

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

November 2016



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

*- The Mother*

Year 7

Issue 8

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# THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

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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 7

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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)

# THE AGRARIAN CRISIS IN INDIA: INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has become a complex sector in India. It is facing crises at multiple levels, which will exacerbate the food quality and security crisis, the environmental crisis and the farm crisis being faced by us.

In addition, the agrarian sector in India is also often at the root of numerous other socio-economic crises the country has seen. The most prominent examples are the struggle over the Land Acquisition Act, the uprisings by caste-based communities dependent on the stagnating agricultural sector, such as the Jat agitation in Haryana and the Maratha agitation in Maharashtra. The Dalit agitation is also assuming economic proportions, as the causes of unrest among Dalits are increasingly being linked to their deprivation of their land titles.

In terms of environmental factors, the agricultural sector is the worst affected by the current environmental crisis facing the country – be it the crisis of water, climate change or land degradation. Last year we faced four back-to-back droughts for the first time in over a century, leading to a persistent decline in food-grain production, which, if not remedied will hurtle us back into the era of severe food shortage.

## Major Issues in Indian Agriculture

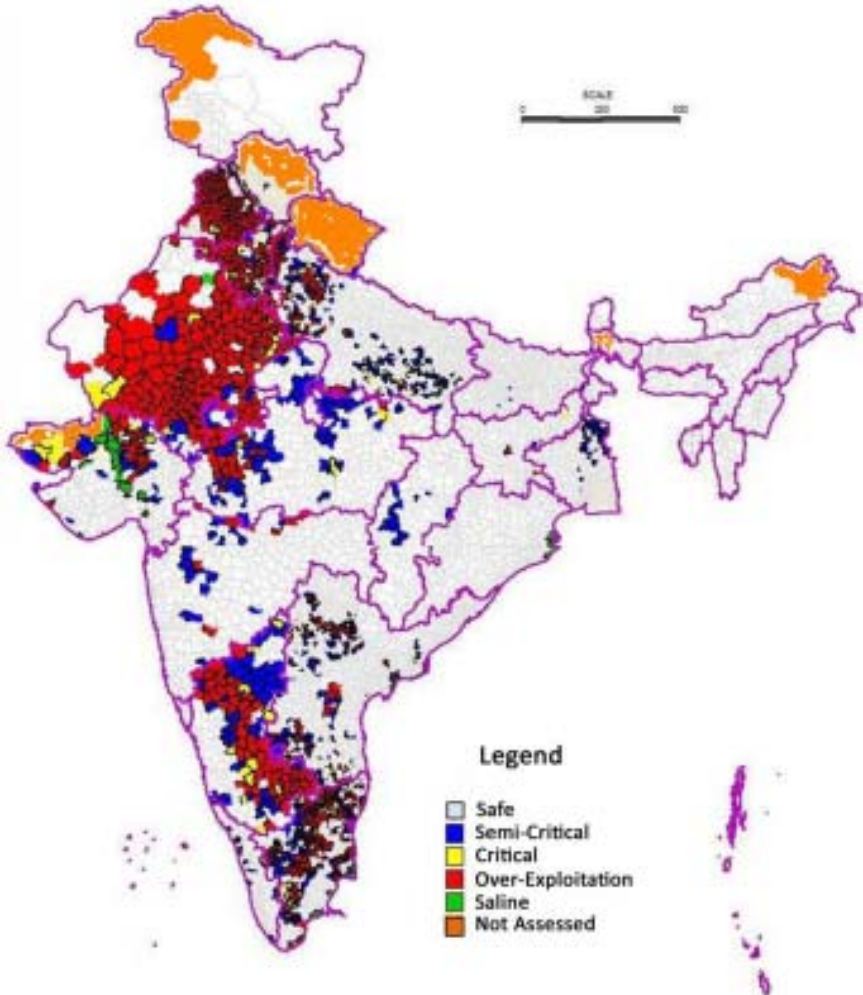
The major issues that implicate the agricultural sector include:

- Water crisis in the country.
- The crisis of climate change, where crops are being experimented upon to make agriculture more “climate-resilient”.
- Land and soil degradation.
- Food crisis, due to the use of chemicals and fertilizers, deteriorating the quality of food.
- Socio-economic dimensions, with the rise of several agitations

by social groups dependent on farming, and, inter-state water disputes.

Ground water depletion has become an especially critical area of concern in Indian agriculture.

As can be seen from the map<sup>1</sup> below, there are five types of ground water assessment units viz. safe, semi-critical, critical, over-exploited and saline. A substantial portion of our ground water units are marked as over-exploited (the units marked in red).



This means that we are exhausting our ground water reserves faster than we think. Ground water is a critical component of agriculture, as it is used for irrigation. However, our agricultural practices have become so intensive that a major part of our ground water is being diverted for irrigation.

This has, in recent times, given rise to another big issue in form of inter-state water disputes and the drinking water crisis. For instance, in the dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the Cauvery river waters sharing, the issue is the conflict between sharing of water for drinking water purposes and irrigation purposes.

With around 60% of Indian agriculture being sustained by groundwater, the diversion of water for irrigation purposes has led to spectacular ground and surface water depletion since the last several years.

The spectacle of the Marathwad region, this year, is something that nobody is able to decode. While the region suffered its worst drought this year, it is now reeling under excess rainfall. Kerala has been declared as the state worst affected by drought this year, while water conflicts are producing social violence across states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Odisha, Jharkhand, Kerala and Puducherry. All of these conflicts boil down to the agricultural sector – the drinking water scarcity and inability to irrigate fields.

Another area of concern has been mounting coastal and soil erosion which is further impacting the crops. Soil degradation is approaching worrisome levels in most parts of India, with 50% of total land and 66 % of cultivated land being degraded – the highest amongst Asia Pacific countries.

Thus, due to a combination of environmental factors, we are facing our worst agrarian crisis, with no solution in sight. And this is when we have not even begun talking about the issues of deteriorating food quality and the use of chemicals in our food.



## **A Chequered History: Green Revolution**

The dire condition of agriculture in India can be traced to the Green Revolution, where inputs like water and fertilizers were used relentlessly to boost farm production. The Green Revolution was initiated by the government in the backdrop of the food crisis that gripped the country during the 1960s, when we were importing massive amount of food from the US. It was an attempt to become self-sufficient in food grain production. As a result, traditional farming methods gave way to high-yield seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.<sup>2</sup> It was based on a model of seed-fertilizer-irrigation, where high-yielding varieties of seeds were used to enhance production and productivity, and the loss of soil nutrients was sought to be made up through the use of chemicals like phosphorous potash and nitrates.<sup>3</sup>

The problem, for us, began when we started viewing our critical means of livelihoods as ways to enhance productivity, use technology and derive maximum benefits for ourselves. Thus, very soon we converted our food grain production units into surplus granaries to be used for exporting food grains and began to earn foreign exchange, thereby making a rich class of farmers.

Our fertilizer consumption also kept increasing, going up from less than 1 million tons of total nutrients in the mid-sixties to almost 25.6 million tons in 2014, with fertilizers alone enhancing our agricultural growth by about 50 per cent,<sup>4</sup> showing that our agricultural growth and the so-called golden age of Green Revolution came at a dire cost of bad consumption of fertilizers, which proved to be fatal to the quality of our soil and crops and water.

In practice, this was given encouragement by skewed policy choices – with, for example, the government giving incentives, during Green Revolution, to extract groundwater for irrigation and promotion of deep-water extraction techniques which resulted in further wastage and extraction of water – and unbridled greed for more and more.

**The excessive use of harmful technologies like fertilizers are**

**giving us the impression that we are producing sufficient quantity of food. But, in reality, this is an illusion. We are living in an age of severe food scarcity, and nothing has changed from the situation in 1960s. Sustaining our agricultural production through the use of fertilizers has deteriorated our soil and crop health and is poised to have a slow, cancerous impact on our health too.**

So, minus the chemicals, we are living in an age of scarcity. According to the latest report of the Lok Sabha Standing Committee on Agriculture, “the country will require about 300 MT<sup>a</sup> of food grains by 2025 to feed its teeming millions. This would necessitate use of about 45 MT of nutrients. While about 6-8 MT of nutrients could be supplied through existing organic sources, the rest has to come from chemical fertilizers.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **Comparison between rates of food grain growth and net sown area**

	Rate of growth of food grain production	Growth rate in net sown area
1960-70	8.37	0.42
1971-80	2.78	0.22
1981-90	3.49	0.08
1991-2000	1.44	-0.12
2001-12	2.61	0.21

The table above shows that while there has been a great increase in the rate of food grain production in the country, there has been negligible progress in the net sown area. Since there are limitations to expanding the net sown area, there has been an increasing recourse to options that can give greater crop yields per hectare, enhancing the use of chemicals and fertilizers.

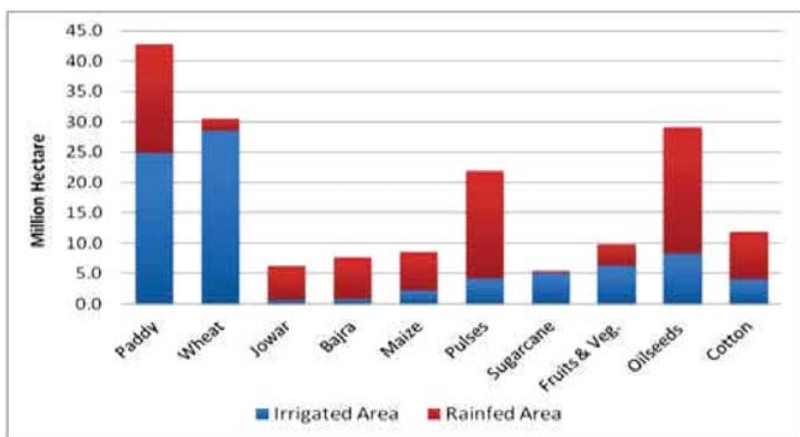
Moreover, the use of harmful non-organic fertilizers is causing environmental concerns like greenhouse gas emissions and pollution of water bodies. There is increasing pollution of ground water with nitrates due to use of nitrogenous fertilizers. Fertilizers also

<sup>a</sup> Million tons

contribute about 77% of the total nitrous oxide emissions from soils, and, nitrous oxide has a global warming potential which is 298 times more than that of carbon dioxide over a 100 year period.<sup>6</sup>

The result of the policy choices of Green Revolution is that major agricultural producing states like Punjab and Haryana, as well as the south-eastern parts of the country, are no longer able to sustain their agrarian economies, and the use of advanced, but unsustainable technology is worsening farm debts. Added to this is the corruption, with numerous middlemen preventing the farmers from getting the right procurement price, even though the benchmark is set by the government. This has agitated many farmers, since the BJP had promised to set MSP to ensure 50% profit margin over the cost of production.

From Green Revolution, we have been steadily moving towards a system of resource-intensive agriculture – particularly with regard to wheat, sugarcane and rice – which has led to the widespread use of commercial agrochemicals, leading to a build-up of heavy metals in the soil – these are hazardous to people’s health and are well-



Source: Land Use Statistics (2012-13), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

These practices have all extracted all nutrients from the soil – the number of elements deficient in Indian soils increased from one in 1950 to nine in 2005-06.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has started a central sector scheme, “Monitoring of Pesticide Residues at National level” under which samples of food commodities are collected and analysed for the presence of pesticide residues, with reference to MRL (Maximum Residue Levels).

**DETAILS OF THE SAMPLES ANALYSED DURING THE YEAR 2015-16<sup>7</sup>**

S.No.	Commodity	Samples Analyzed	Samples found above FSSAI MRL
1.	Food Grains (Rice and Wheat )	1955	157 (8%)
2.	Vegetables	11551	339 (2.9%)
3.	Fruits	2358	30 (1.27%)

It is clear that we have significantly increased the levels of pesticides found in our commodities, especially in food grains.

And, now, the problem has become much worse. For, now we are destroying the soil and our food systems in the name of ‘environment’ – and the government has fallen prey to this rhetoric. All the focus is on showing that we are meeting certain environmental “targets”. In the process, what we actually do is to make profit and destroy our agriculture and environment further.

## **The Current Scenario: No Lessons Learnt from the Past**

Have we learned any lessons from the persistent stagnant state of Indian agriculture? Going by the current worsening crisis in this sector, the answer is clearly no. We are caught in a vicious trap, wherein the worsening impacts of environment on agriculture and the persistent motive of money-making is leading us to adopt dangerous, albeit “profitable” solutions, that will destroy our health and worsen the food crisis in the country, such as the so-called climate resilient crop and plant varieties.

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<sup>a</sup> Food safety and standards authority of India

In terms of larger problems created directly by us, we have major policy stumblings, with the three main global agri-company mergers set to consolidate the global agricultural markets and lead to long-term impact on the nature of products that we will consume. This means there will now be greater threat from GM food products and less transparency as key players monopolize the agricultural markets.

## **Deteriorating Seed and Crop Quality**

The GM threat is already being faced in India, with the latest controversial introduction of GM Mustard by the government. In an age of technology and globalization, as the agricultural sector becomes more and more mechanized, such introductions will become common.

Results of Bt Cotton that is being cultivated in India, since 2002, and now covers 90% of land area under cotton cultivation, also shows that pests become resistant to GM cotton variety over time and that it is also ineffective against other major cotton pests such as mealy bug and white fly. The government has become entirely commercially-minded when it comes to agriculture – it is also pushing for genetically modified substitutes to target nutrition deficiency, such as Golden Rice for Vitamin A.

Despite the ill-effects of GM technology, the government, in 2014, took the controversial decision of introducing field trials of 13 GM crops, which was widely opposed.

India's policy is giving major thrust to various crop management techniques for the purpose of developing:

- Genetically modified crops, in view of the shrinking arable land.
- Developing climate resilient crops.
- Diverse cropping systems tolerant to various risks and diseases.

The government, since 2014, integrating existing seed policies, created a new “Sub Mission on Seed and Planting Material” under a new central scheme where the objective is “to develop/strengthen

seed sector and to enhance production and multiplication of high yielding certified/ quality seeds of all agricultural crops and making it available to the farmers at affordable prices and also place an effective system for protection of plant varieties, rights of farmers and plant breeders to encourage development of new varieties of plants.”<sup>8</sup>

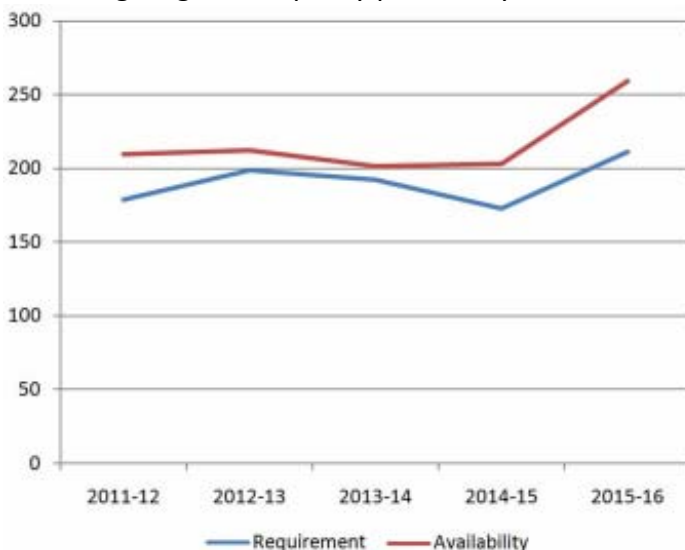
Requirement and Availability of Certified/ Quality Seeds of Hybrids ('000 tonnes)

S.No.	Crop	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16	
		REQ.	AV.	REQ.	AV.	REQ.	AV.	REQ.	AV.	REQ.	AV.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
1	Paddy	9.9	9.2	31.6	31.4	42.8	34.2	15.1	19.5	38.5	61.4
2	Maize	101.7	122.0	97.0	103.5	94.0	96.6	93.5	106.9	101.6	120.5
3	Jowar	13.1	13.9	13.3	14.0	7.9	10.2	15.6	19.0	17.7	20
4	Bajra	24.6	28.4	24.0	27.1	23.6	33.2	21.0	24.8	24.1	26.6
5	Arhar	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0
6	Sunflower	6.9	9.6	6.4	6.6	4.9	5.4	2.9	3.0	4.4	4.6
7	Safflower	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
8	Castor	3.4	4.5	4.0	4.3	3.4	4.3	7.1	8.4	6	6.1
9	Cotton	19.5	22.5	22.4	25.4	15.9	17.9	17.9	21.7	18.7	19.8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>179.1</b>	<b>210.1</b>	<b>198.7</b>	<b>212.3</b>	<b>192.5</b>	<b>201.8</b>	<b>173.2</b>	<b>203.4</b>	<b>211.2</b>	<b>259.1</b>

Req: Requirement Av: Availability

This has given a major push to hybrid and GM crops.

If we decode the above table, it will be clear that the government is giving a clear policy push to hybrid seeds:



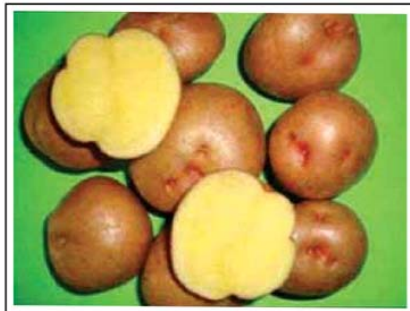
For the total number of hybrid seeds pushed over the years, there is a clear trend wherein the demand for hybrid seeds has always been less than their availability by the government. Moreover, since 2014-15, there has been a sharp increase in the availability of such seeds, even though their requirement has not gone up commensurately, even when we count for the efforts being made by the government to create positive sentiments about these seeds.

A total of 81 high-yielding varieties of crops and hybrids have been introduced. These include 19 varieties of rice, 12 of wheat, 6 of barley, 11 (hybrids) of maize, 9 millets, 7 oilseeds, 11 pulses (including 2 of green gram, 2 each of pigeon pea and field pea and 1 each of black gram, chickpea, lentil, horse gram and cowpea), 2 of sugarcane and 4 varieties and 1 hybrid of forage crops.

### **Disease resistant H-369 Hybrid tomato**



o (yield 25.5 tonne per hectare)



These varieties of tomatoes, potatoes, mangoes, and other grains, fruits and vegetables are high-yielding and disease-resistant. But they have severe adverse health effects. Thus, they only serve to create the illusion that there is no scarcity of food. But what is actually being served on our plates spells a death knell for us.

## **Future Directions**

Agriculture has become an entirely mechanized sector. There is little focus on quality and a lot on how to make profit out of it, and how to keep our present cycle of greed going. Striking international and regional agreements, we import technology that may devastate our livelihoods and increase the ambition, greed and corruption in the system. This is demonstrated amply in the recent agreement that India signed with Russia at the recent BRICS summit in Goa, where the two countries agreed to set-up irradiation centers in India, for treating the farm produce. Certifications from IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) are cited to show that the technology would be 'absolutely safe'. Ostensibly, the purpose is to subject the agricultural produce to nuclear radiation in order to finish off the frequent pests that assail them, so as to increase their storage and shelf-life.

The government is not realizing that the agrarian crisis has deep-rooted implications, and, is therefore targeting all the wrong solutions. It is looking towards the kind of high-level technological innovations like GM crops and nuclear treatment which will prove to be fatal and piecemeal measures like setting up new irrigation facilities, installing projects for ground water restoration, conservation of soil fertility and doubling farmers' income by 2022 and diversification of rural economy.

When we talk about these short-term fixes, the devil lies in the detail. For example, while there is lot of discussion on increasing total and per hectare food production, there is little focus on the quality of food. This means that we end up talking about promoting high-yielding crop varieties and further use of agrochemicals – all



of which sounds very fashionable and technical on paper, but will be disastrous for health. The result is that instead of perishing of food scarcity now, we will die a slow, torturous death. For, with limited availability of fertile land to cultivate food, the only alternative is to increase per hectare productivity by these dangerous, short-term methods.

The government seems to be moving in a populist direction on this issue. It is concerned mainly with doubling farm incomes by 2022, for which it can take any measures, since actual food quality will take less priority. In a recent development, the Niti Aayog proposed a strategy to liberalize the agricultural sector by eliminating the role of middle-men and reforming various laws, and, digitizing the agricultural market, to make the markets directly accessible to the farmers. In this area the government is working positively in signaling the right policy intention, but it is the motive of commercialization and profit-making that needs to be kept out to save our bodies and souls.

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9. **Ibid.**

# THE BENGAL FAMINE OF 1943: HOW THE BRITISH ENGINEERED ONE OF THE WORST GENOCIDES IN THE HUMAN HISTORY

History is written by the winners and not by the losers. No wonder, the history of India under the British rule is written by British and American authors. It is said that during the Second World War Hitler killed as many as seven million Jews and is regarded as the most devilious person of the twentieth century. But what about the ghastly genocide done by the British government in India by using hunger and starvation as tools and which lasted for about two centuries claiming about thirty million lives. The British always adopted a ruthless economic policy towards India. Under the British Raj, India suffered countless famines. The first of these famines started in 1770, followed by severe ones in 1783, 1866, 1873, 1892, 1897 and lastly 1943-44. Previously, when famines had hit the country, the indigenous rulers of India were quick and used different means to avert the famine. After the advent of the British rule, most of the famines were a consequence of monsoonal delays along with the exploitation of the country's natural resources by the British for their own financial gain. Yet they did little to acknowledge the havoc that these famines brought with them, if anything, they were irritated by the inconveniences in collecting taxes that the famines brought about.

The deadliest famine that occurred after 1771 was in 1943, when more than 3.5 million people died and thousand others survived only by eating grass and human flesh. The Bengal Famine of 1943 struck the Bengal Province of British India (present-day West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and the country of Bangladesh) during World War II following the Japanese invasion of Burma. The food situation in India was tight from the beginning of the Second World War, with a series of crop failures and localized famines. In 1941 Bengal had a poor harvest and several districts witnessed hunger marches. The authorities dismissed these as having been organized by 'designing persons' to create political unrest and strove to ensure that no such rumors of shortages leaked out.

The proximate cause of the famine was a reduction in supply with increase in demand. The winter rice crop of 1942 was expected to be poor and to make it more worse Bengal was hit by a cyclone in October, 1942. "An area of 450 square miles was swept away by tidal waves, 400 square miles were affected by floods and 3200 square miles were damaged by wind and torrential rain. A good deal of the reserve stocks in the hands of cultivators, consumers and dealers was destroyed. This killed 14,500 people and 190,000 cattle. The homes, livelihood and property of nearly 2.5 million Bengalis were ruined or damaged. The fungus *Cochliobolus miyabeanus* destroyed 50% to 90% of some rice varieties, causing even greater damage to yield than the cyclone."<sup>1</sup>

In the 1940s to meet the demand for rice Bengal had to import rice from Burma. In the year 1942 the British Empire had suffered a disastrous defeat at Singapore against the Japanese military, which then proceeded to invade Burma in the same year. After the Japanese occupation of Burma in March 1942, Bengal and the other parts of India, which imported large amount of rice from Burma, had to find food elsewhere. There were also poor crops and famine situations in Cochin, Trivandrum and Bombay on the West coast and Madras, Orissa and Bengal in the East. It then fell on the few surplus Provinces, mainly the Punjab, to supply the foodgrains to the rest of India. But the Provincial government of Punjab was reluctant to supply large amount of foodgrains to other provinces as they were themselves having difficulty in meeting the local demand. Bengal's food needs rose at the same time from the influx of refugees from Burma, which made the situation even worse. As the supply of rice was in short and the demand high this made the price of grain to move upward and most of the people were not able to meet this sudden rise in the prices.

Also with the fall of Burma the British government made the Boat Denial Policy and Rice Denial Policy from the fears by the Army and other British authorities that the Japanese would follow up their conquest of Burma with an invasion of British India by way of Bengal. A scorched earth policy was hastily implemented in the Chittagong region, nearest to the Burmese border, to deny the

Japanese easy access to supplies and other resources in case of an invasion. In particular, the Army confiscated many boats (and motor vehicles, carts and even elephants), fearing that the Japanese would commandeer them to speed an advance into India. The inhabitants used the boats for fishing and to take goods to market, and the Army failed to distribute rations to replace the fish and the food lost through the stoppage of commerce. The dislocation in the area forced many of the male inhabitants into the Military Labour Corps, where at least they received rations, but the break-up of families left many children and dependents to beg or to starve. This was the condition of Bengal in the early 1940s, which was once the most prosperous part of India. A brief historical background is needed to understand who was really responsible for all this.

## **A. The Dependence of Britain's Economy on Indian Agricultural Products: A Historical Background**

If we ponder little bit into history then we will be able to clearly see how the British exploitation completely changed the economic conditions of Bengal. The place which was once regarded as the 'paradise of the earth' by Robert Clive, was no more the same. "Historian William Hunter observed in 1874 that in Bengal, if the price of rice after the winter harvest was twice that in a normal year, it foretold a famine – and a price three times the normal, later in the year, indicated that the famine had already set in. Yet even a tripling in the cost of rice, enough to depopulate hundreds of villages, was of little financial significance to a consumer in the United Kingdom. Whereas the colony and the colonizer probably had the same level of prosperity in the mid-eighteenth century (with Bengal having been richer than this average), by the end of the Victorian era the per capita income in the United Kingdom was twenty times that in India. The industrial revolution and imperial policy had plugged India smoothly but asymmetrically into the global economy, such that the high incomes abroad siphoned off a good part of the grain that the land revenue system extruded onto the market. Because the grain

was free to follow the cash out of the country, this forced-feedback loop went by the name of free trade.

Nationalists invariably demanded that cereals not be allowed to be exported in times of famine. But the authorities pleaded the virtues of free trade, and local administrators who curbed exports or otherwise interfered with market forces were severely chastised. Even during devastating famines, the government rigorously collected agricultural taxes, thereby feeding whatever harvest there was into the free market. If the revenue collectors could not gather all the tax due during a famine, they recovered it the following year, along with that year's dues. 'The one good harvest that stood between the famine of 1897 and 1899 had to pay the famine revenue and the revenue for the current year,' observed journalist Vaughan Nash, so that 'when the moneylenders had taken their share, the cultivator had nothing left for a rainy, or, rather, a rainless day'.

The crux of the matter was that India's agricultural exports had become crucial to the United Kingdom's economy. The imperial nation settled more than a third of its trade deficit with the United States and Europe by means of India's export surplus. Prohibiting the export of food from India would make it more affordable within the colony, admitted economist Fred J. Atkinson in 1909. Yet such a measure would adversely affect India's trade balance, reduce the value of the rupee, and make the Home Charge (which had to be paid in sterling) effectively more expensive. Moreover, Atkinson continued, 'if the food supply from India ceased, unless the gaps could at once be filled from elsewhere, food prices outside India would rise, and this, owing to the existence of unions and their methods of enforcing their wishes by means of strikes... might affect wages outside India thus indirectly all prices.' Should Indians eat their grain instead of exporting it, they would destabilize the economy of the United Kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

In 1920s the Great Depression overcame rural India. "High grain prices in the 1920s had allowed some cultivators to accumulate savings in the form of gold or land, which had prompted an increase in taxes. Although the prices of wheat and rice began to slide in 1930, slashing

farmers' incomes, cultivators still owed taxes and other dues. Moneylenders (who, through a chain of refinancing arrangements, were ultimately beholden to banks) ran out of cash, refused additional credit, and instead forced peasants to pay up their debts – which they did by confiscating the gold bangles, earrings and necklaces belonging to the family's women. (The alternative was to sell land, which for a peasant was the last resort because it deprived the family of its cheapest source of food.)

The secretary of state for India and the governor of the Bank of England controlled the colony's monetary policy. They ensured that as much as possible of this 'distress gold' flowed to the United Kingdom. In the United States, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stopped the export of the metal and used the country's gold reserves to support the value of the currency, allowing him to inject money into the economy to revive it. Historian Dietmar Rothermund has written that had the British government in India been more responsive to the needs of the people, it similarly would have collected distress gold and used it to finance projects to alleviate rural suffering. **Instead, banks melted down 3.4 billion (Pound 255 million) worth of gold jewellery into bars and shipped it to London, helping to buttress its threatened position as a financial capital of the world. As a result, rural India was drained of its savings, leaving peasants defenseless against future economic shocks.**"<sup>3</sup>

By the 1930's India was no longer a net exporter of grain, on the contrary, India imported cereals. "Whereas in the nineteenth century it had been producing more than required to feed the people (had the grain stayed in the country), the population's needs had since overtaken food production. But the depression slashed the net earnings of Bengali peasants, the vast majority of whom needed to buy some rice for their families, by 90 per cent – with the result that they could not import enough. A 1933 survey revealed that 41 per cent of India's inhabitants were 'poorly nourished' and another 20 per cent 'very badly nourished', with the statistics for Bengal being worst of all: 47 and 31 per cent, respectively. The province underwent serious food

scarcities in 1934 and 1936; mass migration, the most egregious sign of famine, was averted thanks to rice shipments from Burma.

By the time World War II hit, India was importing between 1 and 2 million tons of rice a year from Burma and Thailand. That lifeline would be cut by the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia – just when India had again become an exporter of grain, this time for the war effort.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus when thousands of Indians were fighting on behalf of the British government in some of the toughest countries around the Mediterranean Sea, and when apart from the troops India was supplying foodgrains, uniforms boots, parachutes, tents, ammunitions and innumerable other necessities, the native people of India were even begging for a morsel of food. This was all because of the deceitful and cunning policies of the British government.

## **B. Winston Churchill and his Dreadful Policies towards India which Paved the Way for the Famine**

In 2010, Bengali author Madhusree Mukherjee wrote a book about the famine called “Churchill’s Secret War,” in which she explicitly blamed Churchill for worsening the starvation in Bengal by ordering the diversion of food away from Indians and towards the British troops around the world. Mukerjee’s book described how wheat from Australia (which could have been delivered to starving Indians) was instead transported to British troops in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. Even worse, British colonial authorities (again under Churchill’s leadership) actually turned down offers of food from Canada and the U.S. In her book she wrote that in June 1942, “Viceroy Linlithgow had been warning about a food crisis in India, and earlier that March a member of his council, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, had told the War Cabinet’s shipping committee of ‘some danger of famine conditions, particularly in Calcutta and Bombay’. Wheat was available in Australia, but all Indian ships capable of the round trip were engaged in the war effort. Moreover, in January the prime minister had brought most of the merchant ships operating in the Indian Ocean over to the Atlantic,

in order to bolster the United Kingdom's stocks of food and raw materials. He was reluctant to release vessels to carry grain to the colony, because lowered stocks at home would compromise the British economy and limit the War Cabinet's ability to pursue military operations of its choice – and because his hostility toward Indians was escalating.”<sup>5</sup>

“On January 2, 1943, Governor Herbert warned the viceroy that his province was desperately short of wheat. ‘Bengal’s normal demand is 18,000 tons a month and we are short of nearly twice this amount over last quarter alone. Amount of 110 tons mentioned by you therefore represents only few hours supply.’ If factory workers who ate wheat did not get it, they would either riot or leave, so the shortage threatened the production of ammunition. Herbert urged Linlithgow to get hold of a ship ‘for large-scale import of wheat which might prove palliative for the whole situation’ involving both wheat and rice.”<sup>6</sup>

“So early January 1943, Amery<sup>a</sup> wrote to Lord Frederick Leathers, the minister of war transport, arguing the urgent necessity of sending to India 600,000 tons of wheat within the first quarter of the year (over and above 30,000 tons already promised to the army). The imports would enable the Viceroy ‘firstly to maintain supplies to the Army, secondly to feed the urban population on whose labour the war effort mainly depends, thirdly to maintain supplies to those areas where for one reason or another there is an unsatisfied deficiency of food grains, and fourthly to convince holders of supplies that holding for a major shortage is not good business.’

Amery was talking to the wrong person. Leathers was a former shipping magnate who had been brought in by Churchill to run the British Empire's merchant shipping during the war. He was reputed to be very competent; but he lacked the authority, and by all accounts the inclination, to release ships for any purpose that the Prime Minister had not approved.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Leopold Charles Maurice Stennett Amery, Secretary of State for India from 13 May 1940 to 26 July 1945



“It was too late. On January 5, 1943, the prime minister had slashed the number of ships operating in the ‘Indian Ocean area’. The term, used in connection with wartime shipping, referred to the entire span of water rimmed by Australia, Arabia, and Africa (as well as the British Empire territories and dominions surrounding this composite body of water). The United Kingdom controlled the merchant ships there, whereas the United States ran the Pacific. Of the forty vessels that remained in the Indian Ocean area after the cut, the lion’s share would go toward supplying Operation Torch, an invasion of French colonies in North Africa, leaving only a handful of ships to ply to and from India – just enough to collect whatever goods the colony could still provide to the outside world.

Churchill seems not to have mentioned this crucial decision when, at a War Cabinet meeting on January 12, 1943, Amery brought up India’s serious food problem. **Instead of wheat shipments, the War Cabinet offered to send to the colony an official who had experience, from a stint in the Middle East, of prying grain out of cultivators.** Unusually for the Prime Minister when India came up, he was ‘full of internal glee’ – because, it turned out, he was shortly to depart for Casablanca<sup>a</sup> to meet the US president.”<sup>8</sup>

In any case, “...India received a little less than 30,000 tons of wheat by July 1943 (plus the 30,000 that had been previously promised to the army). That is, of the 600,000 tons that the viceroy had requested in December 1942 as being essential to avert disaster, it received less than 5 per cent. As a result, only a quarter of the wheat that the Government of India had promised to send to Bengal in the first half of 1943 could arrive in that province. Most of that, in turn, remained in Calcutta for use by the priority classes, with small quantities being sent to the districts for official use. In April, an intelligence summary observed that ‘large numbers of starving people’ were emigrating from the province – a marker of famine as given in the Bengal famine Code, the official manual for the region.

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Curiously, the Government of India chose not to explain to the

<sup>a</sup> Morocco

Bengal administration why it was unable to help out in supplying wheat. Instead it insisted that the province had more than enough rice. 'This shortage is a thing entirely of your own imagination,' Justice Henry B. L. Braund of Bengal's Department of Civil Supplies said he had been told by officials of the Government of India in March 1943. 'We do not believe it and you have got to get it out of your head that Bengal is deficit. You have got to preach that there is sufficiency in Bengal and if you wait you will find that there is sufficiency in Bengal.' Civil servant Pinnell was similarly instructed by Major General E. Wood of New Delhi's Department of Food that if only he would 'preach the gospel of sufficiency' and hint that large imports of grain might suddenly arrive and drive down prices, he would draw out hoarded stocks. Meanwhile he should battle any misconceptions about shortages 'by attacking and confining on a large scale those who were likely to be its exponents'. A food minister was appointed for Bengal – Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy of the Muslim League – and although he believed a famine to be approaching 'he was not allowed by the Government of India to say so.' On the contrary, he announced that the province faced no shortages."<sup>9</sup>

In the War Cabinet meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1943, the secretary of the State for India, Amery began the proceedings by giving the account of the shortage of foodgrains that India was facing. "The Indian economy 'was being strained almost to the breaking-point' by the demands of war, Amery stated, and the direst effects could be countered only by meeting the viceroy's request. The War Cabinet took the view, however, that the problem 'could not be dealt with simply by the importation of grain'. Lord Leathers argued that it would be 'extremely difficult' to find ships to get grain to India. If the War Cabinet felt that something needed to be done, he would suggest sending 'not more than 50,000 tons as a token shipment. This should, however, not be earmarked for India but should be ordered to Colombo to await instructions there.' It might also be possible to send up to 100,000 tons of barley from Iraq."<sup>10</sup>

It is a complete nonsense that during this time of the year 1943 the British government was having difficulty in sparing ships to

transport grains to India. “In truth, perhaps at no other period during the war than in the summer and fall of 1943 did the number of ships at hand so greatly exceed those already committed to Allied operations. The war against U-boats<sup>a</sup> was won and American production of ships was increasing steeply; the net gain for the Allies had been 1.5 million tons of shipping in May alone. That month the president had transferred to British control fifteen to twenty cargo vessels for the duration of the war. By the summer of 1943, the British shipping crisis had given way to what historian Kevin Smith calls a ‘shipping glut’ and the S branch<sup>b</sup> would refer to as ‘[w]indfall shipping’. Lord Arthur Salter, had headed the British shipping mission to Washington, returned London to find that instead of worrying about the scarcity of ships, his colleagues were now concerned about the impact on post-war trade of too many ships in American hands. So many vessels would present at North American ports that autumn to be loaded with supplies to add to the United Kingdom’s stockpile that not enough cargo could be found to fill them. If ever during the war a window had opened for saving lives in Bengal – at no discernible cost to the war effort – this was it.”<sup>11</sup>

So, the whole excuse of not having enough ships was only a hoax for not supplying grains to India and starving the country to death. By the fall of the year 1943, “Ceylon and the Middle East were to receive each month 75,000 tons of Australian wheat to meet the regions’ continuing needs, according to the Ministry of War Transport. In addition, building a stockpile required ‘to meet potential demand for re-occupied S. Eastern Europe’ would consume 70,000 tons of wheat by the end of October and a further 100,000 tons by the end of 1943. Churchill must have had the Balkan stockpile in mind when he commented on the necessity of conserving Australian supplies: because

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<sup>a</sup> U-boat is the anglicized version of the German word U-Boot, a shortening of Unterseeboot. While the German term refers to any submarine, the English one refers specifically to military submarines operated by Germany, particularly in the First and Second World Wars.

<sup>b</sup> S branch means the Shipping Ministry.

Europeans, if and when they were liberated, would need wheat, Indian would have to make do with barley. Cherwell<sup>a</sup>, Leathers<sup>b</sup> and Grigg<sup>c</sup> must also have known that the surplus shipping and Australian wheat were to be used for building the Balkan stockpile, and could not be spared to relieve famine in India; these most loyal of Churchill's aides were no doubt looking for reasons to reject the viceroy's request."<sup>12</sup>

At the end of the year 1943, the United Kingdom had build up a stockpile in the Mediterranean region for feeding the Greeks and Yugoslavs it intended to liberate. That would simply mean that shiploads of Australian wheat would pass by the famine-stricken India, destined not for consumption by the starving people but only for storage and latter to be shipped away. For example, in September 1943, ten vessels were loaded with wheat flour and two with other foodstuff, but none would be for India. Similarly, in October ten vessels were loaded with wheat and other foodstuffs, but again none was for India. As long as food could be exported from India for the use in the war, the imperial administration had exported it in large quantities. But while the colony itself suffered from famine shiploads of Australian wheat would pass it by, to be stored for future consumption in southern Europe.

The excuse that the British government provided for not unloading the wheat shipment in Bengal was that the people of Bengal are not habituated to eat wheat. This untruth appeared so regularly in British accounts of the Bengal famine, "...in one of three forms – that Bengalis 'would sooner starve to death' than eat wheat, had difficulty digesting wheat, or did not know how to prepare wheat – that it deserves special scrutiny.

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<sup>a</sup> Frederick Alexander Lindemann, 1st Viscount Cherwell, was in charge of the Office of HM Paymaster General (OPG), which held accounts at the Bank of England on behalf of Government departments and selected other public bodies from 1942-1945.

<sup>b</sup> Frederick James Leathers, 1st Viscount Leathers Minister of War Transport from 1941-1945.

<sup>c</sup> Sir (Percy) James Grigg, Secretary of State for War from 22 February 1942 to 26 July 1945.

Wheat was one of the ancient crops of Bengal and is one of the nine plants symbolically offered to the goddess Durga. When Bengalis worship her in October, they eat a paste as a sacral offering. They have no trouble digesting it; on the contrary, better-off Bengalis use cream of wheat to wean infants.”<sup>13</sup>

### **C. Some Horrific Incidents during the Famine**

1. “In Sapurapota village of the 17th Union of Panskura Than a Muslim weaver was unable to support his family and, crazed with hunger, wandered away,’ recorded Biplabi<sup>a</sup> on August 5, 1943. ‘His wife believed that he had drowned himself in the flooded Kasai River, unable to feed her two young sons for several days, she could no longer endure their suffering. On 7/23 she dropped the smaller boy torn from her womb, the sparkle of her eye, into the Kasai’s frothing waters. She tried in the same way to send her elder son to his father, but he screamed and grabbed on to her. The maddened mother had lost all capacity for love and compassion. She discovered a new way to silence her child’s searing hunger. With feeble arms she dug a small grave and threw her son into it. As she was trying to cover him with earth a passerby heard his screams and snatched the spade from his mother’s hand. A kagmara (low-caste Hindu) promised to bring up the boy and the mother then went away, who knows where. Probably she found peace by joining her husband in Kasai’s cold torrent.”<sup>14</sup>

2. A schoolteacher in Mohisadal reported seeing children picking and eating undigested grains out of a beggar’s diarrheal discharge.<sup>15</sup>

3. A British soldier Clive Branson wrote to his wife. “The ride was pleasant enough, until the train entered Bengal. ‘The endless view of plains, crops, and small stations, turned almost suddenly into one long trail of starving people. Men, women, children, babies, looked up into the passing carriage in their last hope for food. These people were not just hungry – this was famine. When we stopped, children swarmed round the carriage windows, repeating, hopelessly, “Bukshish, sahib” – with the monotony of a damaged gramophone. Others sat on the ground,

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<sup>a</sup> Local newspaper

just waiting. I saw women – almost fleshless skeletons, their clothes grey with dust from wandering, with expressionless faces, not walking, but foot steadying foot, as though not knowing where they went. As we pulled towards Calcutta, for miles, little children naked, with inflated bellies stuck on stick-like legs, held up empty tins towards us. They were children still – they laughed and waved as we went by. Behind them one could see the brilliant fiendish green of the new crop.”<sup>16</sup>

4. “Stories of abandonment during the Bengal famine – of a small child found wandering alone in a field or of a woman who continued to eat at a relief camp while her baby died untended in her lap – are also common. An actress in Calcutta reported that once when her cook poured onto the pavement some phyan, the starchy water in which rice had been boiled, a shriveled-up woman who nevertheless seemed young caught it in her clay pot. Her four children ran up, but the mother ferociously slapped them away and drank up most of the phyan in quick gulps. ... At Faridpur in eastern Bengal, some workers were removing a corpse when a woman huddled nearby threw a bundle in their direction, saying, ‘Take that also.’ It was the body of her child.”<sup>17</sup>

5. A British soldier posted in Chittagong wrote in his diary: “I have heard many homeless little children of between 5 and 10 crying bitterly and coughing terribly outside my room in the Rest Camp at Chittagong at 3 & 4 in the morning in the pouring monsoon rain. They were all stark naked, homeless, motherless, fatherless and friendless. Their sole possession was an empty tin in which to collect scraps of food. We were strictly prohibited from helping any of these refugees in any way, under heavy penalties. Many could not endure to see this suffering, though, and did help surreptitiously.”<sup>18</sup>

From these real life incidents one can make out that how inhumane were the conditions in Bengal. Even when millions of Indians were serving in British units during this time, Churchill repeatedly denied food exports to India. How this utter inhumane cruelty of the British can ever be explained. These conditions created by the British not only bring them on par with the Nazi Germany but in terms of inhumane activities they even exceed them.

## **D. World's Response to the Famine and Churchill's Refusal to Take Help Reflecting His Dislike for India**

“Starting in the summer of 1943, The Statesman began to publish editorials excoriating the government for the spreading famine. Stephens<sup>a</sup> pointed out the official confusion, indifference, subterfuge, and buck-passing and every day his voice became more strident. The response was disheartening: ‘Write, write, write, but nothing came of it,’ he wrote in a memoir. On Sunday, August 22, the newspaper came out with close-up photographs of children with protruding rib cages and panoramas of stick-like beings huddled in vast numbers. Despite a warning from censors, the next week The Statesman printed more photographs – and another editorial.

Until Stephens publicized it, the calamity in Bengal had been unknown to most of India and utterly unheard about in the rest of the world. In a bid to keep the news from leaking out, the Government of India had allegedly destroyed all but one of five thousand printed copies of *Hungry Bengal*, a collection of sketches and reportage on the Midnapore famine – but it could not suppress *The Statesman*. In New Delhi, storefronts displayed the pictures of famine victims, and in Washington the State Department circulated them among policymakers.”<sup>19</sup>

When the news of the Bengal famine began to spread many nations and individual groups poured into to help the dying souls of Bengal. But the British government, mainly Prime Minister Churchill, was reluctant to take any help and was willing to let the people of Bengal to die.

“On August 14, 1943, the Indian Independence League, an association of expatriate nationalists, announced over Axis radio that it was accepting the help of Japan, Thailand and Burma to send rice to India. ‘Though it is normally impossible to send rice to India from

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<sup>a</sup> Ian Stephens, Chief Editor of the Statesman

Japanese occupied territory the league is prepared to do so if the British Government approves the proposal and gives an undertaking that the food so sent will not be reserved for military consumption or exported from India' went, the message, as translated from Tamil by British intelligence. Over the next months Subhas Chandra Bose repeated the offer, because he had instigated it, in speeches and broadcasts, such as this one from Singapore: '100,000 tons of rice are waiting to be sent to India to alleviate the famine. The rice is stored in a suitable port near India. As soon as the British Government shows its readiness to accept delivery, I will announce the name of the port and the competent authority from whom the rice is to be collected. I will then also ask the Japanese Government to guarantee a safe convoy for the transport. Further deliveries for the starving population of India can be made as soon as the offer has been accepted. I hope that the British Government will accept without hesitation, as it is a humane offer, the acceptance of which will save hundreds of thousands of men, women and children in India.' Ripples of hope stirred in his prostrate homeland. According to one intelligence report, the 'latest Bose rumour is to the effect that he has written to the Viceroy asking him to send two ships to enable Bose to send rice to the starving people of Bengal.'"<sup>20</sup>

"The British must have thought his offer was genuine,' opined historian Sugata Bose (a grandnephew of Subhas Bose) in an interview. 'If they really thought it was a bluff they would have called it.' Had the leader failed to keep his promise, he would have been destroyed as a political force. 'When it came to a question of Bengalis starving to death, Subhas Chandra Bose would not have engaged in a propaganda stunt,' Sugata Bose added. 'When you look at his life, he was engaged in social work – plague relief and flood relief – since childhood.'

The War Cabinet knew of Bose's rice offer (having received at least one of the pertinent intelligence summaries), but whether or not the issue was discussed is unclear. Although ships capable of traversing the oceans were scarce, hundreds of smaller vessels were plying along the Indian coast, most of them under government control. The proximity



of Calcutta to Rangoon or other Burmese ports meant that Bose's rice could have arrived within a week or two, had the authorities chosen to collect it. Distributed at the rate of a half-kilogram per person per day, 100,000 tons would have fed 1.6 million people for four months – after which Bengalis would be harvesting their own winter crop.

To be sure, Subhas Chandra Bose was a despised enemy of the United Kingdom; he was an Axis collaborator and a target of British assassins. But when occupied Greece underwent famine in the winter of late 1941, Germany had permitted humanitarian agencies such as the International Red Cross to bring in relief and distribute it, a remarkable instance of Axis-Allied cooperation during the war. When it came to Bengal, His Majesty's Government would turn down even those offers of cereals that came not from adversaries but from friends. The dominions of Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada all asked how they could help. 'Australia could supply all the wheat needed for the starving in India provided the United Kingdom could provide the ships,' stated a minister in Canberra, as reported by Reuters on September 28. 'Wheat was practically waiting to be loaded on boats.'

Virtually all dominion shipping was under the War Cabinet's control, as were seventeen merchant ships registered in India, amounting to around 80,000 gross tons, that were capable of the journey to Australia, 'Almost all our ships have been taken away,' Sir J.R. Srivastava later told the famine commission. (Srivastava was the member of the viceroy's executive council who was responsible for food.) At 'one time I asked whether these ships could not be released to us to carry foodgrains. But nothing came of it.' As a result, only highly compact foods could be loaded onto the ships that were already destined for India from the empire's ports. Amery informed the New Zealand government, which had authorized £10,000 of famine relief, that 'a free gift of powdered or condensed milk to this value would be the most useful form of gift as shipping could be most easily arranged for that.'

Ireland sent £100,000, and Prime Minister Eamon de Valera asked his compatriots for more; meanwhile, the leader of the country's Labour Party reminded the Irish people that when their forefathers

had starved under British rule in the previous century, Indians had sent help. Private charities in the United Kingdom and the United States also began to collect money. The Red Cross started operations in Calcutta, but it could provide only milk powder, vitamins, and medicines. These were valuable, but no substitute for rice or wheat.”<sup>21</sup>

After a War Cabinet debate of the Bengal Famine in November, 1943, it was agreed, mainly due to international pressures to supply foodgrains to India. The war cabinet managed to “send 50,000 tons for each of January and February, and that was agreed upon. As it happened, Canada had offered a free gift of 100,000 tons of wheat to India to relieve the famine, and Viceroy Wavell had accepted. Churchill had already rejected Canada’s proposal because, according to a document with the Ministry of War transport, ‘it would be unjustifiable to impose any additional strain on our shipping resources (especially if that involved seeking further shipping assistance from the Americans) for the sake of the wholly uneconomic prospect of shipping wheat from Canada to India.’ But a Canadian ship of 10,000 tons had become available at Vancouver, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King wanted to fill it with wheat for India. To Amery’s consternation, Leathers and Churchill were ‘vehement against this’ and resolved to stop the consignment. ‘I can only trust that they won’t have begun loading before Winston’s telegram arrives,’ Amery recorded. **‘The trouble is that Winston so dislikes India and all to do with it that he can see nothing but the mere waste of shipping space involved in the longer journey.’**

At the time, a consignment of 9,000 tons of rice from Brazil was on its way to Ceylon, and shiploads of Australian wheat were circumnavigating India on their way to the Balkan stockpile. Other ships were travelling to Argentina to collect wheat for Britain – a trip twice as long as that to Canada or the United States. And as it happened, the United Kingdom already had more than enough wheat. ‘I hope that out of the present surplus of grain you will manage to do a little more for the domestic poultry keeper,’ the prime minister directed the day after this meeting. If their hens could get more grain, Britons would get more eggs.”<sup>22</sup>

Even as Bengal was going through famine and thousands of people were starving to death, this did not deter the British government a bit. Instead of taking care of the local people and aborting this man-made famine, the British policy was actually contrary to this. As during this time the government should have imported foodgrains to meet the local demand but instead of that it actually exported tons of rice. "Whereas India annually imported at least a million tons of rice and wheat before the war, it exported a net 360,000 tons during the fiscal year April 1, 1942, to March 31, 1943. Of this quantity, 260,000 tons were rice. Gross exports of foodgrains (including lentils) in that fiscal year totaled 465,600 tons. The exports took place after the war had reached India's borders, imports of rice from Southeast Asia had been cut off, invasion appeared imminent, and hunger marches and food riots had become routine. The exports continued even after the cyclone had damaged vital winter crop of rice. On April 22, 1943, more than a month after it had been warned of famine, the Ministry of War Transport recorded with approval 'continued pressure being brought upon India to persuade her to release more than the previously agreed quotas of rice and, more recently, cargoes of wheat'. **Between January and July of 1943, even as famine set in, India exported 71,000 tons of rice, an unknown fraction of it through Calcutta's port.**

Shiploads of food departing a captive and stricken land recall the Indian famines of the Victorian era and the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s, when crop failure combined with colonial policy to fell millions. The exports of 1942 and 1943 were far smaller than those of earlier times, but just as damaging given the substantial imports that were needed to keep native souls from departing their bodies. Ceylon, Arabia and South Africa, where the rice ended up, were already better supplied with grain than was India. **But if distributed at relief camps in Bengal at the average rate of a half-kilogram per person per day, 71,000 tons of rice would have kept 390,000 people alive for a full year. The 360,000 tons of wheat and rice, if similarly used, would have saved almost 2 million.**"<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the year 1943, when India was going through an acute

famine and was wading into an economic morass, the United Kingdom's civilian stocks of food and raw materials continued to swell, and by the end of **"1943 they would stand at 18.5 million tons, the highest total ever.** The United Kingdom imported that year 4 million tons of wheat grain and flour, 1.4 million tons of sugar, 1.6 million tons of meat, 409,000 heads of live cattle, 325,000 tons of fish, 131,000 tons of rice, 206,000 tons of tea, 172,000 tons of cocoa, and 1.1 million gallons of wine for its 47.7 million people – a population 14 million fewer than that of Bengal. Sugar and oilseeds overflowed warehouses and had to be stored outdoors in England under tarpaulins. American and Canadian grain traders complained that excessive British demand was distorting the market and worried that, after the war, the United Kingdom would use its vast stocks to manipulate world prices."<sup>24</sup>

Finally in the year 1944, India received 660,450 tons of wheat. "Fending off a second Indian famine took the combined efforts of the secretary of state for India, the viceroy of India, the chief of the Imperial General Staff, the supreme commander in Southeast Asia, and the commander-in-chief in India. It would be beyond anyone's power, however, to win the prime minister's consent to loosening political control over the colony."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, by the end of the year 1944, the worst famine that was apparently engineered by the British government came to an end. The British government and mainly the British Prime Minister Churchill was solely responsible for this great calamity. It was Churchill's antipathy towards India that India had to go through such gruesome conditions. Churchill's hostility towards Indians has long been well established and documented. His attitude toward Indians was made crystal clear when in May 1943, while discussing his policies with the Secretary of State for India, Leopold S. Amery, Churchill exclaimed, **"I hate Indians. They are beastly people with beastly religion."** **It was this thinking of the Churchill that led him to make India go through all this. As we have seen above that the British government had enough means to avert the famine of Bengal and some officials even tried to do this but it was the reluctance of Churchill that**

they could do nothing. Reportedly, when he first received a telegram from the British colonial authorities in New Delhi about the rising toll of famine deaths in Bengal, his reaction was simply that he regretted that nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi was not one of the victims. Later at a War Cabinet meeting, Churchill blamed the Indians themselves for the famine, saying that, ‘Famine or no famine, Indians will breed like rabbits.’ The Delhi Government sent a telegram to him painting a picture of the horrible devastation and the number of people who had died. His only response was, ‘Then why hasn’t Gandhi died yet?’ This antipathy of Churchill towards India led millions of Indians to starve and nearly 3.5 million to perish.

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# THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (24)

## 4. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN ART

### VI. Indian Art

#### *D. Indian Painting*

“ALL Western and Eastern nations have been obliged to admit that our Mother India was an imperishable treasure-house of knowledge, spirituality, art and literature. But formerly Europe was under the impression that Indian painting was not so highly developed as our literature and other arts, but was horrible and devoid of beauty. We too, enlightened by European knowledge and looking through European glasses, turned up our noses at the sight of Indian painting and sculpture, thus demonstrating our refined intellect and irreproachable taste. The mansions of the rich became filled with Greek statues and things in the ‘cast’ of English paintings or their lifeless imitations, even the walls of the houses of ordinary people were decorated with frightful oil-paintings. **The Indians whose tastes and skills in art had been unmatched in the world, the Indians whose choice of colour and form had been naturally faultless, the same people grew blind, lost the intellectual capacity for seizing the inner significance and developed a taste even worse than that of an Italian labourer. Raja Ravi Varma was acclaimed the best Indian artist.**

However, recently thanks to the efforts of some art-lovers the eyes of the Indians are opening and they are beginning to appreciate their own skill and their own vast wealth of art forms. Animated and inspired by the extraordinary genius of Sri Abanindranath Tagore, a few young men are resurrecting the lost art of Indian painting. By virtue of their talent a new age is being ushered in Bengal. After this, one may expect that India, instead of looking through the eyes of the English will see with her own eyes and, discarding the imitations of the West, depend upon her own clear intellect and once again express the eternal thoughts of India through colour and form.

There are two reasons for the Europeans' dislike of Indian painting. They say Indian paintings are incapable of imitating Nature: instead of drawing a man like a man, a horse like a horse, a tree like a tree, they draw deformed images; they have no perspective, the pictures appear flat and unnatural. The Europeans' second objection used to be that all these pictures lack beauty of form and feeling. This objection is no longer in their mouths. When they saw the incomparable serenity in our ancient images of Buddha and the radiance of supernal power in our ancient statues of Durga, they were charmed and stupefied. The greatest acknowledged art-critics of England have admitted that the Indian painter might not know the perspective of Europe, but the Indian laws of perspective were very beautiful, complete and reasonable. It is true, the Indian painter or other artist does not imitate the external world, but not because he lacks the capacity: his aim is to go beyond the outward scene and appearance and express the inner feeling and truth. The external shape is only a robe, a disguise of the inner truth – we lose ourselves in the beauty of the mass and cannot see what is hidden within. Therefore, **Indian painters deliberately modified the outer form in order to make it more suitable for expressing the inner truth. One is amazed to see how beautifully they express the inner truth of an mental state or of an event, in each limb, in the environment, attitude and dress. This, indeed, is the main characteristic of Indian painting, its highest development.**

**The West is busy with the false external perception, they are devotees of the shadow. The East seeks the inner truth, we are devotees of the eternal. The West worships the body, we worship the soul. The West is in love with name and form, we can never be satisfied unless we get to the eternal object. This difference is evident everywhere: as in religion, philosophy and literature, so in painting and architecture.”<sup>1</sup>**

“...the art of painting are unfortunately more perishable than those of any other of the greater means of creative aesthetic self-expression and of the ancient masterpieces only a little survives, but that little still indicates the immensity of the amount of work of which

it is the fading remnant. It is said that of the twenty-nine caves at Ajanta almost all once bore signs of decoration by frescoes; only so long ago as forty years sixteen still contained something of the original paintings, but now six alone still bear their witness to the greatness of this ancient art, though rapidly perishing and deprived of something of the original warmth and beauty and glory of colour. The rest of all that vivid contemporaneous creation which must at one time have covered the whole country in the temples and viharas and the houses of the cultured and the courts and pleasure-houses of nobles and kings, has perished, and we have only, more or less similar to the work at Ajanta, some crumbling fragments of rich and profuse decoration in the caves of Bagh and a few paintings of female figures in two rock-cut chambers at Sigiriya.<sup>a</sup> These remnants represent the work of some six or seven centuries, but they leave gaps, and nothing now remains of any paintings earlier than the first century of the Christian era, except some frescoes, spoilt by unskilful restoration, from the first century before it, while after the seventh there is a blank which might at first sight argue a total decline of the art, a cessation and disappearance. But there are fortunately evidences which carry back the tradition of the art at one end many centuries earlier and other remains more recently discovered and of another kind outside India and in the Himalayan countries carry it forward at the other end as late as the twelfth century and help us to link it on to the later schools of Rajput painting. The history of the self-expression of the Indian mind in painting covers a period of as much as two millenniums of more or less intense artistic creation and stands on a par in this respect with the architecture and sculpture.

The paintings that remain to us from ancient times are the work of Buddhist painters, but the art itself in India was of pre-Buddhistic origin. The Tibetan historian ascribes a remote antiquity to all the crafts, prior to the Buddha, and this is a conclusion increasingly pointed to by a constant accumulation of evidence. Already in the third century before the Christian era we find the theory

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<sup>a</sup> Since then more paintings of high quality have been found in some southern temples, akin in their spirit and style to the work at Ajanta.



of the art well founded from previous times, the six essential elements, *ṣaṣṭaṅga*, recognised and enumerated, like the more or less corresponding six Chinese canons which are first mentioned nearly a thousand years later, and in a very ancient work on the art pointing back to pre-Buddhistic times a number of careful and very well-defined rules and traditions are laid down which were developed into an elaborate science of technique and traditional rule in the later *Shilpasutras*. The frequent references in the ancient literature also are of a character which would have been impossible without a widespread practice and appreciation of the art by both men and women of the cultured classes, and these allusions and incidents evidencing a moved delight in the painted form and beauty of colour and the appeal both to the decorative sense and to the aesthetic emotion occur not only in the later poetry of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and other classical dramatists, but in the early popular drama of Bhasa and earlier still in the epics and in the sacred books of the Buddhists.”<sup>2</sup>

“The one important and significant thing that emerges is the constant oneness and continuity of all Indian art in its essential spirit and tradition. Thus the earlier work at Ajanta has been found to be akin to the earlier sculptural work of the Buddhists, while the later paintings have a similar close kinship to the sculptural reliefs at Java. And we find that the spirit and tradition which reigns through all changes of style and manner at Ajanta, is present too at Bagh and Sigiriya, in the Khotan frescoes, in the illuminations of Buddhist manuscripts of a much later time and in spite of the change of form and manner is still spiritually the same in the Rajput paintings. This unity and continuity enable us to distinguish and arrive at a clear understanding of what is the essential aim, inner turn and motive, spiritual method which differentiate Indian painting first from occidental work and then from the nearer and more kindred art of other countries of Asia.”<sup>3</sup>

“The spirit and motive of Indian painting are in their centre of conception and shaping force of sight identical with the inspiring vision of Indian sculpture.... The sculptor must express always in static form;

the idea of the spirit is cut out for him in mass and line, significant in the stability of its insistence, and he can lighten the weight of this insistence but not get rid of it or away from it; for him eternity seizes hold of time in its shapes and arrests it in the monumental spirit of stone or bronze. The painter on the contrary lavishes his soul in colour and there is a liquidity in the form, a fluent grace of subtlety in the line he uses which imposes on him a more mobile and emotional way of self-expression. The more he gives us of the colour and changing form and emotion of the life of the soul, the more his work glows with beauty, masters the inner aesthetic sense and opens it to the thing his art better gives us than any other, the delight of the motion of the self out into a spiritually sensuous joy of beautiful shapes and the coloured radiances of existence. Painting is naturally the most sensuous of the arts, and the highest greatness open to the painter is to spiritualise this sensuous appeal by making the most vivid outward beauty a revelation of subtle spiritual emotion so that the soul and the sense are at harmony in the deepest and finest richness of both and united in their satisfied consonant expression of the inner significances of things and life. There is less of the austerity of Tapasya in his way of working, a less severely restrained expression of eternal things and of the fundamental truths behind the forms of things, but there is in compensation a moved wealth of psychic or warmth of vital suggestion, a lavish delight of the beauty of the play of the eternal in the moments of time and there the artist arrests it for us and makes moments of the life of the soul reflected in form of man or creature or incident or scene or Nature full of a permanent and opulent significance to our spiritual vision.”<sup>4</sup>

“The Indian artist lived in the light of an inspiration which imposed this greater aim on his art and his method sprang from its fountains and served it to the exclusion of any more earthly sensuous or outwardly imaginative aesthetic impulse. The six limbs of his art, the *ṣaṣṭaṅga*, are common to all work in line and colour: they are the necessary elements and in their elements the great arts are the same everywhere; the distinction of forms, *rūpabheda*, proportion, arrangement of line and mass, design, harmony, perspective, *pramāṇa*,

the emotion or aesthetic feeling expressed by the form, *bhava*, the seeking for beauty and charm for the satisfaction of the aesthetic spirit, *svaya*, truth of the form and its suggestion, *saḍya*, the turn, combination, harmony of colours, *varṅikabhaga*, are the first constituents to which every successful work of art reduces itself in analysis. But it is the turn given to each of the constituents which makes all the difference in the aim and effect of the technique and the source and character of the inner vision guiding the creative hand in their combination which makes all the difference in the spiritual value of the achievement, and the unique character of Indian painting, the peculiar appeal of the art of Ajanta springs from the remarkably inward, spiritual and psychic turn which was given to the artistic conception and method by the pervading genius of Indian culture. Indian painting no more than Indian architecture and sculpture could escape from its absorbing motive, its transmuting atmosphere, the direct or subtle obsession of the mind that has been subtly and strangely changed, the eye that has been trained to see, not as others with only the external eye but by a constant communing of the mental parts and the inner vision with the self beyond mind and the spirit to which forms are only a transparent veil or a slight index of its own greater splendour. The outward beauty and power, the grandeur of drawing, the richness of colour, the aesthetic grace of this painting is too obvious and insistent to be denied, the psychical appeal usually carries something in it to which there is a response in every cultivated and sensitive human mind and the departures from the outward physical norm are less vehement and intense, less disdainful of the more external beauty and grace, – as is only right in the nature of this art, – than in the sculpture: therefore we find it more easily appreciated up to a certain point by the Western critical mind, and even when not well appreciated, it is exposed to milder objections. There is not the same blank incomprehension or violence of misunderstanding and repulsion. And yet we find at the same time that there is something which seems to escape the appreciation or is only imperfectly understood, and this something is precisely that profounder spiritual intention of which the things the eye and aesthetic sense immediately

seize are only the intermediaries. This explains the remark often made about Indian work of the less visibly potent and quieter kind that it lacks inspiration or imagination or is a conventional art: the spirit is missed where it does not strongly impose itself, and is not fully caught even where the power which is put into the expression is too great and direct to allow of denial. **Indian painting like Indian architecture and sculpture appeals through the physical and psychical to another spiritual vision from which the artist worked and it is only when this is no less awakened in us than the aesthetic sense that it can be appreciated in all the depth of its significance.**

The orthodox Western artist works by a severely conscientious reproduction of the forms of outward Nature; the external world is his model, and he has to keep it before his eye and repress any tendency towards a substantial departure from it or any motion to yield his first allegiance to a subtler spirit. His imagination submits itself to physical Nature even when he brings in conceptions which are more properly of another kingdom, the stress of the physical world is always with him, and the Seer of the subtle, the creator of mental forms, the inner Artist, the wide-eyed voyager in the vaster psychical realms, is obliged to subdue his inspirations to the law of the Seer of the outward, the spirit that has embodied itself in the creations of the terrestrial life, the material universe. An idealised imaginative realism is as far as he can ordinarily go in the method of his work when he would fill the outward with the subtler inner seeing. And when, dissatisfied with this confining law, he would break quite out of the circle, he is exposed to a temptation to stray into intellectual or imaginative extravagances which violate the universal rule of the right distinction of forms, *rūpabheda*, and belong to the vision of some intermediate world of sheer fantasia. His art has discovered the rule of proportion, arrangement and perspective which preserves the illusion of physical Nature and he relates his whole design to her design in a spirit of conscientious obedience and faithful dependence.”<sup>5</sup>

“The Indian artist sets out from the other end of the scale of values of experience which connect life and the spirit. The whole

creative force comes here from a spiritual and psychic vision, the emphasis of the physical is secondary and always deliberately lightened so as to give an overwhelmingly spiritual and psychic impression and everything is suppressed which does not serve this purpose or would distract the mind from the purity of this intention. This painting expresses the soul through life, but life is only a means of the spiritual self-expression, and its outward representation is not the first object or the direct motive. There is a real and a very vivid and vital representation, but it is more of an inner psychical than of the outward physical life. A critic of high repute speaking of the Indian influence in a famous Japanese painting fixes on the grand strongly outlined figures and the feeling for life and character recalling the Ajanta frescoes as the signs of its Indian character: but we have to mark carefully the nature of this feeling for life and the origin and intention of this strong outlining of the figures. The feeling for life and character here is a very different thing from the splendid and abundant vitality and the power and force of character which we find in an Italian painting, a fresco from Michael Angelo's hand or a portrait by Titian or Tintoretto. The first primitive object of the art of painting is to illustrate life and Nature and at the lowest this becomes a more or less vigorous and original or conventionally faithful reproduction, but it rises in great hands to a revelation of the glory and beauty of the sensuous appeal of life or of the dramatic power and moving interest of character and emotion and action. That is a common form of aesthetic work in Europe; but in Indian art it is never the governing motive. The sensuous appeal is there, but it is refined into only one and not the chief element of the richness of a soul of psychic grace and beauty which is for the Indian artist the true beauty, *īvaīya*: the dramatic motive is subordinated and made only a purely secondary element, only so much is given of character and action as will help to bring out the deeper spiritual or psychic feeling, *bhīva*, and all insistence or too prominent force of these more outwardly dynamic things is shunned, because that would externalise too much the spiritual emotion and take away from its intense purity by the interference of the grosser intensity

which emotion puts on in the stress of the active outward nature. The life depicted is the life of the soul and not, except as a form and a helping suggestion, the life of the vital being and the body. For the second more elevated aim of art is the interpretation or intuitive revelation of existence through the forms of life and Nature and it is this that is the starting-point of the Indian motive. But the interpretation may proceed on the basis of the forms already given us by physical Nature and try to evoke by the form an idea, a truth of the spirit which starts from it as a suggestion and returns upon it for support, and the effort is then to correlate the form as it is to the physical eye with the truth which it evokes without overpassing the limits imposed by the appearance. This is the common method of occidental art always zealous for the immediate fidelity to Nature which is its idea of true correspondence, *sādānya*, but it is rejected by the Indian artist. **He begins from within, sees in his soul the thing he wishes to express or interpret and tries to discover the right line, colour and design of his intuition which, when it appears on the physical ground, is not a just and reminding reproduction of the line, colour and design of physical nature, but much rather what seems to us a psychical transmutation of the natural figure.** In reality the shapes he paints are the forms of things as he has seen them in the psychical plane of experience: these are the soul-figures of which physical things are a gross representation and their purity and subtlety reveals at once what the physical masks by the thickness of its casings. The lines and colours sought here are the psychic lines and the psychic hues proper to the vision which the artist has gone into himself to discover.

This is the whole governing principle of the art which gives its stamp to every detail of an Indian painting and transforms the artist's use of the six limbs of the canon. The distinction of forms is faithfully observed, but not in the sense of an exact naturalistic fidelity to the physical appearance with the object of a faithful reproduction of the outward shapes of the world in which we live. To recall with fidelity something our eyes have seen or could have seen on the spot, a scene, an interior, a living and breathing person, and give the aesthetic sense and emotion of it to the mind is not the motive. **There is here an**

**extraordinary vividness, naturalness, reality, but it is a more than physical reality, a reality which the soul at once recognises as of its own sphere, a vivid naturalness of psychic truth, the convincing spirit of the form to which the soul, not the outward naturalness of the form to which the physical eye bears witness.** The truth, the exact likeness is there, the correspondence, *sādānya*, but it is the truth of the essence of the form, it is the likeness of the soul to itself, the reproduction of the subtle embodiment which is the basis of the physical embodiment, the purer and finer subtle body of an object which is the very expression of its own essential nature, *svabhāva*. The means by which this effect is produced is characteristic of the inward vision of the Indian mind. It is done by a bold and firm insistence on the pure and strong outline and a total suppression of everything that would interfere with its boldness, strength and purity or would blur over and dilute the intense significance of the line. **In the treatment of the human figure all corporeal filling in of the outline by insistence on the flesh, the muscle, the anatomical detail is minimised or disregarded: the strong subtle lines and pure shapes which make the humanity of the human form are alone brought into relief; the whole essential human being is there, the divinity that has taken this garb of the spirit to the eye, but not the superfluous physicality which he carries with him as his burden.** It is the ideal psychical figure and body of man and woman that is before us in its charm and beauty. The filling in of the line is done in another way; it is effected by a disposition of pure masses, a design and coloured wave-flow of the body, *bhāga*, a simplicity of content that enables the artist to flood the whole with the significance of the one spiritual emotion, feeling, suggestion which he intends to convey, his intuition of the moment of the soul, its living self-experience. All is disposed so as to express that and that alone. The almost miraculously subtle and meaningful use of the hands to express the psychic suggestion is a common and well-marked feature of Indian paintings and the way in which the suggestion of the face and the eyes is subtly repeated or supplemented by this expression of the hands is always one of the first things that strikes the regard, but as we continue to look, we see that every turn of the body, the pose of each limb, the relation and design of all the masses are

filled with the same psychical feeling. The more important accessories help it by a kindred suggestion or bring it out by a support or variation or extension or relief of the motive. The same law of significant line and suppression of distracting detail is applied to animal forms, buildings, trees, objects. There is in all the art an inspired harmony of conception, method and expression. Colour too is used as a means for the spiritual and psychic intention, and we can see this well enough if we study the suggestive significance of the hues in a Buddhist miniature. This power of line and subtlety of psychic suggestion in the filling in of the expressive outlines is the source of that remarkable union of greatness and moving grace which is the stamp of the whole work of Ajanta and continues in Rajput painting, though there the grandeur of the earlier work is lost in the grace and replaced by a delicately intense but still bold and decisive power of vivid and suggestive line. It is this common spirit and tradition which is the mark of all the truly indigenous work of India.

These things have to be carefully understood and held in mind when we look at an Indian painting and the real spirit of it first grasped before we condemn or praise. To dwell on that in it which is common to all art is well enough, but it is what is peculiar to India that is its real essence. And there again to appreciate the technique and the fervour of religious feeling is not sufficient; the spiritual intention served by the technique, the psychic significance of line and colour, the greater thing of which the religious emotion is the result has to be felt if we would identify ourself with the whole purpose of the artist. If we look long, for an example, at the adoration group of the mother and child before the Buddha, one of the most profound, tender and noble of the Ajanta masterpieces, we shall find that the impression of intense religious feeling of adoration there is only the most outward general touch in the ensemble of the emotion. That which it deepens to is the turning of the soul of humanity in love to the benignant and calm Ineffable which has made itself sensible and human to us in the universal compassion of the Buddha, and the motive of the soul moment the painting interprets is the dedication of the awakening mind of the child, the coming younger humanity, to that in which already the soul of the mother has learned to find and fix its spiritual joy. **The eyes, brows, lips, face, poise of the**



head of the woman are filled with this spiritual emotion which is a continued memory and possession of the psychical release, the steady settled calm of the heart's experience filled with an ineffable tenderness, the familiar depths which are yet moved with the wonder and always farther appeal of something that is infinite, the body and other limbs are grave masses of this emotion and in their poise a basic embodiment of it, while the hands prolong it in the dedicative putting forward of her child to meet the Eternal. This contact of the human and eternal is repeated in the smaller figure with a subtly and strongly indicated variation, the glad and childlike smile of awakening which promises but not yet possesses the depths that are to come, the hands disposed to receive and keep, the body in its looser curves and waves harmonising with that significance. **The two have forgotten themselves and seem almost to forget or confound each other in that which they adore and contemplate, and yet the dedicating hands unite mother and child in the common act and feeling by their simultaneous gesture of maternal possession and spiritual giving.** The two figures have at each point the same rhythm, but with a significant difference. The simplicity in the greatness and power, the fullness of expression gained by reserve and suppression and concentration which we find here is the perfect method of the classical art of India. And by this perfection Buddhist art became not merely an illustration of the religion and an expression of its thought and its religious feeling, history and legend, but a revealing interpretation of the spiritual sense of Buddhism and its profounder meaning to the soul of India.

To understand that – we must always seek first and foremost this kind of deeper intention – is to understand the reason of the differences between the occidental and the Indian treatment of the life motives. Thus a **portrait by a great European painter will express with sovereign power the soul through character, through the active qualities, the ruling powers and passions, the master feeling and temperament, the active mental and vital man: the Indian artist tones down the outward-going dynamic indices and gives only so much of them as will serve to bring out or to modulate something that is more of the grain of the subtle soul, something more static and impersonal of**

**which our personality is at once the mask and the index. A moment of the spirit expressing with purity the permanence of a very subtle soul quality is the highest type of the Indian portrait.** And more generally the feeling for character which has been noted as a feature of the Ajanta work is of a similar kind. **An Indian painting expressing, let us say, a religious feeling centred on some significant incident will show the expression in each figure varied in such a way as to bring out the universal spiritual essence of the emotion modified by the essential soul type,** different waves of the one sea, all complexity of dramatic insistence is avoided, and so much stress only is laid on character in the individual feeling as to give the variation without diminishing the unity of the fundamental emotion. The vividness of life in these paintings must not obscure for us the more profound purpose for which it is the setting, and this has especially to be kept in mind in our view of the later art which has not the greatness of the classic work and runs to a less grave and highly sustained kind, to lyric emotion, minute vividness of life movement, the more naive feelings of the people. One sometimes finds inspiration, decisive power of thought and feeling, originality of creative imagination denied to this later art; but its real difference from that of Ajanta is only that the intermediate psychic transmission between the life movement and the inmost motive has been given with less power and distinctness: the psychic thought and feeling are there more thrown outward in movement, less contained in the soul, but still the soul motive is not only present but makes the true atmosphere and if we miss it, we miss the real sense of the picture. This is more evident where the inspiration is religious, but it is not absent from the secular subject. Here too spiritual intention or psychic suggestion are the things of the first importance. In Ajanta work they are all-important and to ignore them at all is to open the way to serious errors of interpretation. Thus a highly competent and very sympathetic critic speaking of the painting of the Great Renunciation says truly that this great work excels in its expression of sorrow and feeling of profound pity, but then, looking for what a Western imagination would naturally put into such a subject, he goes on to speak of the weight of a tragic decision, the bitterness of renouncing a life of bliss blended with a yearning sense of hope in the happiness of the future, and **that is**

singularly to misunderstand the spirit in which the Indian mind turns from the transient to the eternal, to mistake the Indian art motive and to put a vital into the place of a spiritual emotion. It is not at all his own personal sorrow but the sorrow of all others, not an emotional self-pity but a poignant pity for the world, not the regret for a life of domestic bliss but the afflicting sense of the unreality of human happiness that is concentrated in the eyes and lips of the **Buddha**, and the yearning there is not, certainly, for earthly happiness in the future but for the spiritual way out, the anguished seeking which found its release, already foreseen by the spirit behind and hence the immense calm and restraint that support the sorrow, in the true bliss of Nirvana. There is illustrated the whole difference between two kinds of imagination, the mental, vital and physical stress of the art of Europe and the subtle, less forcefully tangible spiritual stress of the art of India.”<sup>6</sup>

“It is not necessary to dilate on the decorative arts and crafts of India, for their excellence has always been beyond dispute. The generalised sense of beauty which they imply is one of the greatest proofs that there can be of the value and soundness of a national culture. Indian culture in this respect need not fear any comparison: if it is less predominantly artistic than that of Japan, it is because it has put first the spiritual need and made all other things subservient to and a means for the spiritual growth of the people. **Its civilisation, standing in the first rank in the three great arts as in all things of the mind, has proved that the spiritual urge is not, as has been vainly supposed, sterilising to the other activities, but a most powerful force for the many-sided development of the human whole.**”<sup>7</sup>

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2. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.298-300, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
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## THE WORKING OF POLITICAL MACHINERY – APPEARANCE AND REALITY

“Constitutions can only disguise facts, they cannot abrogate them: for whatever ideas the form of the constitution may embody, its working is always that of the actually realised forces which can use it with effect. Most governments either have now or have passed through a democratic form, but nowhere yet has there been a real democracy; it has been everywhere the propertied and professional classes and the bourgeoisie who governed in the name of the people.”

– **Sri Aurobindo**

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 25, p.400)