CONCLUSION

The notion of Indian Ocean as a region existed in the minds of men long before the European advent in its waters with Vasco da Gama (1497-8). Areas around the Indian Ocean had links pulsating primarily with trade and commerce along its littoral, but equally strongly with cross-culturation.

Indian Ocean, characterised by unique geological contiguity, relief, climate, and geographical compactness, constitutes a region inhabited by the people ranging from the primitive to most sophisticated, and professing all major religions of the world. The proposition that Indian Ocean constitutes a region or not is unmistakably characterised by a unity which may seem difficult to sustain. But the interactive linkages among various peoples and places, and the perceptions and policies of major powers, especially the super-powers, have been such that this area is well acknowledged as a distinctive geopolitical region possessing 'global influencing characteristics'.

The 'rebirth of European mind', with Renaissance extending from 1300 to about 1650 A.D., gave birth to new institutions and ways of thinking in Europe. Italy became the most important centre of scientific discovery, notably in the field of astronomy, mathematics, physics and medicine. The use of new scientific discoveries augured the 'Oceanic Age' which helped in expansion of commerce and voyages of discovery, marking the European transition from semi-static, localised, non-profit economy of middle ages to the dynamic, world-wide, capitalistic regime of the 15th and succeeding centuries that continued till about 1700. The successful use of magnetic compass, ship-building, better cannons and allied maritime technology helped the Portuguese, Dutch and later Britain, France and others to get into and then take over the profiteering trade network outside the geographical confines of Europe in the Indian Ocean. The rivalries, jealousies and cut-throat competition among the European powers in trade and commerce spilled over into the Indian Ocean also. The respective European powers traded in spices, textiles, luxury goods, indigo etc. and imposed a trade regime in the Indian Ocean. In the process they defeated their local competitors, particularly the Arabs and Indians.
The Afro-Asian lands were way behind in science and technology and the local technologies, such as they were, were deliberately destroyed concomitantly with a conscious policy of denying implantation of emerging technologies of Europe. In furtherance of an elaborate imperialist design the diffusion of European technology was systematically and deliberately, not allowed to occur. As the relationship between Europe and Afro-Asia became multi-dimensional, multifaceted (political, cultural, strategic etc. rather than merely commercial) and complex, the European masters harnessed and employed technological capability to sustain their superiority in all spheres in Afro-Asia.

Almost everywhere in the Indian Ocean region the traditional systems of learning were overwhelmed and supplanted in the name of modernisation that would serve the interest of particular European power.

The occupied lands were surveyed [topographical, hydrographical, geodesic, geological surveys] only to map resources and strengthen political, military, administrative and economic control of metropolitan power. The establishment of transportation networks of rail and road ways, telegraph and wireless, a particular type of education, a certain kind of machinery and techniques on a limited scale to work in select areas (like mines, forests, drilling for subterranean resources and so on) were employed in the creation and maintenance of the military, administrative and commercial infrastructure in the occupied lands for facilitating rule and economic exploitation there.

The countries in the region remained economically backward, politically maimed, socially oppressed, and underdeveloped in terms of modern technology. Neither had they economic infrastructure and/or technology to harness their resources nor viable political set-ups. Their social systems were hide-bound, orthodox, and far away from scientific temper.

In the process, the differential in the technological capabilities and levels of European powers in the Indian Ocean region and the natives became widely disparate. The gap between the two was more manifest in the sphere of military technology, which made possible the firm grip the Europeans acquired over the region. At the time of their independence from colonial yoke, the region suffered not only from the deprivation and denial of the modernising upsurges, they also suffered from the perversions of modernisation inherent in the phenomenon.
The land and peoples of the Indian Ocean region can be divided into eight distinctive sub-regions viz., southern and eastern Africa; South Asia; south-east Asia and Australia; Antarctica and the island states of the Ocean. A survey of these 28 littoral & 6 Island-states shows that most of these countries had a turbulent past, experiencing subjugation and economic exploitation at the hands of one or the other European power. Rich in resources, they lack requisite technology and skilled manpower to harness these resources for meeting the basic needs of the people. Barring the petroleum exporting countries of Arab-Gulf region and a possible exception of South Africa, Australia and Singapore, most of these countries have agro-based economies, rural and illiterate population, have few and/or insignificant industries, very few educational and scientific institutions and additionally lack adequate economic infrastructure. They have perpetual political instability leading to undemocratic and unresponsive political systems. Most of them have a wide ranging vibrant variety within their respective bounds, which merely highlights the strong undercurrent and aspects of innate sameness or similarity.

Clearly, the diversity and variations characterising the Indian Ocean are tremendous --and of course complex and compelling-- than what obtains in the Pacific or the Atlantic. The history of the Indian Ocean with its origins in antiquity makes this diversity rich and fascinating. In comparison the history of the other two major oceans is new and quite lacking in the impulses and experience that has pervaded the Indian Ocean. it is precisely this factor that has conditioned and continues to affect the totality of environment of the Indian Ocean.

Under the circumstances, from this flows too the necessity of being selective, rather than exhaustive, in examining any single aspect of the region or any meaningful analysis of it. Five countries chosen --namely, South Africa, Iran, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka-- seem to be representative enough for our study and analysis.

Evidently, the course which the history of these five states has followed, and the path they have chosen for themselves for development into modern state have not been identical even though there are considerable similarities here and there in many areas. Whether it is their respective geographic features that are responsible for divergence or the texture of their socio-culture fabrics, or indeed the variety and the variation of external colonial impact on them that are responsible for the divergences is difficult or possible
or perhaps even desirable to say. The fact remains that none of them is, or can perhaps be, a model for the other. Colonialism is apparently the one common factor that puts them in the same category of developing countries in the region. Otherwise their paths to development and modernization are visibly different. This is clearly reflected in their aspirations, capabilities and compulsions.

The complex range of colonial legacies; the plurality inhering national and sub-national tensions and conflicts in these newly independent countries, along with the diversities of their geography, race, religion and ideology set in a totally changed [post-war] globalised international environment, pushed these states to concern themselves at once with long neglected, overdue economic development.

The compulsions of economic development, arising from long unarticulated or suppressed aspirations of the people, had to find expression in a variety of ways. Besides the stability and sensitivity of the newly installed or adopted political systems, infrastructure of science and technology for harnessing the available resources to meet the basic needs of the people had to be created or augmented in these states. After independence, they were obliged either to import technology, or generate and harness it themselves, to utilize their resources, for providing better health, education, food and nutrition, social amenities and overall improved standard of living of their peoples.

As we know, it is the political leadership who decides upon the import or the generation of science and technology to be employed for goal attainment. The political systems most of these countries adopted had their own weaknesses. The persons wielding power had other priorities in their mind than developing a viable scientific and technological network, even though they fully knew its importance. In this process, staying in power became more important than the economic and technological development these countries. The real purpose of political independence took gradually a back seat. Sluggish and lopsided development that followed as a result, steadily increased their dependence and made them vulnerable to those erstwhile colonial powers of Euro-America.

The people soon became dissatisfied, disgruntled and disillusioned. To cope with mounting disappointment and frustration of the people, the regimes often resorted to populist measures, suppression, use of religion and
exaggerated threat perception from outside to cling to power. As a consequence, in none of these select five states has a full realization of the aspirations of the people been achieved.

The factor compounding and confounding the frustrated aspirations is of course the internal as well as external factors operating in the region. Even though the homogeneity and heterogeneity are juxtaposed and operate at certain levels and in certain areas, practically all segments of the ocean are disturbed in varying degrees. In some cases the tension or conflict is latent or potential; in others it is manifest and chronic. The struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the popular revolution in Iran, the Challenge to central authority in Sri Lanka, for instance, are cases in point.

Notwithstanding the differentials in the conditions and capabilities of these five representative states, it is apparent that they share common internal aspirations of rapid economic development and self-reliance, political stability through open and participative political system and modernization by developing industry and science and technology. This commonality in aspirations has resulted in the strong urges and sentiments of mutual cooperation, albeit not on the scale and with the sincerity some would wish, or are even possible actually. The scope in this regard is vast indeed, especially now that the constraints and distortions inflicted by the super and other outside powers in the Ocean have practically disappeared with the Soviet Union.

In the present changed, outside-powers-free scenario of the Ocean, India looms large, capable and of considerable consequence for others there. Emerged as it has as a significant technological power with a huge reservoir of skilled manpower backed by a growing economy, India, clearly, has a great deal to offer to the life and lands of the Ocean. It can, and perhaps will, encourage and enhance the capacities and capabilities of Indian ocean countries in this regard.

Given its geopolitical location in the Ocean, India is destined to play a leading role in the region. Its huge, expanding institutional network in science, technology and education, together with its achievements in the realm of outer space, Antarctic and ocean enhance its credibility and importance as an easily accessible centre and source of science and technology to which the needy in the Indian ocean region can turn. As a supplier of relevant technology, on
easily acceptable terms alongwith the maintenance manpower, India stands out in the Ocean. With her active and meaningful role in the World affairs generally, and in the Indian Ocean region particularly, India is bound to maintain its preeminent position and role there. The more so, in the present day world sans bipolarity and the threat of a nuclear holocaust, ideological proselytisation etc.

In the largely geopolitical world today, where threats and challenges are those of depleting ozone layer, ecological disasters and of environment conservation, alongwith its sensitive harnessing for rapid, imaginative economic development, rather than an annihilating Third World War, pervasive cooperation is of the essence. Actually conscious of this that India is, and having a worthy record of performance in this regard to her credit too, it can confidently be suggested that her stakes in promoting cooperation are vital and pressing. As an actor of some significance in the region she may want to ensure that the potential of intra-regional cooperation is stretched to the limit and realised to the maximum.