

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

March 2018



***“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”***

*– The Mother*

Year 8

Issue 12

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# THE RESURGENT INDIA

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## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

*Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels*

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## **A Declaration**

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

— The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

## WELCOME CHINA'S 'PRESIDENT FOR LIFE'

The amendments to the Chinese Constitution at the ongoing National People's Congress removing the formal two-term limit to Presidential appointments mark a welcome step in shedding the façade of ineffectual artificial modern liberal democracy and strive towards a true vision of society and internationalism governed by the principles rooted in communal harmony. This is happening at a time when the Western democracy has, since a long time, thoroughly degenerated into a carefully managed puppet of big capital, punctuated by periodic elections every few years which give the people the illusion of the exercise of political power. In reality, democracy had become nothing but a numeric exercise in a utilitarian system, while the real power rests in the hands of those with money. ***The election of Trump in USA, the popularity of Putin in Russia, the resurgence of BJP across India, the resurgence of French people led by a President who has taken the entrenched lethargic socialist interests head-on, and, now the overwhelming support for bringing back the 'President for life' system in China, show that the people world-over are revolting against the carefully managed façade of Western liberal democracy.***

The Chinese have been accustomed to the idea of 'President for life', first, in the form of monarchical rule and then during the years of Mao Zedong. It was only after 1976 that Mao's liberal successor, Deng Xiaoping, to usher in the capitalist economy in China, along with several other changes, did away with the 'President for life' policy and instead introduced formal two-term limit to the re-election of the President. But because the Communist Party of China (CPC), along with the Central Military Commission (CMC), continued to reign supremely over the Chinese polity and foreign and defence affairs, the institution of the two-term limit did not mean much. ***The removal of the two-term Presidential election limit is just a formal***

***change, as Xi was already the leader of the CPC and the CMC – the two most powerful institutions in Chinese polity – and they, in any case, have no term limits. So, Xi would have continued to hold sway well into the future, with or without this small formal change. But with the removal of the term-limit, the emergence of an unnecessary parallel power centre is precluded and the smooth functioning of domestic and foreign affairs can take place.***

For the apologists of the two-term limit, such a limit could, at best, inspire competitive politics within the CPC for higher positions – but this intra-party politics is hardly ‘democratic’ politics. Quite to the contrary, in fact. Intra-party competition within CPC – when there were no political parties in the public arena and no open elections – gave rise to a corrupt system based on politics of patronage, where individual members and those belonging to powerful and wealthy families would take advantage by lobbying those at the top or would themselves harbor ambitions to rule the country.

***All the while, this unhealthy competition remained confined within the CPC, thereby giving rise to a privileged corrupt class of Chinese ‘princelings’ against whom even the public started revolting several years ago. How such a system could be called ‘democratic’ in even the remotest sense of the word is baffling, to put it mildly – one wonders why, then, critics are decrying the passing of such a system, which was ushered in when Xi Jinping assumed power. With Xi’s ascendance to power, one of his most conspicuous first actions was, precisely, to root out this entrenched corruption from the system.*** Obviously, the international media – with Indian media parroting their international counterparts – liked to term this as suppression of ‘political dissent’ and suppression of anyone who could pose a threat to Xi. But these remain mere speculations in ***an age where ‘dissent’ itself has become a manufactured and sponsored process – like how the West commonly funds ‘democratic dissent’***

***in various parts of the world to overthrow a recalcitrant regime or the ubiquitous lobbying which has become an indispensable part of the political scene in Washington DC.***

In the Chinese case of the rise of Xi, the suppression of dissent theory does not hold because his measures, his re-election and the imprinting of his thought on socialism have had widespread support in the party and the government as well as in the public. The only few dissenting voices are, reportedly, limited to Western-educated or Western-backed Chinese living in the USA – their numbers as well as their location rendering their voices largely irrelevant.

The democracy they seem to be trying to bring into China – at a time when the West is failing – has never ever existed in the one-party system of China, as economic capitalism never gave way to political capitalism and that was a saving grace for Chinese culture and society and allowed it to ascend to the level of the global political and economic superpower that it has now become. ***The tightly-knit political system, especially under Xi, has become an instrument for the revival of traditional Chinese values and a threat to the onslaught of Christianity, which had gained substantial foothold in China.*** Xi and his youth leadership put restrictions on celebrations of Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, April Fool's Day and Halloween, last year.

***Much like the crusade against the corrupt elite of China, it was, again, under Xi's leadership that the voices of the Confucian scholars began to be heard seriously by the government. For more than a decade, they had been lamenting the 'western cultural invasion' of China, but it was only under Xi that the government displayed the gumption to officially adopt the policy of recognizing this cultural invasion and fight it by a policy of national cultural revival, aligned with the principles of Xi's ideas of socialism.*** The effort to 'sinicise' alien cultures and political doctrines (like capitalism



and socialism) has seen a marked revival under Xi, who is known to be a staunch nationalist. In fact, only last month, China succeeded in instituting a policy in which the Chinese government, and not the Pope, became the final authority in the appointment of Bishops in churches – a first anywhere.

This staunch nationalism, under which Xi is uniting the CPC, the CMC and the entire nation, is one of the reasons for the rise of China and the public popularity of Xi. As for the questions of democracy and socialism, it must be emphasized that ***the present spirit of Chinese socialism (and not Communism) is not at all the regimented, heartless and selfish economic socialism of the West. The effort in Asia has always been towards a true spirit of socialism, grounded in spiritual harmony – China, under Xi, is consciously trying to move towards that.***

To quote from Sri Aurobindo here, “Socialism is not an European idea, it is essentially Asiatic and especially Indian. What is called Socialism in Europe, is the old Asiatic attempt to effect a permanent solution of the economic problem of society which will give man leisure and peace to develop undisturbed his higher self. Without Socialism democracy would remain a tendency that never reached its fulfilment, a rule of the masses by a small aristocratic or monied class with the consent and votes of the masses, or a tyranny of the artisan classes over the rest. ***Socialistic democracy is the only true democracy, for without it we cannot get the equalised and harmonised distribution of functions, each part of the community existing for the good of all and not struggling for its own separate interests, which will give humanity as a whole the necessary conditions in which it can turn its best energies to its higher development. To realise those conditions is also the aim of Hindu civilization... The fulfilment of Hinduism is the fulfilment of the highest tendencies of human civilization and it must include in its***

***sweep the most vital impulses of modern life. It will include democracy and Socialism also, purifying them, raising them above the excessive stress on the economic adjustments which are the means, and teaching them to fix their eyes more constantly and clearly on the moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection of mankind which is the end.” (CWSA 7, 648-85).***

That this Asiatic idea of polity could ever degenerate into dictatorship is invalid. ***Only regimented systems, arising out of the material-vital spirit to cater to the selfish interests of a utilitarian and commercialized society (be it communism or capitalism or socialism), can so degenerate into dictatorships. Dictatorships are a very common modern phenomenon.*** To suppose that materialistic, culture-less and unregenerate democratic tendencies can get rid of dictatorships is a folly. Examples abound. For instance, ***almost all anti-colonial nationalist movements, spanning Asia, Africa and Middle-east, were born out of a discourse of ‘rights’ and ‘democracy’ and ‘equality’ – India’s Nehru was a leader and product of that age. Yet, except for India, almost all these so-called democratic struggles – including the later ones like the creation of Bangladesh – ended in abject and irrevocable dictatorships. Witness that no country on the Indian sub-continent is a democracy except India herself.***

***So, on what historical or psychological basis can it possibly be said that Xi’s transition to power would lead to a personality-cult type of dictatorship? We know nothing about democracy, except as a system where majoritarian and populist tendencies rule the roost and there is always conflict between narrow competing interests, and that is where it stops – there is never any further talk of enlightenment or true psychological progress or true internationalism. The more the competition and strife and demands – no matter what its nature or how degenerate it is – the better***

## ***the prospects for democracy.***

When a country tries to practice a wider and more magnanimous approach – like China – it is ostracized. How can a flailing western system preach to us democracy at this stage? Ancient Indian system – a culture so revered by the Chinese also – abounds with examples of an ideal polity. By making the rule of Dharma – as sanctioned by the rishis of the age or by the Shastra or some spiritual authority – the ancient polity ensured that the ruler (in what is today called ‘monarchy’) was always subject to the will of the people, who lived in a communal and organic harmony in the society.

***The ancient system vested political power in spiritual authority – when the centers of power were non-materialistic and non-temporal, so how can there be misuse? In such a system, the modern notions of democracy cannot apply. The question of democracy – as a forceful assertion and charter of demands and perpetual struggle for power – does not even arise in the case of a system which was motivated and worked by consciousness.***

The crippled notions of modern democracy cannot, therefore, be applied to Xi’s new transition to power. And, by all external, practical and ethical yardsticks, it makes perfect sense. The Modi government, here, seems to be supporting the new development, with both India and China making favourable statements for each other and two key Union ministers from India flying to China to discuss bilateral relations. But these overtures will be of little use, unless India fully grasps the historicity and future potential of India-China relationship.

### **India and the new status of Xi Jinping**

From the point of view of India, contrary to what our ill-informed media would like to analyze, this is an extremely favourable situation. This is so not only because of the mere practical fact of political

stability that Xi's leadership will bring in the years to come, but also because the renewed focus of the Chinese on cultural revival makes it look towards India as its natural ally in the new transformation that is taking place the world-over and in which Asiatic resurgence, led by the restoration of Asia's ancient cultural glory, is the vision that dominates China's internal apolitical circles.

This puts in perspective the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi's, recent comment that **"The Chinese dragon and Indian elephant must not fight each other but dance with each other. If China and India are united, one plus one is not equal to two but eleven. Despite some tests and difficulties, the China-India relationship continues to grow."** This was further confirmed by Chinese foreign affairs spokesperson, Lu Kang's statement that Wang Yi's comments represented China's 'basic position' on its relationship with India. It is unfortunate that only the government of India welcomed China's comments, while the majority of the public 'analysts' either dismissed them or treated them with suspicion, as usual.

*For how long can India – allowing narrow-minded views to prevail – continue to harbor a selfish, Western-inspired foreign policy of 'balance of powers' by striking utilitarian relationships with nations to balance out competing interests and contain rivals? It is commendable that China is not even reacting to India's plans to 'contain' it in the Indian Ocean by allying with Japan, USA and Australia, or, trying to forge a BRI-replica through the Asia-Africa Economic Corridor or the trade route with Iran and Afghanistan – all being done, like Doklam, to ostensibly put China in its place.* Despite these irritants spawned by Indian foreign policy, China, on its part, is not leaving any stone unturned to accommodate India. From offering to rename the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to agreeing to grey-list Pakistan in the terror-funding list, China is

trying its level best to accommodate India while ensuring that its business interests in Pakistan are not disturbed.

***India has not yet fully grasped the positive role China's intervention in Pakistan will play in the future.*** China's foreign economic policy mainly entails making poorer nations indebted to itself without being a brutal creditor like the World Bank or the IMF – this enables China to control these countries as well as achieve its purposes of positive cultural indoctrination in them. Pakistan is nothing more than one such country. What China did in Sri Lanka and Africa, it is doing in Pakistan. Recent reports claim that China has been secretly holding talks with the Baloch separatists without involving Pakistan in order to protect its business interests in the region – this shows how much of an 'equal' ally Pakistan really is. Leaked documents of CPEC also show that China has been interested in controlling the Pakistani media and other cultural centres and conduct surveillance in Pakistani cities – obviously, de-radicalizing Pakistan would serve to counter the Muslim separatist threat faced by China in its Xinjiang province.

Despite China treating Pakistan as nothing more than a convenient strategic ground, India cannot seem to grasp this. It continues to want China to treat Pakistan and India equally – what a travesty of equality that would be! Despite India's insistence, the fact that China treats India with utmost respect and as its own equal in power and cultural history, has been India's luck for decades. But India wants to be treated like Pakistan – a classic instance of how foreign policy fails, even as wise men think they are being very smart.

The reason China holds India in high regard, despite constant political tensions between the two countries, is mainly because of India's status as a cultural powerhouse and its ancient lineage – the same reason why countries in the West are dismissed or treated platonically as no more than business partners by China. This is set

to accelerate under Xi's leadership. If Xi remains around for a long time and if India-China relations get back to their true spirit, the vision of Asiatic resurgence may not seem that distant a dream.

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## SUSTAINED VICTORY IN THE NORTHEAST INDIA

The clean sweep made by the BJP in the recent elections in three north-eastern states – and especially in Tripura – represents a very important movement of national consolidation. These elections have clearly revealed how the northeastern India had, for the last several decades, been craftily manipulated for political ends to sustain polarization and cultural degradation and reap the resultant underhanded benefits of corruption in an atmosphere of intimidation. This has been the political model of northeastern India since Independence – a model which RSS has been trying to challenge since 1970s and in which many martyrs have sacrificed their lives, till as recently as the Tripura election of 2018.

When this sustained decades-old groundwork of the RSS combined with the political determination of the Modi government towards the north-east since 2014, the result brought the BJP to power in almost all northeast states. Since 2014, the BJP's average vote share in the northeast India has grown from just 3.9% to 27%.

With the latest election results, it has become evident that the BJP is making significant strides among the Bengali and even the non-Hindu voters across the region, and has significantly shored up its political support base in Assam, Tripura and Nagaland. In Tripura, it pretty much secured a majority on its own, completely vanquishing the 25-year old spell of the CPI (M) by securing 35 seats, while its ally, IPFT got 8 seats and the CPI (M) was reduced to just 16 seats. From a vote-share of just 1.3% in 2013, the BJP's vote-share has gone up 41.7 percentage points to 43% – no wonder the victory is being viewed as a miracle. Similarly, the progress in Nagaland too has been impressive, where it has won 12 seats on its own – from a vote-share of just 1.8% in 2013, its vote-share has gone up to 15.3%, showing a 13.5 percentage point increase. Compare this with the

Congress vote-share in Nagaland, which fell from 22.8% to 2.1% during the same period. In Meghalaya, the BJP's vote-share jumped from 1.27% in 2013 to 9.6% – a significant increase.

Besides these immediate results, the overall rise of the BJP in the northeastern India has seen a similar trajectory. In other states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Assam, the BJP's vote share has risen since 2014. This rapid and expansive success of the BJP cannot be explained away by anti-incumbency or rejection of the Congress. It actually shows rising popularity of the party in a region which is completely non-Hindu – a mostly Christian-majority region.

Consider the demography of the northeastern India – while 34% of the population in Assam is Muslim, in other states Christianity dominates, with Nagaland and Mizoram having more than 85% of Christian population, Meghalaya about 74% Christian population, and, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh having between 30-40% of Christian population. In this, mostly Christian-dominated region, BJP's expanding real foothold, shows how the nationalist integration of country under the universal principles of Sanatana Dharma is taking place.

*The spirit of Sanatana Dharma, being eternal and transcendent, accepts all faiths and sustains all diversity within itself, rejecting, at the same time, everything that runs antithetical to the Divinely-guided destiny of the country. **This spirit of active assimilation and rejection has always been a part of India's history, even when the country was at her lowest. But, today, the nationalist fervour is almost as pronounced as seen during India's freedom struggle. People are irresistibly rising up to break free from the shackles that have so far kept them bound to satisfy the whims of political convenience. This explains why excuses such as secularism have become a farce, while development has taken on a new meaning, no longer confined to material sops or the politics of socialist redistribution, but deeper***



***and actual individual and social well-being linked to the progress of the nation.***

That is why BJP is still going strong, confounding the usual predictions of anti-incumbency into its fourth year in power, after a series of shaking policy decisions and usual policymaking. ***Its development idea does not mean the old utilitarian development idea of giving free entitlements in lure of votes – a new idea is taking root in the minds of the people, which no longer separates our deeper well-being with a strong national identity.***

***The reason for BJP's victory is not its promise of the 7<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission, better jobs or a skillful balancing of Bengali and tribal populations in Tripura – the Congress had already done all of this and a lot more in its heyday of power, and yet, did not manage to win the kind of support that BJP suddenly did.*** Something else is at play here, besides these intermediate outward triggers and promises. ***The inevitability of the nationalist integration of India is ruthlessly rooting out all those power-soaked entrenched interests that have stood in the way for decades.***

In the northeastern India, conversions of the tribals has been the site of one such power play, which particularly gained currency and clout during the rule of the one family at the centre. In a state like Arunachal Pradesh, the Christian population grew from just 0.79% in 1971 to 30.26% at the time of the 2011 census, showing how meticulously the conversion project has been carried out under the aegis of the Congress. Despite the institution of the state's 1978 anti-conversion act, not a single prosecution has taken place, despite so many conversions. And, when Rajiv Gandhi came to power, he persuaded the Arunachal Chief Minister to allow Christian missionaries to work freely – overturning the policies of Nehru and Indira Gandhi to keep the missionaries out of the strategically important state – resulting in a 6% upsurge in Christian population

in just 10 years between 1981 and 1991 (Mazumdar 2017). This politics has continued until – through the BJP – the fortunes of the state were ruthlessly overturned in mid-2016 when the Congress lost its entire government wholesale to the BJP.

***In all of this politics, the close chain connecting the state, the militants, the dominant religious forces and national parties, in the northeastern India sheds a lot of light on how the region has been deliberately kept deprived, restless and obstructed from integrating into mainstream India. The BJP's recent success and its exposure of other parties further reinforces how the northeast was, historically, first marginalized, and, then its marginality was exploited for votes by political parties that claim to pander to marginalized interests. This was a model of functioning which first creates victims and then exploits their victimhood in a manner that passes off under the garb of compassion and affirmative action.***

It is particularly noteworthy that the recent decent victory in Nagaland and the ability to become a part of the government in Meghalaya happened despite a sustained hostile campaign by the Baptist Church to exhort the people to not vote for the BJP. It didn't fully work. In Nagaland, the concerted personal interest of Modi, since 2014, ensured that the Naga accord signed with the rebel militant Naga outfit, NSCN (I-M), roped in the latter in such a way that the Church lost its most powerful instrument.

Besides, the personal efforts by Modi and other top leaders of the BJP and the RSS, who threw themselves entirely into the northeast more than any other part of the country, they also adopted the strategy of not responding to all the negative propaganda and instead focused on cracking the tough equations by ensuring the revival of tribal heroes and heroines, like Rani Gaidinliu, and by reminding them of their own worships, which often flowed from Hinduism's Vaishnavite, Shaivite and Tantric variations.

Besides this sustained effort at national integration, under the aegis of Sanatana Dharma, carried out by the RSS and its affiliates by braving the bloodshed and violence in the region, the corruption and intimidating tactics of existing governments, like Manik Sarkar's in Tripura, aided the process. ***Like in states like Kerala and West Bengal, in Tripura too, Mr. Sarkar's personal image notwithstanding, the killer machine of CPI (M) cadres were, virtually, indirectly ruling the state and rigging elections through strong-man tactics, bribery and primitive booth-rigging and other methods. Ignored by the national media, cut-off from the central government and the attention it needed and having become a personal fiefdom of CPI (M), the primitive electoral machinations in Tripura were neither resisted nor reported. But, despite losing a number of its own cadres, the BJP resisted this system and the people, Bengali and tribals alike – who were earlier scared to raise their voices – responded.***

In all likelihood, the Bengali-tribal divide and the resultant bogey of past insurgency was overplayed by the media, which conveniently forgot the fact that the CPI (M) leadership had kept the tribals artificially subdued to control the insurgency, giving rise to formations like the IPFT, which went on a murder rampage before this election. On the other hand, as the RSS continues to work among the tribals, the upliftment and integration of tribal areas will be real and not artificial. After all, keeping alive the artificial suppression, mutual divisions among warring tribes and insurgency against India has been the hallmark of northeast politics that few mainstream national parties in the region have cared to depart from.

As for the power of the Church, the RSS does not view this as such a big threat. Over the years, it has become sure in its ground work and ability to initiate reconversions. After all, Christianity in India has ceased to owe its allegiance to foreign soil, unlike the

Muslim radicals in Kashmir – so the northeast is a one-off problem, involving exhaustive hard work and integration of thousands of warring tribes. And, with the Western funders of the Church themselves losing ground in North-Atlantic countries and with neighbours like governments in Myanmar, Bangladesh and China being firmly on board with Narendra Modi, potential and existing insurgents are only set to lose material and political resources in the times to come. With the spirit of nationalism gaining ground all over the country, even the tough and complicated politics of northeast is being swept away, through all ways and means necessary.

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## HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (34)

### XIII. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THE HISTORICAL BASES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA

#### E. THE HISTORICAL CONFIRMATION OF THE DEEPER TRUTH OF THE VEDA IN THE UPANISHADS

The notions generated by the European scholars of the Veda are a stumbling block to the proper approach to Vedanta. “Under their influence we come to the Upanishads with a theory of their origin and in a spirit hostile to the sympathetic insight to which alone they will render up their secret. The very sense of the word Vedanta indicates clearly the aim of the seers who composed the Upanishads as well as the idea they entertained, – the true & correct idea, I believe, of their relations to the Veda. They were, they thought, recording a fulfilment of Vedic knowledge, giving shape to the culmination to which the sacred hymns pointed, and bringing out the inner and essential meaning of the practical details of the Karmakanda. The word, Upanishad, itself meant, I would suggest, originally not a session of speculative inquirers (the ingenious & plausible German derivation) but an affirmation and arrangement of essential truths & principles. The sense, it would almost seem, was at first general but afterwards, by predominant practice, applied exclusively to the Brahmi Upanishad, in which we have the systematisation particularly of the Brahmavidya. In any case such a systematisation of Vedic Knowledge was what these Rishis thought themselves to be effecting.... I am convinced that the claim was neither a pretence nor an error. **I believe the Vedas to hold a sense which neither mediaeval India nor modern Europe has grasped, but which was perfectly plain to the early Vedantic thinkers. Max Muller has understood one thing by the Vedic mantras, Sayana has understood another, Yaska had his own interpretations of their antique diction, but none of them understood what Yajnavalkya and Ajatashatru understood.** We shall yet have to go back from the Nature-worship and henotheism of the Europeans,

beyond the mythology and ceremonial of Sayana, beyond even the earlier intimations of Yaska and recover – nor is it the impossible task it seems – the knowledge of Yajnavalkya and Ajatashatru. **It is because we do not understand the Vedas that three fourths of the Upanishads are a sealed book to us.** Even of the little we think we can understand, much has been insecurely grasped and superficially comprehended, so that these sublimest of all Scriptures have become, latterly, more often a ground for philosophic wranglings than an illumination to the soul. For want of this key profound scholars have fumbled and for want of this guidance great thinkers gone astray, – MaxMuller emitted his wonderful utterance about the babblings of humanity’s nonage, Shankara left so much of his text unexplained or put it by as inferior truth for the ignorant, Vivekananda found himself compelled to admit his non-comprehension of the Vedantins’ cosmological ideas & mention them doubtfully as curious speculations. **It is only Veda that can give us a complete insight into Vedanta.** Only when we thoroughly know the great Vedic ideas in their totality shall we be able entirely to appreciate the profound, harmonious and grandiose system of thought of our early forefathers. **By ignoring the Vedas we lose all but a few rays of the glorious sun of Vedanta.”**<sup>1</sup>

“...in the Upanishads the whole method is suprarational; it is the method of intuition and revelation expressed in a language and with a substance that might be characterised rather as the language of mysticism than of rationality. **These sages do not protest against polytheism; they affirm the gods. These spiritual Titans do not protest against ritual and ceremony, they insist on the necessity of ritual and ceremony. It is true that they deny emphatically the sufficiency of material sacrifices for the attainment of the highest; but where does the Rigveda itself assert any such efficacy?** From this single circumstance no protestant movement against ritual and sacrifice can be inferred, but at the most we can imagine rather than deduce a spiritual movement embracing while it exceeded ritual and sacrifice.... **The Vedantic thinkers positively believed that they were proceeding on a Vedic basis. They quote Vedic authority,**

**appeal to Vedic ideas, evidently thinking themselves standing on the secure rock of Veda.”<sup>2</sup>**

“...I find in the Upanishads abounding indications of a preexisting philosophical system, minute & careful at least & to my experience profound as well as elaborate. **Where is the indication of any other than a Vedic origin for this well-appointed metaphysics, science, cosmology, psychology? Everywhere it is the text of the Veda that is alluded to or quoted, the knowledge of Veda that is presupposed. The study of Veda is throughout considered as the almost indispensable preliminary for the understanding of Vedanta. How came so colossal, persistent & all-pervading a mistake to have been committed by thinkers of so high a capacity?** Or when, under what impulsion & by whom was this great & careful system originated & developed? Where shall we find any documents of that speculation, – its initial steps, its gradual clarifying, its stronger & more assured progress? The Upanishads are usually supposed themselves to be such documents. But the longer I study these profound compositions, the less I feel able to accept this common and very natural hypothesis. If we do not prejudge their more recondite ideas as absurd, if we try sympathetically to enter into the thoughts & beliefs of these Rishis, to understand what precise facts or experiences stand behind their peculiar language, especially if we can renew those experiences by the system they themselves used, the system of Yoga, – a method still open to us – it will, I think, very soon dawn upon our minds that **these works are of a very different nature from the speculative experiments they are generally supposed to be. They represent neither a revolt nor a fresh departure. We shall find that we are standing at a goal, not assisting at a starting-point. The form of the Upanishads is the mould not of an initial speculation but of an ultimate thinking.** It is a consummation, not a beginning, the soul of an existing body, not the breath of life for a body yet to come into being. Line after line, passage after passage indicates an unexpressed metaphysical, scientific or psychological knowledge which the author thinks himself entitled to take for granted, just as a modern thinker

addressing educated men on the ultimate generalisations of Science takes for granted their knowledge of the more important data and ideas accepted by modern men. All this mass of thought so taken for granted must have had a previous existence and history. It is indeed possible that it was developed between the time of the Vedas and the appearance of these Vedantic compositions but left behind it no substantial literary trace of its passage and progress. But it is also possible that the Vedas themselves when properly understood, contain these beginnings or even most of the separate data of these early mental sciences. It is possible that the old teachers of Vedanta were acting quite rationally & understood their business better than we understand it for them when they expected a knowledge of Veda from their students, sometimes even insisting on this preliminary knowledge, not dogmatically, not by a blind tradition, but because **the Veda contained that basis of experimental knowledge upon which the generalisations of Vedanta were built.**"<sup>3</sup>

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# THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (34)

## 6. INDIAN POLITY

### IV. THE NATURE OF THE INDIAN MONARCHICAL STATE – ITS SUBJECTION TO THE YOKE OF THE DHARMA

“But Indian monarchy previous to the Mahomedan invasion was not, in spite of a certain sanctity and great authority conceded to the regal position and the personality of the king as the representative of the divine Power and the guardian of the Dharma, in any way a personal despotism or an absolutist autocracy: it had no resemblance to the ancient Persian monarchy or the monarchies of western and central Asia or the Roman imperial government or later European autocracies: it was of an altogether different type from the system of the Pathan or the Mogul emperors. The Indian king exercised supreme administrative and judicial power, was in possession of all the military forces of the kingdom and with his Council alone responsible for peace and war and he had too a general supervision and control over the good order and welfare of the life of the community, but his power was not personal and it was besides hedged in by safeguards against abuse and encroachment and limited by the liberties and powers of other public authorities and interests who were, so to speak, lesser copartners with him in the exercise of sovereignty and administrative legislation and control. He was in fact a limited or constitutional monarch, although the machinery by which the constitution was maintained and the limitation effected differed from the kind familiar in European history; and even the continuance of his rule was far more dependent than that of mediaeval European kings on the continued will and assent of the people.

**A greater sovereign than the king was the Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridic and customary law organically governing the life of the people.** This impersonal authority was considered sacred and eternal in its spirit and the

totality of its body, always characteristically the same, the changes organically and spontaneously brought about in its actual form by the evolution of the society being constantly incorporated in it, regional, family and other customs forming a sort of attendant and subordinate body capable of change only from within, – and with the Dharma no secular authority had any right of autocratic interference. The Brahmins themselves were recorders and exponents of the Dharma, not its creators nor authorised to make at will any changes, although it is evident that by an authoritative expression of opinion they could and did favour or oppose this or that tendency to change of principle or detail. **The king was only the guardian, executor and servant of the Dharma, charged to see to its observance and to prevent offences, serious irregularities and breaches. He himself was bound the first to obey it and observe the rigorous rule it laid on his personal life and action and on the province, powers and duties of his regal authority and office.**

This subjection of the sovereign power to the Dharma was not an ideal theory inoperative in practice; for the rule of the socio-religious law actively conditioned the whole life of the people and was therefore a living reality, and it had in the political field very large practical consequences. It meant first that the king had not the power of direct legislation and was limited to the issue of administrative decrees that had to be in consonance with the religious, social, political, economic constitution of the community, – and even here there were other powers than that of the king who shared with him the right of promulgating and seeing to the execution of administrative decrees independently issued, – neither could he disregard in the general tenor and character and the effective result of his administration the express or tacit will of the people.

The religious liberties of the commons were assured and could not normally be infringed by any secular authority; each religious community, each new or long-standing religion could shape its own way of life and institutions and had its own authorities or governing

bodies exercising in their proper field an entire independence. **There was no exclusive State religion and the monarch was not the religious head of the people.** Asoka in this respect seems to have attempted an extension of the royal control or influence and similar velleities were occasionally shown on a minor scale by other powerful sovereigns. But Asoka's so-called edicts of this kind had a recommendatory rather than an imperative character, and the sovereign who wished to bring about a change in religious belief or institutions had always, in accordance with the Indian principle of communal freedom and the obligation of a respect for and a previous consultation of the wishes of those concerned, to secure the assent of the recognised authorities or to refer the matter to a consultative assembly for deliberation, as was done in the famous Buddhist councils, or to arrange a discussion between the exponents of the different religions and abide by the issue. The monarch might personally favour a particular sect or creed and his active preference might evidently have a considerable propagandist influence, but at the same time he was bound to respect and support in his public office all the recognised religions of the people with a certain measure of impartiality, a rule that explains the support extended by Buddhist and Brahmin emperors to both the rival religions. At times there were, mainly in the south, instances of petty or violent State persecutions, but these outbreaks were a violation of the Dharma due to momentary passion at a time of acute religious ferment and were always local and of a brief duration. **Normally there was no place in the Indian political system for religious oppression and intolerance and a settled State policy of that kind was unthinkable.**

The social life of the people was similarly free from autocratic interference. Instances of royal legislation in this province are rare and here too, when it occurred, there had to be a consultation of the will of those concerned, as in the rearrangement or the reconstitution of the caste system by the Sena kings in Bengal after its

disorganisation during a long period of Buddhist predominance. Change in the society was brought about not artificially from above but automatically from within and principally by the freedom allowed to families or particular communities to develop or alter automatically their own rule of life, *ĪcĪra*.

In the sphere of administration the power of the king was similarly hedged in by the standing constitution of the Dharma. His right of taxation was limited in the most important sources of revenue to a fixed percentage as a maximum and in other directions often by the right of the bodies representing the various elements of the community to a voice in the matter and always by the general rule that his right to govern was subject to the satisfaction and good-will of the people. This as we shall see, was not merely a pious wish or opinion of the Brahmin custodians of the Dharma. The king was in person the supreme court and the highest control in the execution of the civil and criminal law, but here too his role was that of the executor: he was bound to administer the law faithfully as it stood through his judges or with the aid of the Brahmin legists learned in these matters. He had the complete and unfettered control in his Council only of foreign policy, military administration and war and peace and of a great number of directive activities. He was free to make efficient arrangements for all that part of the administration that served to secure and promote the welfare of the community, good order, public morals, and all such matters as could best be supervised or regulated by the sovereign authority. He had a right of patronage and punishment consistent with the law and was expected to exercise it with a strict regard to an effect of general beneficence and promotion of the public welfare.

**There could therefore be ordinarily little or no room in the ancient Indian system for autocratic freak or monarchical violence and oppression, much less for the savage cruelty and tyranny of so common an occurrence in the history of some other**

**countries.** Nevertheless such happenings were possible by the sovereign's disregard of the Dharma or by a misuse of his power of administrative decree; instances occurred of the kind, – though the worst recorded is that of a tyrant belonging to a foreign dynasty; in other cases any prolonged outbreak of autocratic caprice, violence or injustice seems to have led before long to an effective protest or revolt on the part of the people. The legists provided for the possibility of oppression. In spite of the sanctity and prestige attaching to the sovereign it was laid down that obedience ceased to be binding if the king ceased to be faithful executor of the Dharma. Incompetence and violation of the obligation to rule to the satisfaction of the people were in theory and effect sufficient causes for his removal. Manu even lays it down that an unjust and oppressive king should be killed by his own subjects like a mad dog, and this justification by the highest authority of the right or even the duty of insurrection and regicide in extreme cases is sufficient to show that absolutism or the unconditional divine right of kings was no part of the intention of the Indian political system. As a matter of fact the right was actually exercised as we find both from history and literature. Another more peaceful and more commonly exercised remedy was a threat of secession or exodus which in most cases was sufficient to bring the delinquent ruler to reason. It is interesting to find the threat of secession employed against an unpopular monarch in the south as late as the seventeenth century, as well as a declaration by a popular assembly denouncing any assistance given to the king as an act of treason. A more common remedy was deposition by the council of ministers or by the public assemblies. The kingship thus constituted proved to be in effect moderate, efficient and beneficent, served well the purposes assigned to it and secured an abiding hold on the affections of the people. The monarchical institution was however only one, an approved and very important, but not, as we see from the existence of the ancient republics, an indispensable element of the Indian socio-political system, and we shall understand nothing

of the real principle of the system and its working if we stop short with a view of the regal façade and fail to see what lay behind it. It is there that we shall find the clue to the essential character of the whole construction.”<sup>1</sup>

*References:*

- 1 CWSA 20: 391-95



*“...at the end of our long mental labour we might know all that has been said of the Eternal, possess all that can be thought about the Infinite and yet we might not know him at all.” (23: 81)*

*– Sri Aurobindo*

*(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, 23: 81)*