

FROM “THE HOME OF THE BRAVE”

Professor Joy T. Kunjappu, D.Sc., Ph.D.

[from my blog:

<http://myliteraryescapadeforcreativethinkers.blogspot.com/>]

November is the harbinger of festival season all over the world. Here in US we welcome the month, dreaming and ruminating over the imminent festivities that wait for US. The weather change in New York puts us in a heating-cooling cycle which conditions the body, of course, with the attendant, unavoidable joint aches. The trees discard the chlorophyll-bearing greenery to deposit the shining, whitish, dendrimer-like ice-cake decorations. People forget all the dietary restrictions in this season and, on the average, gain 5-10 pounds by the time New Year celebrations dusk. The lamp lighted on the Diwali day persists through Thanksgiving, Hanukkah (A Jewish festival, lasting eight days from the 25th day of Kislev [in December] and commemorating the re-dedication of the Temple in 165 BCE by the Maccabees after its desecration by the Syrians. It is marked by the successive kindling of eight lights), and Christmas.

Past months were shrouded with episodes of great expectations and disappointments – the triumphing election victory of president Obama was with a lessened sheen, as the tribulations that affected 8 million Americans in the North-East causing agony in the aftermath of hurricane Sandy usurped power, both in the electrical and gasoline sense. The unprecedented long queues in the gas stations running to miles around these regions; the traffic blocks enforced by fallen trees; large areas without electric power during those winter-like days; the sight of burnt-down houses; the flooded basements; the disrupted telephone connection – All were foreign even to

residents in their life's tenth decade. Those relatively less-affected, fortunate citizens launched their Thanksgiving litany little early. The extent of looting that could be a natural follower of crises of this magnitude was minimal, though the driver-side mirror glass of my car was plucked down without traces sans the agency of any natural forces. This, added to the unavailability of gasoline, forced me to take an early-morning train to Manhattan at a temperature of 33 F (~ 0 C) to exercise my voting right on the election Tuesday to enjoy the greatest gift endowed to humans who value democratic rights, me being an Indian-American born in independent, democratic India.

In this edition, I touch upon a calamitous episode like Sandy, the significance of election victory in America, the downfall of General Petraeus, and the immanent hope in the imminent Thanksgiving.

Obama's victory was not unexpected. But the vagaries in the psephological (the statistical study of elections and trends in voting) index, indicating popularity, gave anxious moments to Obama-watchers. After his far-below performance in the Colorado debate, the swings in the scale appeared to favor Romney, although the lexicons may be enriched by terms like Romnesia from the days after. In effect, nothing has changed in the political horizon of US after the elections – the same president, and more or less the same composition for the Senate and Congress; the same agenda, namely implementing the ObamaCare, taxing the filthy rich (Buffett Law), generating new jobs, ... [etc. continues to be a good British contribution to avoid cataloging maneuvers.] But looks like, Obama will need to divert attention to international issues in the wake of Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Sandy has changed the perspective of New Yorkers – the anxiety level escalated, comparable to the days after 9/11, though the magnitude and direction of the feeling may not be the same. Sandy taught us again about the unpredictability and vulnerability of life, which gave a swell time to God-watchers. She was not just a storm in the tea cup! It leaves one to wonder why the nomenclature rules of hurricanes embody a vixenish image to the female characters in our lives like Sandy, Irene and Katrina! The great prayers in the Psalms were worth reciting when you were closeted alone with the howling and catcalls that winds passing through the corridor of destruction penetratingly pressurized your ear drums.

That takes us to a juicy affair that culminated in the downfall of the CIA director – the former General Petraeus. Chat rooms were brisk with discussions on infidelity, the prominent toll-taker in American marriage/divorce. More than 50 % of marriages in US end up in divorce. Infidelity has been defined in various ways as a tribute to the philosophy of convenience: An infidel act, in this context, is one that you perform, which you may not do in your spouse's presence – may be a little extreme view, though not far-fetched. Another definition of infidelity, divorced from conventional morality concepts, says that infidelity is what the couple defines. This principle has been found to be applied in various shades in many apparently successful marriages, where the spouses cheat one another fully knowing, but still continue living together owing to financial and other social interests. But many self-respecting souls do not stomach such a degrading definition of this important social institution. One can add more scenarios that help understanding this domain and can coat stabilizing glues to stitch the wear and tear in the honey-moon coats. The impact of Petraeus affair on the American national security is yet to be assessed in relation to Benghazi or internal matters.

Tomorrow is the Thanksgiving Day of 2012. Thanksgiving, in any standard, is the supreme, secular national holiday that celebrates the peace-seeking truce of our pilgrim fathers with native Indians. Dictionaries describe this festival as “An annual national holiday marked by religious observances and a traditional meal including turkey. The holiday commemorates a harvest festival celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1621, and is held in the US on the fourth Thursday in November. A similar holiday is held in Canada, usually on the second Monday in October.” I happened to participate in an inter-faith thanksgiving ceremony two days ago in a neighboring church, where many Christian denominations were represented aside from Jewish communities, though Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh presence were not visible. A sense of fraternity pervaded when a Jewish Rabi accompanied the choir of a Christian group on his guitar because their stipulated guitarist could not show up. Most of the Thanksgiving messages delivered at the pulpit by the leaders of various sects were inundated with the prayerful thanking for sparing the community with more ravages of Sandy!

**Happy
Thanksgiving Day
To All!**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JFK', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the bottom of the letters.