools and colleges have become the interface of the rich and the poor. The rich come to know the plight of the poor. The poor get to study with the rich, which was something unimaginable in the past. The Church has reduced the gap by providing opportunities to the poor. The Nation develops when her poor develop.

Today India has just two major concerns: the poverty and the ecology. *Laudato Si*, the papal encyclical precisely focusses on these two concerns of the world. This is where the Church and the nation meet. This is the melting point. The richer countries are worried about the ecology and the poorer countries are worried about their poor. If the present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us.¹⁴ ‘The culture of the satisfied’¹⁵ can ignore the devastation of the poor masses; for they are concerned about their profits. Only if the rich think of the poor in terms of the degradation of the environment there would be bridging of these two concerns.

6. Conclusion: Restoring Draupadi’s Dignity

Rendering justice to Draupadi would call for a radical change in the social structure as envisaged in *Gaudium et Spes*, the document is not content with a conversion in the mentality and attitudes of peoples, but calls for reforms in the socio-economic realm. “Numerous reforms are needed at the socio-economic level, along with universal change in ideas and attitudes”.¹⁶ In many situations there is urgent need for a reassessment of economic and social structures.¹⁷ Because, “excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.”¹⁸

Restoring justice, the dignity of the poor and the oppressed is so divine. Jesus went about preaching, healing and teaching; every-time he did that he restored people’s dignity by forgiving their sins and restoring them to God,

healing their sicknesses and making them ritually complete, preaching and bringing them to God. Lord Kṛṣṇa did the same thing when he saved Draupadi of public shame at the Vastraharana and restored her dignity. Justice to the poor translates into justice to the mother earth too.

As we serve the nation, taking care of our mother earth is a top priority. The earth is not something that gives life, but life itself. Earth is a co-creator. The human persons have lost the sacred dimension towards the earth. Earth is not just for tilling, it is to be respected. Once we lose the sacredness of a being then we misuse and mistreat. As it happened to Draupadi, she was mistreated once she was reduced to a slave in the dice-game. The Dalits and the Tribals are ripped of their dignity therefore the upper-caste take undue advantage of them. Once we recognize the sanctity of the earth, we need to get into personal relationship to love the mother earth. It entails a new covenant between human beings and other beings, a new gentleness towards what is created, and the fashioning of an ethic and mystique of kinship with the entire cosmic community.¹⁹ Once this connection of love is established with the humans and the earth then we may never mistreat the mother earth and her children. Thus, we shall restore the dignity of Draupadi who represents both the poor and the Bhārata Mātā. This takes us back to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. India is a jewel of the earth, a force to reckon with; a potential super-power if only it actualizes the maxim *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas*, and the environment included.

Notes

1. *Maha Upaniṣad* 6: 72.
2. Mark 10:45.
3. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva. Who is a Hindu?* (New Delhi:

Hindi Sahitya Sadan, 1923), 130.

4. Ibid., 110.
5. Lancy Lobo, *Globalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Christians in India* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2002), 171.
6. Ibid., 172.
7. Ram Puniyani, ed., *Fascism in India*, (Delhi: Media house), 40.
8. C. P. Bishikar, *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya: Ideology and Perception* (New Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan), 11.
9. Ad Gentes, 2.
10. *Laudato Si'*, #51.
11. *Bolivian Bishops' Conference, Pastoral Letter on the Environment and Human Development* in Bolivia El Universo, don de Dios para la Vida (23 March 2012), 17.
12. Cardinal Carlo Martini says Church '200 years behind', *Corriere della Sera*, 1 September 2012, Sec III, 5.
13. Loyola College Chennai, one of the best in the country reserves 50% of the seats for the underprivileged.
14. *Laudato Si'* #24.
15. Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 113.
16. *Gaudium et Spes*, #63.
17. *Gaudium et Spes*, #86.
18. *Gaudium et Spes*, #29.
19. Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 112.

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