

Matter of Faith

(Narrating an incident of November 13)

Preamble

Faith is the phenomenon that keeps the world moving. It is quite often laced with Trust, Hope, Optimism and usually pragmatic thought to an extent. The efficacy of faith improves, with higher quotient of sincerity (on both ends) and pragmatics. In the case of divinity, it is pertinent to add an important dimension of devotion. Where worldly faith needs the quotient of Trust, which thinly borders on recent past experience interspersed with luck.

Tendency

Faith runs billions of people in this Universe. Without any assured guarantee of success, people tend to undertake many ventures. A farmer irrigates the land without the assurance of adequate rain and fair price for the prospective produce among other factors. A business venture is launched with the faith that it could succeed with the faith of prospective clients. Similarly, any client would entertain a new entrepreneur that this relation could stabilise and help their own business to flourish. For a family to thrive and sustain, faith based adjustments and sacrifices are vital.

Divinity or the factor of G

In this foreground of faith, how should one relate the essay on divinity is the topic broached in this narration. Normally, devotion is related to a person's own well-being or occasionally extended to the family. Very rarely, we witness an event of prayer or ritual being conducted for the overall benefit of the society at large.

However, a new trend develops in a section of society, if it is repeatedly battered by events beyond its reasonable control. Fortunately or otherwise, a coastal town in Andhra Pradesh of Southern Indian Sub-Continent; called Machilipatnam has a notoriety of facing natural calamities. The location of the town itself is conspicuous, as observed from the important contour as depicted in the satellite imagery.

Generally, Post-Monsoon tropical storms, cyclones are hurricanes/ typhoons are the bane of Coastal India, especially in the Eastern Region, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu bear the brunt usually. The impact is harsh to critically severe for everyone. Fishermen and Farmers are hit the hardest by these calamities. Other than fore-warning, precaution, evacuation and emergency relief supplies, no government or scientific organisation can help the society to avoid the calamity. This is the hard fact of life.

Pondering

Man turns outward in his exploration, if his best efforts are not yielding the desired result in reasonable time frame. Sometimes, it extends to cosmos and even beyond. In this realm, the factor of G (standing for Greater Force called GOD) emerges. Even self made men, fond of relying on hard work (quite often overlooking the influence of external factors) look for answers or guidance from external factors. Thus the phenomena of astrology, astronomy and divinity are strengthened in the society.

Role of the Ruler

Historically, traditionally, morally and ethically; the role of the rulers is to ensure the welfare of the subjects. If the population lives peacefully with ample resources, the taxes are paid for the regime to strengthen. Accordingly, **few rituals are prescribed for collective conduct in order to avert disasters and calamities at large.** In the advent of famine, drought, wild fires or typhoons; rulers in ancient India organised mass prayers and rituals to tide over the crises and met with success reasonably.

However, in the secular India inheriting western thoughts, such practices were abandoned at large. Isolated incidents of prayers are organised by religious affairs ministries of local governments, which are often look down by the so-called progressive thinkers/ establishment with disdain. Media, our unaccountable monster plays a second fiddle to this trend. Thus, most of our population is oblivious to power of collective prayers in mitigating and averting a calamity.

Prevention or Cure

As mentioned above, repeated calamities cause our people to become depressed or philosophical. At times, the churning of the minds could lead to innovative thoughts to find out methods to avert a disaster or to lessen the brunt. Such Prevention of calamity is not only a benefit to the society, but also a great stabilisation factor for the economy.

Similar to the vaccination to prevent outbreak of diseases, preventive prayers could avert or lessen the fiery spells of the Factor G. Hence, many rituals and Mantras (Hymns) in the Vedic Tradition are conducted.

Shata Rudreeya

Rudra Adhyaaya of Yajurveda Samhita (Text) is a powerful prayer. This is called as Shata Rudreeya, where hundreds of omni-potent and omni present forms of the God are extolled. Homa (Ablation in the sacrificial fire) with these Mantras, is a method to appease the ferocious nature, Yajurveda prescribed.

Collective Prayers

The power of Individual conduct of a ritual is dwarfed by the collective might of the mass prayers. Therefore, people congregate at the places of worship. If the common motive is to dedicated to the benefit of the society and region, the effect would be greater than ever. (Rather than desiring personal benefit, every prayer should concentrate to achieve common benefit to avert an impending danger to the society.) If this principle is observed in letter and spirit, the society can reap rich dividends in short term too.

Unfolding of the events in 2013

Coastal region was battered by a very powerful cyclone called [Phailin](#) in October 2013. During the ensuing period, an organiser from Vijayawada (Smt. Nirmala Chowdary) was casually discussing plans for conducting a mass ritual at Vijayawada. The discussion crystallised in short period and the blessings were obtained from Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji, a great seer, for its successful conduct. The motive for such an event, was nothing more than the well being at large. Dates for the event were thought to be 30 November, 1st December and 2nd December to coincide with the last days of Kartika Maasa, a month special for the worship of Shiva, whose fiery in the times of delusion (Pralaya) is legendary.

Meanwhile, certain unforeseen circumstances caused the event to be pre-poned by a week. All of us, including our organisers about the prospects of successful conduct within two weeks. (From an organiser's point of view, necessary skilled manpower, resources and logistics are quite hectic, if not nightmarish.)

In the course of time, another cyclone Helen was also identified in the latter half of November '13 by the meteorologists. It was scheduled to cross the coast near Machilipatnam on 22nd November '13. Traditionally, the devotees at Machilipatnam pray to Sri Swamiji, whenever an impending cyclone is predicted to cross the coast at this point; since the establishment of an Ashrama at Manginapudi (sea coastal hamlet). And they had experienced the benefit of this prayer. Many a time, huge hurricanes had their intensity tapered down or the course of its direction drastically altered.

Mahaa Rudra Yaagam

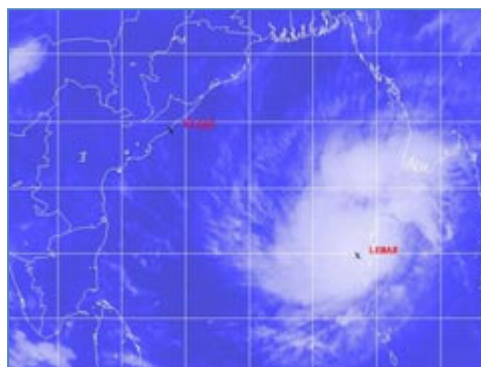
Upon the direction of Sri Swamiji, the event - Mahaa Rudra Yaagam was announced. Luckily, all the logistics were arranged within a short time. Mahaa Rudram is a system of recitation and Homa, prescribed in Rudra Yaamala. It comprises of Abhishekam to Shiva, coupled with the recitation of 1331 chants of Rudra Mantras, with a Homa of 121 Chants.

Prior to that commencement of the ritual, we happened to visit a small village Kurumaddali, to advise a friend to manage the temple, he founded. That particular time was said to be the crossing of the coast at Machilipatnam, by cyclonic storm [Helen](#). It was categorised as a low intensity cyclone, with gale speeds not exceeding 60 - 70 km per hour. At that odd hour, streets/ highways were empty, as people were advised to stay indoors.

During our visit to the temple, a couple of farmers named Sitaram and Sambasiva Rao narrated their share of woes due to frequent cyclones. This year, half their produce is wasted, which is not even sufficient to cover half the production costs. They were very pessimistic about the prospects. We empathised their plight and bid farewell.

Surprisingly [IMD](#) (Indian Meteorology Department) has found the formation of another intensive cyclone in South Andaman sea, more than 1500 km from that region. It was construed as more dangerous and intense cyclone, with speeds predicted to exceed 240 km per hour, dwarfing the previous cyclones of recent years. It was named [Lehar](#).

Formative Stage of Lehar.



The ritual Mahaa Rudram, commenced on Saturday 23 November 2013, with the invocation of deities and establishment of 11 pedestals of worship. Ritwiks (scholars) from Pithapuram (SGS Veda Pathashala), Vijayawada (Kanaka Durga Temple) had joined the team from Mysore (consisting of myself, Chinmaya Datta, Santosh Kumar and Surya Narayana). As the 3 day event was progressing, media persons sought the purpose of the ritual and its significance.

It was explained that praying to God was the best method to avert a potential disaster or to minimise the impact at least. **As our Sadguru explains, never ask for an event/ incident to get annulled or postponed. Whatever has to happen, will happen. Pray for the wherewithal to withstand the impact. This will make you stronger and ready for any exigency.**

Rational of this prayer

This exhort, is actually thought provoking. For a unit of energy consumed by a section of population, people close to power generation stations have face the consequences of pollution or heavy traffic. For us to enjoy the excellent and safe homes, people in the iron ore/ lime stone (for cement) mining areas have to undergo the terrific dust and pollution. For our safe sleep at our beloved home, a police man has to guard the street/ locality and a military man has to forsake his sleep at the border. To make someone happy, some people have to sacrifice some benefits of life. That is the barter system in the society.

Vitality of Rain Water

Similarly, if hinterland has to recharged with ground water, storm/ monsoon related rains are compulsory. Regions without the benefit of irrigation system (Rivers/ Rivulets/ Canals) have to sustain. Rain is the only source of livelihood. Humans are not the only creatures important for nature. Plants, Animals, Birds and insects also thrive on the same rain water. Hence, it is the duty of the nature to protect the species of its creation.

Therefore, front line (Coastline) regions will have to lose crops and related benefits, due to the storms and related rains. However, lesser the intensity, lesser the pain of the front line. For the survival of many creatures, some sacrifices are to be made by people, who are otherwise the beneficiaries of nature's bounty, with sufficient water resources due to rains compared to their lesser advantaged peers at hinterland.

Desired Result (Weakening of the Storm)

With this logic in mind, our prayers were to minimise the damage to ensure the safety of people. The Mahaa Rudra Yaagam smoothly concluded on 25th November 2013, 4th Monday of Kartika. People around, were still tense about the impact of the impending ferocity of Lehar. But, we were confident that our prayers will be answered sufficiently.

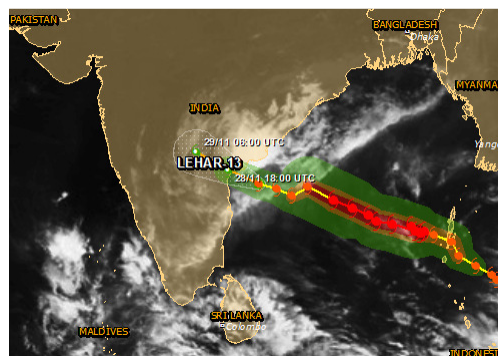
From that Monday, reports about weakening of the cyclone poured in to the relief of people. In the fag end, the storm crossed Machilipatnam, bringing rains normal to the region. At the time of crossing, it was categorised as a low intensity normal depression, with an intensity of 40 - 50 km per hour.

Here, we can observe the lessening of the ferocity of 240 km is limited to one fifth of its anticipated intensity. Before, estimating the colossal loss caused by storms at short intervals, we have to analyse the trauma of hapless poor farmers, whose lives are made or broken by the frequent storms.

But for the power of collective prayer devoid of personal elements, the nation can sustain its welfare and prosperity. One or two natural disasters or manmade disasters, can unwind decades of efforts to achieve prosperity. Hence, this practical experience made me wiser about the efficacy of prayer.

- Do not ask for guarantee of result without the guarantee of sincerity.
- Make your sincere effort without an element of self.
- Whatever is due to you, will be bestowed by the Almighty with compassion.

Picture at the time of LandFall (Weakened Storms)



Om Namasshivaaya

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More information about the course of storm can be had from [NASA](#) link also.