

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

September 2018



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

- The Mother

Year 9

Issue 6

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

Year 9

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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, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

SOME MAJOR RECENT SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENTS

The Supreme Court has passed a series of landmark judgements in the last one week, prior to the retirement of CJI Dipak Misra. The judgements encapsulate the important controversies of the day and also expose the ironies of the populist thinking. The important judgements passed by the Court included the constitutionality of the Aadhar Act of 2016, the question prefacing the Ayodhya dispute, and, the question of quota in promotions for SC/ST categories. Other decisions were passed as well, but these stood out, due to the nature of sustained controversy they had courted.

THE AADHAR VERDICT:

One of the most significant verdicts passed by the Court pertained to the constitutionality and scope of Aadhar. At a time when privacy violations and misuse of personal information of people has become rampant around the world, forcing regions like EU to enact the world's most stringent data protection laws, in India too, the debate has been gaining traction around Aadhar. Does the Aadhar mechanism violate a person's right to privacy? In keeping with its 2017 judgement which declared the right to privacy as a fundamental right, in the present judgement too, the Court sought to address these concerns.

It has scrapped certain contentious sections of the Aadhar Act, 2016. Section 57, which empowered private companies (such as mobile companies) to ask for people's Aadhar number and store the biometric information as a pre-condition to providing basic services, has been scrapped by the present judgement. Similarly, related to this, Section 33(2), which allowed the government to access people's biometric information for

the purpose of national security, has also been scrapped. Section 47, which did not allow a private citizen to lodge a complaint when his/her data had been compromised and allowed only the UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) to do so, has similarly been done away with.

In the day-to-day services, while Aadhar has been made compulsory for linking with PAN card and filing Income Tax returns, the requirement of linking it with bank accounts, mobile numbers etc. has been done away with. At the same time, despite the modifications, the Court has upheld the constitutionality of the Aadhar mechanism. It has clearly stated that “The entire aim behind launching this programme is the ‘inclusion’ of the deserving persons who need to get such benefits. When it is serving the much larger purpose by reaching hundreds of millions of deserving persons, it cannot be crucified on the unproven plea of exclusion of some.” In keeping with this, the Court has upheld Section 7 of the Aadhar Act which makes it mandatory for people to have Aadhar in order to access welfare services and subsidy benefits.

The Court has also, disregarding the only dissenting voice on the bench of Justice Chandrachud, upheld the legality of Aadhar and its passage as a money bill under Article 110 of the Constitution. Since the Money Bill does not compulsorily require the assent of the Rajya Sabha and can be passed by the Lok Sabha, the Aadhar was passed as a Money Bill, on the ground that it involved government expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India in order to provide access to welfare schemes.

While all of these major issues in the Aadhar judgement have made the judgement a balanced one, one needs to question the vehement opposition that the Aadhar exercise has faced so far from the brigade of social activists, in the areas of privacy,

national security and social welfare. Incidentally, the very points of opposition, especially in the area of national security, turn out to be potential strengths of the Aadhar exercise. There is little doubt that the Modi government completely revamped the purpose and direction of Aadhar, undertaking it as one of its consistent reforms.

Overtly the focal point continued to remain the targeted delivery of welfare services with the aim of getting rid of middlemen, leakages and corruption in welfare schemes. Yet, there was an effort to make Aadhar mandatory for all other financial and services transactions (like linking bank accounts, mobile numbers, PAN card, admissions and exams etc.) and, more importantly, to track criminal records of people. ***This underlined the ambitious intention to strengthen the capacity of the Indian state to deal with financial duplicities, integrate service delivery options in a person's life and deal with crimes like sexual harassment by using Aadhar in other areas like preparing a National Sex Offenders Registry and by attempting to enact a DNA Profiling Bill.***

It was innovative thinking and right intention to try to make multiple uses of the unique identity that Aadhar gives to each person. The questions of breach of privacy ignore the fact that the mere dispossession of Aadhar does not protect privacy in any way. Just a few days after the Aadhar judgement, a giant social media company, Facebook, suffered one of its most massive data breaches. Government records along with personal information of millions of people registered on various government databases, are easily breachable with or without Aadhar. ***The advancing technological innovation that's creeping into all aspects of our lives, and the privacy violations it brings with it, world over, has rendered the privacy invasion of Aadhar rather tame.***

To suggest that Aadhar empowers the Indian state to become a “surveillance state” would be a misrepresentation, since ***India has already been, for the last several years, one of the biggest surveillance states in the world, after US. With their sophisticated intelligence services and technological prowess, no government in the world needs an Aadhar to spy on its own citizens. Least of all well-established powers like India.***

Neither do private multi-billionaire companies need it. Most of the time, every basic office – even NGOs – in Indian cities has begun to record biometric details of its employees. The timings of entry and exit from offices are no longer recorded on paper, but through machines that record finger prints. Employees do it willingly and without a single protest. It is a near universal and accepted phenomenon in the cities and towns. Mobile phones manufactured by Apple have an option of recording the biometrics of the owner of the phone, to act as a phone password. We allow private companies like Apple to access and store our biometrics and our private details for corporate use, quite willingly, for no serious reason at all. Yet, the recording of similar biometrics by the government has given rise to sweeping allegations of spying and what not.

The surveillance is already full-fledged. It is called the ‘deep state’ in US - a term which has gained popular currency after Trump’s election and signifies how the powers and surveillance capacities of shadow agencies can render even the President of United States a puppet.

Yet, in India, a basic mechanism like Aadhar has managed to trigger such a massive debate on privacy. Nevertheless, with the recent judgement, at least the technicalities have been laid to rest. There is no assurance of whether the data already recorded via Aadhar will be deleted or not, but it is strange that

we do not worry about the biometric data we have voluntarily handed over to our employers, to Apple etc. and make an issue out of the data gleaned through Aadhar. If misuse of data is the ultimate concern, then shouldn't both recipients of data worry us?

After a certain point, it matters little whether the data was given voluntarily or involuntarily, if the ends being served are the same. ***Sharing your personal and biometric information voluntarily – with employers and mobile companies – in the coercive, ruthless and utilitarian capitalist system of today, is no 'freedom' of choice.*** Brazen and violative technology already pervades every aspect of our lives and we have accepted it. ***The freedom of choice was never there since the present state of affairs shows our enslavement to the current system and our captivity to the greed and crudity of nature fostered by it.*** To, thus, raise a hue and cry about something like Aadhar, has been most superficial.

In fact, there is a case to be made that the government – as a national security provider – is a relatively safer repository of our data than the capitalist agents to whom we willingly give it. Anyone who wants to misuse the data will misuse it, but it will be a losing battle to sue a company like Apple or your employers for doing so and lose millions in the litigation process itself. Therefore, the privacy debate has been the most vacuous aspect of the Aadhar controversy. ***If right to privacy is indeed a 'fundamental right' – as the Court had ruled last year and as regulators like EU have also insisted – then the entire spectrum of multinational companies in India and elsewhere need to be sued for consistently violating it with ever more innovative means!***

Incidentally, surveillance, which the government already

does, was not the purpose of Aadhar, as alleged by rights activists. The programme was to be used towards more fruitful social ends, like delivery of welfare services and, significantly, facilitating sophisticated ideas like the National Sex Offenders Registry, through which criminals could be tracked and prevented from repeating their crimes. Countries like US also have such registries. It is a complement to civic and broader national security. ***An Aadhar card in itself can be duplicated and misused by terrorists and criminals, but DNA-based biometrics will not. To have such information retained by the government is actually a complement to safety.***

Certainly, the delivery of welfare services is an area that needs more work. The leakages in Aadhar are many, in this area. Duplicate systems like PDS make things complicated for the target groups, difficulty in using Aadhar has led to some exclusions and cases of hunger deaths. Despite these loopholes, the Court has pronounced Aadhar to be mandatory to get access to welfare services. The rationale is clear – without direct linkage through Aadhar, the levels of inefficiency and role of middlemen in the delivery of services will become rampant again - more so than at present. But the intent of having a unique identity will be lot more efficient - if the system and technology is reformed – in delivering the services directly.

QUOTA IN PROMOTIONS FOR SCHEDULED CASTES (SCs) AND SCHEDULED TRIBES (STs):

In yet another major judgement from the preceding week, the Supreme Court has, referring to the M. Nagaraj judgement of 2006 and the Indira Swahney case of 1992, ruled on the criteria for backwardness and the question of promotions for SCs and STs in government jobs. The government has been pushing for having quota in promotions for SCs/STs on the basis

of their population and wanted the restrictive 2006 judgement referred to a larger bench and reconsidered. However, the present bench turned down both the pleas.

The Court had, overriding a part of the Nagaraj judgement, ruled that:

1. 'Backwardness' of SCs cannot be proven by collection of quantifiable data by the states. The Nagaraj judgement of 2006 had mandated that states need to provide quantifiable data on the backwardness of SCs and STs, the facts about their inadequate representation in government jobs and the overall administrative efficiency, before providing quota in promotions to them.

The present judgement ruled that the Nagaraj judgment of 2006 runs afoul of the Indira Swahney case of 1992. According to the 1992 judgement, 'backwardness' is historical and social. Therefore, in principle, the present judgement has held 'backwardness' to be a parameter that cannot be proven by quantifiable data. The implication is that this will make it easier for the government of the day – central and states – to facilitate quota in promotions for SCs and STs in government jobs. However, in talking about issues of representation of Dalits in a cadre, the data needs to be collected.

2. However, the Court has upheld 'backwardness' as a non-quantifiable criterion only *in principle*. In practical terms, the implications are entirely different. In the same judgement, the Court has also upheld the 'creamy layer' principle for filtering out who gets to avail quota in promotions in government jobs. This means that economically well-off Dalits cannot avail of quota in promotions. Up till now, the creamy layer principle has been applicable only to OBCs.

Now, the Court has held that “The whole object of reservation is to see that backward classes of citizens move forward so that they may march hand in hand with other citizens of India on an equal basis. This will not be possible if only the creamy layer within that class bag all the coveted jobs in the public sector and perpetuate themselves, leaving the rest of the class as backward as they always were.”

The Court has maintained that the lists of castes, groups or sub-groups listed in the Presidential Lists under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution will not be tampered with. The lists define who will be considered as SC/ST in any state or Union Territory. The bench held that, “It is only those persons within that group or sub-group, who have come out of untouchability or backwardness by virtue of belonging to the creamy layer, who are excluded from the benefit of reservation.”

This means that irrespective of data on backwardness not being collected, the Court has still made untouchability an economic construct by the applying the creamy layer principle. The assumption in the judgement is that once people reach a certain level of economic development, they come out of untouchability.

In doing so, the Court has overruled the Centre’s plea that reservation in promotions should be provided based on the proportion of population of Dalits to ensure adequate representation. It has also junked the view that untouchability is a historical problem and does not go away with economic progress. No matter what level of economic progress the Dalits reach, the social discrimination against them continues.

If a statue inaugurated by a union minister, Jagjivan Ram, can be purified with Ganga water, it shows that such cases are

rampant and irrespective of material political or economic clout, the discrimination exists. Similarly, it has been alleged that there are multiple cases pending which highlight that Dalits have faced discrimination in getting promotions in bureaucracy, judiciary and other government services by the fact of their caste identity.

The overall tenor of the judgement of the Court ran against providing quota in promotions, not only because the creamy layer does not need it, but also in the interests of administrative efficiency. The Court has stated that, “as the post gets higher, it may be necessary, even if a proportionality test to the population as a whole is taken into account, to reduce the number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in promotional posts, as one goes upwards. This is for the simple reason that efficiency of administration has to be looked at every time promotions are made.”

From the overall judgement, it is clear that it does not give any headstart or freedom to implement the policy of quota in promotions. The conclusion is simple :—

The first rung is that while the Court agreed that backwardness cannot be quantified and data need not be collected to prove the same, yet, before making any policy to grant reservation in promotions, the state governments would need to prove that these castes were inadequately represented in the service in the first place. And this representation needs to be proven by collecting quantifiable data. Therefore, backwardness, it is agreed, is presumed and cannot be shown through data, but, before implementing the policy, data is needed to show that SCs/STs are inadequately represented in the service.

Essentially, this makes the ‘relief’ provided by the Court

merely a matter of principle and effective at a theoretical level only. In practical terms, the Court has very much upheld the Nagraj verdict. Data proof of backwardness is still needed – and that too it needs to be data with respect to the total posts and not any particular cadre in question. With such a wide sample, the representation numbers of SCs/STs is bound to go up in any practical exercise.

The second rung is that the Court in making an argument to limit the promotions of SCs/STs to higher posts in the interests of efficiency, has mandated that the creamy layer principle will be strictly applied, and that, no reservation shall breach the 50% limit even if the state is under compelling circumstances. All these decisions of the Nagraj judgement were upheld here too.

It is surprising that certain groups are stating that the Court has made it easier to grant reservation in promotions - simply because it had overruled the 2006 judgement's definition of how backwardness can be *shown in principle*. It does not amount to anything in practical terms as we can see. If anything, providing reservation in promotions has become even more tough! No wonder Dalit politicians and activists have already started hounding the government to challenge the judgement and take an ordinance route, subvert the conditions laid down by the Supreme Court and provide quota in promotions without regard to any of the creamy layer and other criteria laid down by the Court.

Certainly, what the Dalit politicians are really doing is mere 'messaging' or 'signalling' before the 2019 elections. Even if the Court's stipulations are disregarded, there would be absolutely no guarantee of ensuring that promotions in reservation would be progressive. The current system of promotions - under which

a lot of arm-twisting and networking tactics are required - will continue as before. Dalits can then compete with each other to fill the reserved posts by using similar tactics and, most likely, the powerful ones or the ones who can game the system by buttering up their seniors the most, will get the best advantage. If this is being passed off as 'social justice', it is a travesty.

On the other hand, if the creamy layer criteria is included, then, at least, for the initial posts during the start of the career and in the middle stages, the truly backward Dalits can get somewhere instead of only the powerful ones exploiting the system of reservation. Yet, protesting voiced by the Dalit politicians (many of whom belong to the creamy layer) indicate that they care only about numbers and not about the truly underprivileged getting the benefit. The Court has found a balanced answer to the problem of quota in reservation, which the Dalit groups are now trying to subvert.

THE AYODHYA VERDICT

The recent verdict delivered by the Court was not directly related to the Ayodhya dispute, but will have far reaching implications for how the final verdict will come out. It is a critical foundation stone for the future verdict. The Court has, in its present judgement, held the Babri Masjid dispute to be primarily a land title dispute and effectively de-coupled it from matters of faith. It has done so by upholding the 1994 Ismail Faruqi judgement that a mosque is not central to Islam and namaz can be offered anywhere, even in the open.

The genesis, in brief, lay in the fact that, in 1993, the Narasimha Rao government had legislated an Act to acquire 67.7 acres of the Babri Masjid mosque, nearly a year after it was demolished in 1992 - to prevent any further conflagration. This

action of the government was challenged in the 1994 case. The Court had, in 1994, upheld the government's Act, stating that a mosque is not central to Islam and Muslims can offer prayers anywhere, even in the open.

In the present context, while the Court was set to hear the main Ayodhya title dispute, the activist advocate Rajeev Dawan, resurrected the 1994 judgement and challenged it earlier this year, pleading that it be referred to a larger bench and reconsidered before any decision on the main dispute.

Now, with the latest decision, the Court has upheld the 1994 judgement by insisting that the question of centrality of mosque to Islam was purely contextual and, in this context, it was upholding this principle since Ayodhya was mainly a title dispute over land. The same principles about centrality of mosque to Islam cannot be applied from this judgement. They will also have to be seen on the basis of the context.

Therefore, in the Ayodhya case, as per the present judgement, the government can acquire the land of the mosque under its power of eminent domain without affecting the provisions of religious freedom under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution. This is because, ***in principle and theology, the place of worship is not of a particular significance in Islam.*** In religions where the place of worship is significant to the tenets of that religion, the state cannot use its power of eminent domain, not even in a contextual sense.

While Justice Nazeer had dissented, yet, from the majority opinion it becomes clear that the Court has not violated any provisions of Islam or imposed its own understanding on the religion. It has passed the judgement on the place of worship based on the internal tenets of Islam itself. In fact, it has gone

one step further and shown that it has not had the temerity to make this an absolute understanding of Islam, but only in the particular context of Ayodhya as a land dispute. Therefore, it insulates the place of worship argument from being used on other subsequent judgements.

Of course, the 2010 verdict by the Allahabad High Court dividing the land between Nirmohi Akhara, Ram Lalla and the Sunni Waqf Board, was also based on the 1994 understanding that a mosque is not central to Islam. With the resumption of the Ayodhya hearings, the Supreme Court too will treat this as a land dispute and keep debates on faith completely aside.

Even if the matters of faith were introduced, there is a compelling case to be made that Ayodhya as Ram's birthplace is central to Hinduism, much like Mecca and Vatican, and while mosques, temples and churches are many, such places are unique. It would be injustice if Hindus were not allowed to offer prayers in the Ram temple. For Muslims, this was just another mosque built during the Mughal rule as late as the 16th century during the modern era, but for Hindus, even from the point of view of faith, it holds a lot more ancient significance.

With the Ayodhya hearings set to resume on October 29th, it remains to be seen what course of action the new CJI takes.

CONCLUSION

From the above judgements, it is clear that the Court has dealt with some very tricky questions that have, at some point or the other, nearly ripped apart the social fabric of the country. The Court judgements are never set in stone and it is, ultimately, up to the government of the day to make legislation to implement them. While the Ayodhya verdict was just a sub-case and the real case will be heard later, the other two

judgements on Aadhar and quota in promotions were decisive.

The debates and the issues surrounding them showed the immense degree of degradation and lack of thinking capabilities that our society has witnessed. In both the cases, the activist-petitioner's contentions were based on propagandist ideas and completely disregarded the practical welfare of the very people they claimed to champion.

INDIA-US 2+2 SUMMIT: CONFLICTS AND FRICTION PERSIST

The conclusion of the first 2+2 strategic dialogue between the US and India has produced a mixed bag of results for India. The tenor of negotiations and the nature of agreements signed showed that India can never completely rely on the US and will need constant balancing and maneuvering to retain her independence. The most notable aspect about the 2+2 dialogue is in the format itself – showing that the India-US relationship is attempting to overcome natural odds to arrive at an upgradation of the relationship. The strategic interests and natural global inclinations of the two countries vary vastly and the 2+2 negotiations showed the US's unsubtle attempts to forcefully prevail upon India to change its natural alliances – a move which India continues to resist.

Thus, the dialogue, besides the basic agreements signed, has really left the original sticky issues unanswered. More importantly, it has not in any way precluded the chances of a future conflict of interest between the US and India on economic issues. In this sense, it can be contrasted with the relatively smooth 2+2 dialogue that India has been conducting with Japan for the last few years, and which is devoid of such political bargains and focuses on areas where cooperation can be made possible.

THE STICKY ISSUES

The Indo-US 2+2 dialogue between the foreign and defence ministries of the two countries resulted in the significant signing of the COMCASA or the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement. This is a part of the three foundational agreements between USA and India, which are defined purely

by the developing military relationship between the two countries over the past decade. The previous one – LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) – was signed in 2016, enabling an agreement for the two countries to use their military bases and allow for fuel replenishment. The last one – Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is still under negotiations.

COMCASA will likely smoothen the process of transfer of sensitive military technology and weaponry from US to India and enable secure communication channels between the two militaries. COMCASA will support encrypted datalinks for communication between US and India, and will link ground, air, surface and subsurface assets to present a common strategic picture of the operations of a country in the entire region. It will enable India to permanently retain access to Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System or CENTRIXS communications grid. Currently, the CENTRIXS system is installed only temporarily on Indian warships during the Malabar exercises.

It was signed after much resistance from India, since it portends the possibility that India's secure military bases might become vulnerable to espionage by the US or that the technology transferred through COMCASA might be used for spying on India's security apparatus.

Despite the signing of the agreement, this concern continues to remain valid. It must be noted that the US has only provided an assurance to India that the agreement will prevent the disclosure of data acquired through the COMCASA systems to 'third parties' without the prior consent of India. Nowhere does it assure us of ways or means through which such data can be prevented from being acquired altogether. This

still has high probabilities of making India's security data available to the US. This is apart from the altogether different apprehension that US does not have a record of honouring its commitments or agreements. It has abandoned and violated them freely whenever its interests were threatened.

That the US has signed the COMCASA-type agreements with 30 or so countries – all of them its transatlantic allies and countries, like South Korea – will be cold comfort to India. These countries do little to resist intrusive behaviour by the US. COMCASA might or might not involve visits by US inspectors to carry out inspections of COMCASA installed hardware sold to India. A similar US agreement with South Korea, of 2008, stipulated that the equipment will be installed and maintained by authorized US personnel only and there will be inspections periodically (Jacob 2018).

These countries have unquestioningly toed the US line and alliances in global politics and many of them, including South Korea, are US military allies, unlike India. There has hardly been a conflict of interest between them and the US, having accepted US as their natural leader. India can never – and should neither aspire to – fit in with this privileged coterie of wealthy but passive US followers.

India has always followed an independent foreign policy – which is why it has resisted COMCASA for the past so many years – preferring to keep open its options with US adversaries like China, Russia and Iran and effortlessly opting out of QUAD-type US-led alliances whenever the need arose. Even now, after the subtle unease in the wake of the 2+2 summit, the Indian government is valiantly proclaiming that it will not allow its agreements with the US to dictate its relationship with third countries. This would not have been possible with the US of five

years ago. It may be possible only under conditions of a decline of the US and the latter's inability to influence India's foreign policy outcomes, as it has done with its other 'core' NATO allies with whom such agreements have been signed or who have been designated as STA-1 (Strategic Trade Authorization) partners of the US, as India was done a few weeks prior to the 2+2 summit.

Even though both the countries have signed the COMCASA and have sought to deepen their relationship through the 2+2 summit, their purposes are at variance. India's only objectives are to import state of art military hardware and technology and develop a generally better relationship with the US, which could help her in international institutions and enabled her to become a part of all major export control regimes – Wassenaar Agreement, Missile Technology and Control Regime and Australia Group – except the NSG.

Despite the joint rebukes to Pakistan by India and the US, India is not formulating any kind of systematic strategy for the containment of Pakistan – the only objective is to expose Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism. To some extent, this objective was achieved at the 2+2 summit, as the joint statement, for the first time, referred to the 'territory under the control of Pakistan' instead of 'Pakistan's territory', while rebuking the latter for launching terror attacks – an important change of position from the past.

These kind of commercial and diplomatic objectives are in direct contrast to what the US wants out of the India-US relationship – fulfilment of political objectives and an unequal economic relationship. Among other things, the US is interested in a systematic strategy of containment of China – something which India has strongly resisted. From the US, as is evident by its historical relationships, nothing comes for free. Its

relationship with all its allies are seen to be serving a purpose or else the US does not hesitate to discard them and it certainly has no hesitation in going into its pre-War inclination towards isolationism when needed. By giving India – though various agreements and favourable STA-1 and Major Defence Partner designations – a place among its core allies, a place not even Israel has, the US is inevitably drawing India into its ambit.

The desire to contain China is only a small part of this story. The US's claims of counter-balancing China are actually belied by the minuscule investment that's been committed to the 'Indo-Pacific' so far. The real reasons are mainly commercial and are intended to contain India herself within the US's ambit. India's rise has become inevitable and is already happening. Its relationship with China is also on an upswing as is the increase in cooperative tendencies within Asia. The US, on the other hand, is a power in the mode of decline and plays a small role in Asia. India needs the US only as an arms importer and as a strategic support system in global politics. For India to fall for the US's commercial interests at this stage – that too on the US's terms – will be unfortunate.

And the US has not ceased its habit of applying pressure and overriding allies, as was visible during the 2+2 summit also. The questions of India buying crude oil from Iran – which forms a quarter of its oil imports – and of acquiring the S-400 missile defence system from Russia, remained unresolved. Instead of accepting India's independent prerogative, the US even demanded that India buy its oil and missile defence systems from America, which will also help to narrow the trade imbalance between the two – Trump administration's eternal obsession with trade was visible here too. These are irrational demands. Not only are India's old refineries uniquely suited for Iranian oil,

the cost of importing from US would send India's import bill skyrocketing. Iran is also offering concessions like transportation of the oil. India also does not want to imperil its Chabahar port development which would enable trade between India, Iran and Afghanistan. Thus, these issues remained unresolved.

INDIA ON GUARD

While treading with the US and in order to be able to have the benefit of all the advantages that come with premium access to top sensitive US technology without compromising on its independence, India needs to be constantly on her guard. India's designation as an STA-1 partner of the US – the only Asian country after Japan and South Korea to be designated as such on par with all other NATO countries – will enable India to import 90% dual use technologies whose access was severely restricted by the US prior to this. This could be made possible only by India's inclusion as a part of the major export control regimes of the world after 2016, even though India's has been demanding the status since 2008.

Similarly, other agreements like COMCASA too come with a rider. Despite enhancing India's capabilities, getting access to better military technology and communications systems which go beyond the commercial ones, India needs to be on guard in keeping its security data safe. This, especially, requires a level of trust which has not been visible in the mostly transactional India-US relationship so far.

India needs to be especially aware that despite progress in military cooperation, the political objectives of India and US in the Asian region are at variance. India does not share US's need to contain China, settle Russia and Iran and condescend to Afghanistan while playing dangerous games with Taliban. China,

Russia, Iran and Afghanistan are close partners of India. With China, the level of closeness is increasing. Both countries are finding common cultural and political objectives in the Asian region and the differences are less than the political differences between India and US.

Therefore, even as India ramps up cooperation with the US, political differences will continue. As recently as after the 2+2 dialogue, India turned down US's proposal to upgrade the QUAD grouping – consisting of India, US, Japan and Australia, to contain China – to a foreign secretary level and insisted that it should remain at a joint secretary level, which is two levels below what the US wanted. To have yielded to US would have alienated China, especially at the time when the US-China trade war is snowballing.

India will continue to resist US's pressures on its Indo-Pacific and China strategy, as well as unreasonable demands on how she should conduct her relations with old allies like Iran and Russia. Besides these political conflicts of interest, there is unlikely to be a convergence on trade issues anytime soon. It may only get worse. After the 2+2 dialogue, it has become apparent that the US is interested in an unequal exchange. India has refused to yield to the US on aluminum and steel tariffs and will not buy American oil and replace Russian defence imports wholesale for American only to fulfill the commercial interests of the US. This may create a persistent subtle friction in the relationship, but the alternative would prove very costly for India.

India does not fit into the US's way of conducting foreign policy. The US is used to dealing with its allies as inevitably junior partners in the relationship or with adversaries – India is neither (Sood 2018). As long as the relationship is limited to commercial

military exchange, as it has been over the last decade, it will be a smooth sailing, as both US and Israel emerge as India's major defence suppliers and as defence contracts with the US reach a value of \$15 billion in the last one decade, as opposed to \$400 million during 1947-2005.

But the moment India becomes entangled in the US's political interests and dealings with other countries or gives into the US pressure of unequal exchange, there will be problems for India. Already, there are pulls and pushes within the Indian establishment, in the wake of 2+2 summit, on whether India should go for a Free Trade Agreement with the US. FTAs are not at all easy to negotiate and those with blocs such as EU are still wanting despite years of work. Here again US will likely be much more ruthless and it is already pressurizing India to enter into one. Not only will this have a negative impact on domestic industry, but will flood the markets with harmful GM dairy products from the US. Through an FTA, the US is also sniffing an opportunity to unfairly influence India's policy on intellectual property.

This kind of economic cooperation with US highlights typical instances where India stands to lose much more economically and politically and it would be a heavy cost to pay to get some access to the US markets. India is already bearing the burden of trying to reduce the trade gap with the US by importing more, including American oil whose imports have doubled over the past year, ever since Trump unleashed his global trade offensive. Such trends only reinforce the belief that cooperation with the US comes at a cost and demands alertness at all times. This is especially so in case of India, where issues of conflict are many more than areas of similar thinking.

Thus, the 2+2 summit should be seen as an opportunity to

continue with the US-India relationship as it has been during the last decade, with caution about the risks that come with closer military technology exchange while keeping resolutely out of political questions and unreasonable economic demands.

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HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (35)

XIV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTICS

“The Veda possesses the high spiritual substance of the Upanishads, but lacks their phraseology; it is an inspired knowledge as yet insufficiently equipped with intellectual and philosophical terms. We find a language of poets and illuminates to whom all experience is real, vivid, sensible, even concrete, not yet of thinkers and systematisers to whom the realities of the mind and soul have become abstractions. Yet a system, a doctrine there is; but its structure is supple, its terms are concrete, the cast of its thought is practical and experimental, but in the accomplished type of an old and sure experience, not of one that is crude and uncertain because yet in the making. Here we have the ancient psychological science and the art of spiritual living of which the Upanishads are the philosophical outcome and modification and Vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga the late intellectual result and logical dogma. But like all life, like all science that is still vital, it is free from the armoured rigidities of the reasoning intellect; in spite of its established symbols and sacred formulae it is still large, free, flexible, fluid, supple and subtle. It has the movement of life and the large breath of the soul. And while the later philosophies are books of Knowledge and make liberation the one supreme good, the Veda is a Book of Works and the hope for which it spurns our present bonds and littleness is perfection, self-achievement, immortality.

The doctrine of the Mystics recognises an Unknowable, Timeless and Unnameable behind and above all things and not seizable by the studious pursuit of the mind. Impersonally, it is That, the One Existence; to the pursuit of our personality it reveals itself out of the secrecy of things as the God or Deva, –

nameless though he has many names, immeasurable and beyond description, though he holds in himself all description of name and knowledge and all measures of form and substance, force and activity.

The Deva or Godhead is both the original cause and the final result. Divine Existent, builder of the worlds, lord and begetter of all things, Male and Female, Being and Consciousness, Father and Mother of the Worlds and their inhabitants, he is also their Son and ours: for he is the Divine Child born into the Worlds who manifests himself in the growth of the creature. He is Rudra and Vishnu, Prajapati and Hiranyagarbha, Surya, Agni, Indra, Vayu, Soma, Brihaspati, – Varuna and Mitra and Bhaga and Aryaman, all the gods. He is the wise, mighty and liberating Son born from our works and our sacrifice, the Hero in our warfare and Seer of our knowledge, the White Steed in the front of our days who gallops towards the upper Ocean.

The soul of man soars as the Bird, the Hansa, past the shining firmaments of physical and mental consciousness, climbs as the traveller and fighter beyond earth of body and heaven of mind by the ascending path of the Truth to find this Godhead waiting for us, leaning down to us from the secrecy of the highest supreme where it is seated in the triple divine Principle and the source of the Beatitude. The Deva is indeed, whether attracting and exalted there or here helpful to us in the person of the greater Gods, always the Friend and Lover of man, the pastoral Master of the Herds who gives us the sweet milk and the clarified butter from the udder of the shining Cow of the infinitude. He is the source and outpurer of the ambrosial Wine of divine delight and we drink it drawn from the sevenfold waters of existence or pressed out from the luminous plant on the hill of being and uplifted by its raptures we become immortal.

Such are some of the images of this ancient mystic adoration.

The Godhead has built this universe in a complex system of worlds which we find both within us and without, subjectively cognised and objectively sensed.... We have the same cosmic gradations as in the Puranas but they are differently grouped, – seven worlds in principle, five in practice, three in their general groupings:

1. The Supreme Sat-

Chit- Ananda The triple divine worlds

2. The Link-World

Supermind The Truth, Right, Vast,
manifested in Swar, with
its three luminous heavens

3. The triple lower world

Pure Mind Heaven (Dyaus, the three heavens)

Life-force The Mid-Region (Antariksha)

Matter Earth (the three earths)

And as each principle can be modified by the subordinate manifestation of the others within it, each world is divisible into several provinces according to different arrangements and self-orderings of its creative light of consciousness. Into this framework, then, we must place all the complexities of the subtle vision and fertile imagery of the seers down to the hundred cities which are now in the possession of the hostile kings, the Lords of division and evil. But the gods shall break them open and give them for his free possession to the Aryan worshipper!

But where are these worlds and whence are they created? Here we have one of the profoundest ideas of the Vedic sages.

Man dwells in the bosom of the Earth-Mother and is aware of this world of mortality only; but there is a superconscient high beyond where the divine worlds are seated in a luminous secrecy; there is a subconscious or inconscient below his surface waking impressions and from that pregnant Night the worlds as he sees them are born. And these other worlds between the luminous upper and the tenebrous lower ocean? They are here. Man draws from the life-world his vital being, from the mind-world his mentality; he is ever in secret communication with them; he can consciously enter into them, be born into them, if he will. Even into the solar worlds of the Truth he can rise, enter the portals of the Superconscient, cross the threshold of the Supreme. The divine doors shall swing open to his increasing soul.

This human ascension is possible because every being really holds in himself all that his outward vision perceives as if external to him. We have subjective faculties hidden in us which correspond to all the tiers and strata of the objective cosmic system and these form for us so many planes of our possible existence. This material life and our narrowly limited consciousness of the physical world are far from being the sole experience permitted to man, – be he a thousand times the Son of Earth. If maternal Earth bore him and retains him in her arms, yet is Heaven also one of his parents and has a claim on his being. It is open to him to become awake to profounder depths and higher heights within and such awakening is his intended progress. And as he mounts thus to higher and ever higher planes of himself, new worlds open to his life and his vision and become the field of his experience and the home of his spirit. He lives in contact and union with their powers and godheads and remoulds himself in their image. **Each ascent is thus a new birth**

of the soul, and the Veda calls the worlds 'births' as well as seats and dwelling-places.

For as the Gods have built the series of the cosmic worlds, even so they labour to build up the same series of ordered states and ascending degrees in man's consciousness from the mortal condition to the crowning immortality. They raise him from the limited material state of being in which our lowest manhood dwells contented and subject to the Lords of Division, give him a life rich and abundant with the many and rapid shocks and impulsions from the dynamic worlds of Life and Desire where the Gods battle with the demons and raise him yet higher from those troubled rapidities and intensities into the steadfast purity and clarity of the high mental existence. For pure thought and feeling are man's sky, his heaven; this whole vitalistic existence of emotion, passions, affections of which desire is the pivot, forms for him a mid-world; body and material living are his earth.

But pure thought and pure psychic state are not the highest height of the human ascension. The home of the Gods is an absolute Truth which lives in solar glories beyond mind. Man ascending thither strives no longer as the thinker but is victoriously the seer; he is no longer this mental creature but a divine being. His will, life, thought, emotion, sense, act are all transformed into values of an all-puissant Truth and remain no longer an embarrassed or a helpless tangle of mixed truth and falsehood. He moves lamely no more in our narrow and grudging limits but ranges in the unobstructed Vast; toils and zigzags no longer amid these crookednesses, but follows a swift and conquering straightness; feeds no longer on broken fragments, but is suckled by the teats of Infinity. Therefore he has to break through and out beyond these firmaments of earth and heaven; conquering firm possession of the solar worlds, entering on to

his highest Height he has to learn how to dwell in the triple principle of Immortality.

This contrast of the mortality we are and the immortal condition to which we can aspire is the key of the Vedic thought and practice. Veda is the earliest gospel we have of man's immortality and these ancient stanzas conceal the primitive discipline of its inspired discoverers."¹

"Our normal life and consciousness are a dark or at best a starlit Night. Dawn comes by the arising of the Sun of that higher Truth and with Dawn there comes the effective sacrifice. By the sacrifice the Dawn itself and the lost Sun are constantly conquered out of the returning Night and the luminous herds rescued from the darkling cave of the Panis; by the sacrifice the rain of the abundance of heaven is poured out for us and the sevenfold waters of the higher existence descend impetuously upon our earth because the coils of the obscuring Python, the all-enfolding and all-withholding Vritra, have been cloven asunder by the God-Mind's flashing lightnings; in the sacrifice the Soma wine is distilled and uplifts us on the stream of its immortalising ecstasy to the highest heavens.

Our sacrifice is the offering of all our gains and works to the powers of the higher existence. The whole world is a dumb and helpless sacrifice in which the soul is bound as a victim self-offered to unseen Gods. The liberating Word must be found, the illuminating hymn must be framed in the heart and mind of man and **his life must be turned into a conscious and voluntary offering in which the soul is no longer the victim, but the master of the sacrifice.** By right sacrifice and by the all-creative and all-expressive Word that shall arise out of his depths as a sublime hymn to the Gods man can achieve all things. He shall conquer his perfection; Nature shall come to him as a willing and longing

bride; he shall become her seer and rule her as her King.”²

“The image of this sacrifice is sometimes that of a journey or voyage; for it travels, it ascends; it has a goal – the vastness, the true existence, the light, the felicity – and it is called upon to discover and keep the good, the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous, yet joyful road of the Truth. It has to climb, led by the flaming strength of the divine Will, from plateau to plateau as of a mountain, it has to cross as in a ship the waters of existence, traverse its rivers, overcome their deep pits and rapid currents; its aim is to arrive at the far-off ocean of light and infinity.

And this is no easy or peaceful march; it is for long seasons a fierce and relentless battle. Constantly the Aryan man has to labour and to fight and conquer; he must be a tireless toiler and traveller and a stern warrior, he must force open and storm and sack city after city, win kingdom after kingdom, overthrow and tread down ruthlessly enemy after enemy. His whole progress is a warring of Gods and Titans, Gods and Giants, Indra and the Python, Aryan and Dasyu. Aryan adversaries even he has to face in the open field; for old friends and helpers turn into enemies; the kings of Aryan states he would conquer and overpass join themselves to the Dasyus and are leagued against him in supreme battle to prevent his free and utter passing on.

But the Dasyu is the natural enemy. These dividers, plunderers, harmful powers, these Danavas, sons of the Mother of division, are spoken of by the Rishis under many general appellations. There are Rakshasas; there are Eaters and Devourers, Wolves and Tearers; there are hurters and haters; there are dualisers; there are confiners or censurers. But we are given also many specific names. Vritra, the Serpent, is the grand Adversary; for he obstructs with his coils of darkness all

possibility of divine existence and divine action. And even when Vritra is slain by the light, fiercer enemies arise out of him. Shushna afflicts us with his impure and ineffective force, Namuchi fights man by his weaknesses, and others too assail, each with his proper evil. Then there are Vala and the Panis, miser traffickers in the sense-life, stealers and concealers of the higher Light and its illuminations which they can only darken and misuse, – an impious host who are jealous of their store and will not offer sacrifice to the Gods. These and other personalities – they are much more than personifications – of our ignorance, evil, weakness and many limitations make constant war upon man; they encircle him from near or they shoot their arrows at him from afar or even dwell in his gated house in the place of the Gods and with their shapeless stammering mouths and their insufficient breath of force mar his self-expression. They must be expelled, overpowered, slain, thrust down into their nether darkness by the aid of the mighty and helpful deities.

The Vedic deities are names, powers, personalities of the universal Godhead and they represent each some essential puissance of the Divine Being. They manifest the cosmos and are manifest in it. Children of Light, Sons of the Infinite, they recognise in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their luminous fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the Sons of Darkness and Division. Man in return calls the Gods to his sacrifice, offers to them his swiftnesses and his strengths, his clarities and his sweetnesses, – milk and butter of the shining Cow, distilled juices of the Plant

of Joy, the Horse of the Sacrifice, the cake and the wine, the grain for the God-Mind's radiant coursers. He receives them into his being and their gifts into his life, increases them by the hymn and the wine and forms perfectly – as a smith forges iron, says the Veda – their great and luminous godheads.

All this Vedic imagery is easy to understand when once we have the key, but it must not be mistaken for mere imagery. The Gods are not simply poetical personifications of abstract ideas or of psychological and physical functions of Nature. To the Vedic seers they are living realities; the vicissitudes of the human soul represent a cosmic struggle not merely of principles and tendencies but of the cosmic Powers which support and embody them. These are the Gods and the Demons. On the world-stage and in the individual soul the same real drama with the same personages is enacted.

To what gods shall the sacrifice be offered? Who shall be invoked to manifest and protect in the human being this increasing godhead?

Agni first, for without him the sacrificial flame cannot burn on the altar of the soul. That flame of Agni is the seven-tongued power of the Will, a Force of God instinct with knowledge. This conscious and forceful will is the immortal guest in our mortality, a pure priest and a divine worker, the mediator between earth and heaven. It carries what we offer to the higher Powers and brings back in return their force and light and joy into our humanity.

Indra, the Puissant next, who is the power of pure Existence self-manifested as the Divine Mind. **As Agni is one pole of Force instinct with knowledge that sends its current upward from earth to heaven, so Indra is the other pole of Light instinct with**

force which descends from heaven to earth. He comes down into our world as the Hero with the shining horses and slays darkness and division with his lightnings, pours down the life-giving heavenly waters, finds in the trace of the hound, Intuition, the lost or hidden illuminations, makes the Sun of Truth mount high in the heaven of our mentality.

Surya, the Sun, is the master of that supreme Truth, – truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of process and act and movement and functioning. He is therefore the creator or rather the manifester of all things – for creation is outbringing, expression by the Truth and Will – and the father, fosterer, enlightener of our souls. The illuminations we seek are the herds of this Sun who comes to us in the track of the divine Dawn and releases and reveals in us night-hidden world after world up to the highest Beatitude.

Of that beatitude Soma is the representative deity. The wine of his ecstasy is concealed in the growths of earth, in the waters of existence; even here in our physical being are his immortalising juices and they have to be pressed out and offered to all the gods; for in that strength these shall increase and conquer.

Each of these primary deities has others associated with him who fulfil functions that arise from his own. For if the truth of Surya is to be established firmly in our mortal nature, there are previous conditions that are indispensable; a vast purity and clear wideness destructive of all sin and crooked falsehood, – and this is Varuna; a luminous power of love and comprehension leading and forming into harmony all our thoughts, acts and impulses, – this is Mitra; an immortal puissance of clear-discerning aspiration and endeavour, – this is Aryaman; a happy spontaneity of the right enjoyment of all things dispelling the evil dream of sin and error and suffering, – this is Bhaga. These

four are powers of the Truth of Surya.

For the whole bliss of Soma to be established perfectly in our nature a happy and enlightened and unmaimed condition of mind, vitality and body are necessary. This condition is given to us by the twin Ashwins; wedded to the daughter of Light, drinkers of honey, bringers of perfect satisfactions, healers of maim and malady they occupy our parts of knowledge and parts of action and prepare our mental, vital and physical being for an easy and victorious ascension.

Indra, the Divine Mind, as the shaper of mental forms has for his assistants, his artisans, the Ribhus, human powers who by the work of sacrifice and their brilliant ascension to the high dwelling-place of the Sun have attained to immortality and help mankind to repeat their achievement. They shape by the mind Indra's horses, the Ashwins' chariot, the weapons of the Gods, all the means of the journey and the battle. But as giver of the Light of truth and as Vritra-slayer Indra is aided by the Maruts, who are powers of will and nervous or vital Force that have attained to the light of thought and the voice of self-expression. They are behind all thought and speech as its impellers and they battle towards the Light, Truth and Bliss of the supreme Consciousness.

There are also female energies; for the Deva is both Male and Female and the gods also are either activising souls or passively executive and methodising energies. Aditi, infinite Mother of the gods, comes first; and there are besides five powers of the Truth-consciousness, – Mahi or Bharati, the vast Word that brings us all things out of the divine source; Ila, the strong primal word of the Truth who gives us its active vision; Saraswati, its streaming current and the word of its inspiration; Sarama, the Intuition, hound of heaven who descends into the

cavern of the subconscious and finds there the concealed illuminations; Dakshina, whose function is to discern rightly, dispose the action and the offering and distribute in the sacrifice to each godhead its portion. Each god, too, has his female energy.

All this action and struggle and ascension is supported by Heaven our Father and Earth our Mother, Parents of the Gods, who sustain respectively the purely mental and psychic and the physical consciousness. Their large and free scope is the condition of our achievement. Vayu, Master of life, links them together by the mid-air, the region of vital force. And there are other deities, – Parjanya, giver of the rain of heaven; Dadhikravan, the divine war-horse, a power of Agni; the mystic Dragon of the Foundations; Trita Aptya^a who on the third plane of existence consummates our triple being; and more besides.

The development of all these godheads is necessary to our perfection. And that perfection must be attained on all our levels, – in the wideness of earth, our physical being and consciousness; in the full force of vital speed and action and enjoyment and nervous vibration, typified as the Horse which must be brought forward to upbear our endeavour; in the perfect gladness of the heart of emotion and a brilliant heat and clarity of the mind throughout our intellectual and psychical being; in the coming of the supramental Light, the Dawn and the Sun and the shining Mother of the herds, to transform all our existence; for so comes to us the possession of the Truth, by the Truth the admirable surge of the Bliss, in the Bliss infinite Consciousness of absolute being.

^a "Trita is the god or Rishi of the third plane, full of luminous mental kingdoms unknown to the physical mind."³

Three great Gods, origin of the Puranic Trinity, largest puissances of the supreme Godhead, make possible this development and upward evolution; they support in its grand lines and fundamental energies all these complexities of the cosmos. **Brahmanaspati is the Creator; by the word, by his cry he creates**, – that is to say, he expresses, he brings out all existence and conscious knowledge and movement of life and eventual forms from the darkness of the Inconscient. Rudra, the Violent and Merciful, the Mighty One, presides over the struggle of life to affirm itself; he is the armed, wrathful and beneficent Power of God who lifts forcibly the creation upward, smites all that opposes, scourges all that errs and resists, heals all that is wounded and suffers and complains and submits. Vishnu of the vast pervading motion holds in his triple stride all these worlds; it is he that makes a wide room for the action of Indra in our limited mortality; it is by him and with him that we rise into his highest seats where we find waiting for us the Friend, the Beloved, the Beatific Godhead.

Our earth shaped out of the dark inconscient ocean of existence lifts its high formations and ascending peaks heavenward; heaven of mind has its own formations, clouds that give out their lightnings and their waters of life; the streams of the clarity and the honey ascend out of the subconscious ocean below and seek the superconscious ocean above; and from above that ocean sends downward its rivers of the light and truth and bliss even into our physical being. Thus in images of physical Nature the Vedic poets sing the hymn of our spiritual ascension.

That ascension has already been effected by the Ancients, the human forefathers, and the spirits of these great Ancestors still assist their offspring; for the new dawns repeat the old and

lean forward in light to join the dawns of the future. **Kanwa, Kutsa, Atri, Kakshiwan, Gotama, Shunahshepa have become types of certain spiritual victories which tend to be constantly repeated in the experience of humanity.** The seven sages, the Angirasas, are waiting still and always, ready to chant the word, to rend the cavern, to find the lost herds, to recover the hidden Sun. Thus **the soul is a battlefield full of helpers and hurters, friends and enemies.** All this lives, teems, is personal, is conscious, is active. We create for ourselves by the sacrifice and by the word shining seers, heroes to fight for us, children of our works. The Rishis and the Gods find for us our luminous herds; the Ribhus fashion by the mind the chariots of the gods and their horses and their shining weapons. Our life is a horse that neighing and galloping bears us onward and upward; its forces are swift-hooved steeds, the liberated powers of the mind are wide-winged birds; this mental being or this soul is the upsoaring Swan or the Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of felicity the wine of the Soma. Every shining godward Thought that arises from the secret abysses of the heart is a priest and a creator and chants a divine hymn of luminous realisation and puissant fulfilment. We seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.

The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which the demons strive to possess; the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session.

Such are some of the principal images of the Veda and a very brief and insufficient outline of the teaching of the

Forefathers. So understood the Rig Veda ceases to be an obscure, confused and barbarous hymnal; it becomes the high-aspiring Song of Humanity; its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension.

This at least; what more there may be in the Veda of ancient science, lost knowledge, old psycho-physical tradition remains yet to be discovered.”⁴

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The Greatest Discovery That Man Can Make

“The greatest, most momentous natural discovery that man can make is this that mind, and still more the force of the spirit, can in many tried and yet untried ways and in all directions – by its own nature and direct power and not only by devices and contrivances such as the superior material instrumentation discovered by physical Science – overcome and control life and matter. In the evolution of the gnostic supernature this direct power of consciousness, this direct action of the force of the being, its free mastery and control of life and matter, would be consummated and reach their acme.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 22: p. 1075)