

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

May 2020



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

Year II

Issue 2

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

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

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

— The Mother

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

A PERSPECTIVE ON MODERN POLITY IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

I. THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE AGE OF REASON AND THE APPLICATION OF REASON TO THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COLLECTIVE LIFE OF A SOCIETY OR A NATION

Individualism, which is a dominant force in modern societies, got its impulse and chance of development following the age of dominant Conventionalism. It is the spirit of individualism which opened the way to the age of reason. It is not that there were no thinkers before the age of reason but they did not think in the characteristic all-observing and all-questioning manner of the logical reason. "Their thought and their building of life were much less logical than spontaneously intelligent, organic and intuitive. Always they looked upon life as it was and sought to know its secret by keen discernment, intuition and insight; symbols embodying the actual and ideal truth of life and being, types setting them in an arrangement and psychological order, institutions giving them a material fixity in their effectuation by life, this was the form in which they shaped their attempt to understand and mentalise life, to govern life by mind, but mind in its spontaneously intuitive or its reflectively seeing movements..." (CWSA 25: 194)

"So long as the old method of mentalising life served its purpose, there was no necessity for men in the mass to think out their way of life by the aid of the reason. But the old method ceased to serve its purpose as soon as the symbols, types, institutions it created became conventions so imprisoning truth that there was no longer a force of insight sufficient to deliver

the hidden reality from its artificial coatings. Man may for a time, for a long time even, live by the mere tradition of things whose reality he has lost, but not permanently; the necessity of questioning all his conventions and traditions arises, and by that necessity reason gets her first real chance of an entire self-development.” (CWSA 25:195)

1. The Age of Reason and the Principle of Individualistic Democracy

The age of reason must necessarily be an age of “progress” and change because, “Reason cannot accept any institution merely because it serves some purpose of life: it has to ask whether there are not greater and better purposes which can be best served by new institutions. There arises the necessity of a universal questioning, and from that necessity arises the idea that society can only be perfected by the universal application of the rational intelligence to the whole of life, to its principle as to its details, to its machinery and to the powers that drive the machine.

This reason which is to be universally applied, cannot be the reason of a ruling class; for in the present imperfection of the human race that always means in practice the fettering and misapplication of reason degraded into a servant of power to maintain the privileges of the ruling class and justify the existing order. It cannot be the reason of a few pre-eminent thinkers; for, if the mass is infrarational, the application of their ideas becomes in practice disfigured, ineffective, incomplete, speedily altered into mere form and convention. It must be the reason of each and all seeking for a basis of agreement. Hence arises the principle of individualistic democracy, that the reason and will of every individual in the society must be allowed to count equally with the reason and will of every other in determining

its government, in selecting the essential basis and in arranging the detailed ordering of the common life. This must be, not because the reason of one man is as good as the reason of any other, but because otherwise we get back inevitably to the rule of a predominant class which, however modified by being obliged to consider to some extent the opinion of the ruled, must exhibit always the irrational vice of reason subordinated to the purposes of power and not flexibly used for its own proper and ideal ends. Secondly, each individual must be allowed to govern his life according to the dictates of his own reason and will so far as that can be done without impinging on the same right in others. This is a necessary corollary of the primary principle on which the age of reason founds its initial movement. It is sufficient for the first purposes of the rational age that each man should be supposed to have sufficient intelligence to understand views which are presented and explained to him, to consider the opinions of his fellows and to form in consultation with them his own judgment. His individual judgment so formed and by one device or another made effective is the share he contributes to the building of the total common judgment by which society must be ruled, his little brick in appearance insignificant and yet indispensable to the imposing whole. And it is sufficient also for the first ideal of the rational age that this common judgment should be effectively organised only for the indispensable common ends of the society, while in all else men must be left free to govern their own life according to their own reason and will and find freely its best possible natural adjustment with the lives of others. In this way by the practice of the free use of reason men can grow into rational beings and learn to live by common agreement a liberal, a vigorous, a natural and yet rationalised existence.

In practice it is found that these ideas will not hold for a

long time. For the ordinary man is not yet a rational being; emerging from a long infrarational past, he is not naturally able to form a reasonable judgment, but thinks either according to his own interests, impulses and prejudices or else according to the ideas of others more active in intelligence or swift in action who are able by some means to establish an influence over his mind. Secondly, he does not yet use his reason in order to come to an agreement with his fellows, but rather to enforce his own opinions by struggle and conflict with the opinions of others. Exceptionally he may utilise his reason for the pursuit of truth, but normally it serves for the justification of his impulses, prejudices and interests, and it is these that determine or at least quite discolour and disfigure his ideals, even when he has learned at all to have ideals. Finally, he does not use his freedom to arrive at a rational adjustment of his life with the life of others; his natural tendency is to enforce the aims of his life even at the expense of or, as it is euphemistically put, in competition with the life of others. There comes thus to be a wide gulf between the ideal and the first results of its practice. There is here a disparity between fact and idea that must lead to inevitable disillusionment and failure.” (CWSA 25: 195-97)

2. The Acute Difficulties Encountered in the Practical Application of the Individualistic Democratic Ideal

“Democracy was the protest of the human soul against the allied despotisms of autocrat, priest and noble; Socialism is the protest of the human soul against the despotism of a plutocratic democracy; Anarchism is likely to be the protest of the human soul against the tyranny of a bureaucratic Socialism. A turbulent and eager march from illusion to illusion and from failure to failure is the image of European progress.” (CWSA 12: 468)

A. The Rule of a Dominant Class in the Name of Democracy

“The individualistic democratic ideal brings us at first in actual practice to the more and more precarious rule of a dominant class in the name of democracy over the ignorant, numerous and less fortunate mass. Secondly, since the ideal of freedom and equality is abroad and cannot any longer be stifled, it must lead to the increasing effort of the exploited masses to assert their down-trodden right and to turn, if they can, this pseudo democratic falsehood into the real democratic truth; therefore, to a war of classes. Thirdly, it develops inevitably as part of its process a perpetual strife of parties, at first few and simple in composition, but afterwards as at the present time an impotent and sterilising chaos of names, labels, programmes, war-cries. All lift the banner of conflicting ideas or ideals, but all are really fighting out under that flag a battle of conflicting interests. Finally, individualistic democratic freedom results fatally in an increasing stress of competition which replaces the ordered tyrannies of the infrarational periods of humanity by a sort of ordered conflict. And this conflict ends in the survival not of the spiritually, rationally or physically fittest, but of the most fortunate and vitally successful. It is evident enough that, whatever else it may be, this is not a rational order of society; it is not at all the perfection which the individualistic reason of man had contemplated as its ideal or set out to accomplish.” (CWSA 25: 197-98)

B. The Beneficial Effects of Democracy and Its Panacea of Universal Rational Education

“The natural remedy for the first defects of the individualistic theory in practice would seem to be education; for if man is not by nature, we may hope at least that he can be

made by education and training something like a rational being. Universal education, therefore, is the inevitable second step of the democratic movement in its attempt to rationalise human society. But a rational education means necessarily three things, first, to teach men how to observe and know rightly the facts on which they have to form a judgment; secondly, to train them to think fruitfully and soundly; thirdly, to fit them to use their knowledge and their thought effectively for their own and the common good. Capacity of observation and knowledge, capacity of intelligence and judgment, capacity of action and high character are required for the citizenship of a rational order of society; a general deficiency in any of these difficult requisites is a sure source of failure. Unfortunately, – even if we suppose that any training made available to the millions can ever be of this rare character, – the actual education given in the most advanced countries has not had the least relation to these necessities. And just as the first defects and failures of democracy have given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme and to vaunt the superiority or even the quite imaginary perfection of the ideal past, so also the first defects of its great remedy, education, have led many superior minds to deny the efficacy of education and its power to transform the human mind and driven them to condemn the democratic ideal as an exploded fiction.

Democracy and its panacea of education and freedom have certainly done something for the race. To begin with, the people are, for the first time in the historical period of history, erect, active and alive, and where there is life, there is always a hope of better things. Again, some kind of knowledge and with it some kind of active intelligence based on knowledge and strengthened by the habit of being called on to judge and decide between conflicting issues and opinions in all sorts of matters have been much more generalised than was formerly possible. Men are

being progressively trained to use their minds, to apply intelligence to life, and that is a great gain. If they have not yet learned to think for themselves or to think soundly, clearly and rightly, they are at least more able now to choose with some kind of initial intelligence, however imperfect as yet it may be, the thought they shall accept and the rule they shall follow. Equal educational equipment and equal opportunity of life have by no means been acquired; but there is a much greater equalisation than was at all possible in former states of society. But here a new and enormous defect has revealed itself which is proving fatal to the social idea which engendered it. For given even perfect equality of educational and other opportunity, – and that does not yet really exist and cannot in the individualistic state of society, – to what purpose or in what manner is the opportunity likely to be used?” (CWSA 25: 198-99)

C. The Misuse of Equal Opportunity and Education by the Individuals leading to the Initial Bankruptcies of the Rational Age

“Man, the half infrarational being, demands three things for his satisfaction, power, if he can have it, but at any rate the use and reward of his faculties and the enjoyment of his desires. In the old societies the possibility of these could be secured by him to a certain extent according to his birth, his fixed status and the use of his capacity within the limits of his hereditary status. That basis once removed and no proper substitute provided, the same ends can only be secured by success in a scramble for the one power left, the power of wealth. Accordingly, instead of a harmoniously ordered society there has been developed a huge organised competitive system, a frantically rapid and one-sided development of industrialism and, under the garb of democracy, an increasing plutocratic tendency that shocks by its ostentatious grossness and the

magnitudes of its gulfs and distances. These have been the last results of the individualistic ideal and its democratic machinery, the initial bankruptcies of the rational age. (CWSA 25: 199-200)

3. The Transition of the Rational Mind from Democratic Individualism to Democratic Socialism and Often to More Vigorous and Ruthlessly Logical Forms of Socialism – Communism, Nazism, Fascism

“Democracy in Europe is the rule of the Cabinet minister, the corrupt deputy or the self-seeking capitalist masqued by the occasional sovereignty of a wavering populace; Socialism in Europe is likely to be the rule of the official and policeman masqued by the theoretic sovereignty of an abstract State. It is chimerical to enquire which is the better system; it would be difficult to decide which is the worse.” (CWSA 12: 468)

The natural result of the initial bankruptcy of the rational age has been a transition of the rational mind – in a revolt against capitalism and the rule of the bourgeois and the plutocrat – from democratic individualism to democratic socialism. The socialistic idea owes its birth and speedy growth in Europe to the ruthless functioning of a capitalist industrial system. The above circumstances of its birth are accidents that, according to Sri Aurobindo, have disfigured the true nature of socialism and it has been compelled to work itself out by a war of classes.

A. The True Nature and the Inevitable Character of Socialism

“Its true nature, its real justification is the attempt of the human reason to carry on the rational ordering of society to its fulfilment, its will to get rid of this great parasitical excrescence of unbridled competition, this giant obstacle to any decent ideal or practice of human living. Socialism sets out to replace a system

of organised economic battle by an organised order and peace. This can no longer be done on the old lines, an artificial or inherited inequality brought about by the denial of equal opportunity and justified by the affirmation of that injustice and its result as an eternal law of society and of Nature. That is a falsehood which the reason of man will no longer permit. Neither can it be done, it seems, on the basis of individual liberty; for that has broken down in the practice. Socialism therefore must do away with the democratic basis of individual liberty, even if it professes to respect it or to be marching towards a more rational freedom. It shifts at first the fundamental emphasis to other ideas and fruits of the democratic ideal, and it leads by this transference of stress to a radical change in the basic principle of a rational society. Equality, not a political only, but a perfect social equality, is to be the basis. There is to be equality of opportunity for all, but also equality of status for all, for without the last the first cannot be secured; even if it were established, it could not endure. This equality again is impossible if personal, or at least inherited right in property is to exist, and therefore socialism abolishes – except at best on a small scale – the right of personal property as it is now understood and makes war on the hereditary principle. Who then is to possess the property? It can only be the community as a whole. And who is to administer it? Again, the community as a whole. In order to justify this idea, the socialistic principle has practically to deny the existence of the individual or his right to exist except as a member of the society and for its sake. He belongs entirely to the society, not only his property, but himself, his labour, his capacities, the education it gives him and its results, his mind, his knowledge, his individual life, his family life, the life of his children. Moreover, since his individual reason cannot be trusted to work out naturally a right and rational adjustment of his life

with the life of others, it is for the reason of the whole community to arrange that too for him. Not the reasoning minds and wills of the individuals, but the collective reasoning mind and will of the community has to govern. It is this which will determine not only the principles and all the details of the economic and political order, but the whole life of the community and of the individual as a working, thinking, feeling cell of this life, the development of his capacities, his actions, the use of the knowledge he has acquired, the whole ordering of his vital, his ethical, his intelligent being. For so only can the collective reason and intelligent will of the race overcome the egoism of individualistic life and bring about a perfect principle and rational order of society in a harmonious world.” (CWSA 25: 200-201)

B. Progression of Socialism to Communism and Other Forms of Totalitarianism

“Totalitarianism of some kind seems indeed to be the natural, almost inevitable destiny, at any rate the extreme and fullest outcome of Socialism or, more generally, of the collectivist idea and impulse. For the essence of Socialism, its justifying ideal, is the governance and strict organisation of the total life of the society as a whole and in detail by its own conscious reason and will for the best good and common interest of all, eliminating exploitation by individual or class, removing internal competition, haphazard confusion and waste, enforcing and perfecting coordination, assuring the best functioning and a sufficient life for all. If a democratic polity and machinery best assure such a working, as was thought at first, it is this that will be chosen and the result will be Social Democracy. That ideal still holds sway in northern Europe and it may there yet have a chance of proving that a successful collectivist rationalisation of society is quite possible. But if a non-democratic polity and machinery are found to serve the purpose better, then there is

nothing inherently sacrosanct for the collectivist mind in the democratic ideal; it can be thrown on the rubbish-heap where so many other exploded sanctities have gone. Russian communism so discarded with contempt democratic liberty and attempted for a time to substitute for the democratic machine a new sovietic structure, but it has preserved the ideal of a proletarian equality for all in a classless society. Still its spirit is a rigorous totalitarianism on the basis of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, which amounts in fact to the dictatorship of the Communist party in the name or on behalf of the proletariat. Non-proletarian totalitarianism goes farther and discards democratic equality no less than democratic liberty; it preserves classes – for a time only, it may be, – but as a means of social functioning, not as a scale of superiority or a hierarchic order. Rationalisation is no longer the turn; its place is taken by a revolutionary mysticism which seems to be the present drive of the Time Spirit.

This is a symptom that can have a considerable significance. In Russia the Marxist system of Socialism has been turned almost into a gospel. Originally a rationalistic system worked out by a logical thinker and discoverer and systematiser of ideas, it has been transformed by the peculiar turn of the Russian mind into something like a social religion, a collectivist mystique, an inviolable body of doctrines with all denial or departure treated as a punishable heresy, a social cult enforced by the intolerant piety and enthusiasm of a converted people. In Fascist countries the swing away from Rationalism is marked and open; a surface vital subjectivism has taken its place and it is in the name of the national soul and its self-expression and manifestation that the leaders and prophets teach and violently enforce their totalitarian mystique. The essential features are the same in Russia and in Fascist countries, so that to the eye of the outsider

their deadly quarrel seems to be a blood-feud of kinsmen fighting for the inheritance of their slaughtered parents – Democracy and the Age of Reason. There is the seizure of the life of the community by a dominant individual leader, Führer, Dux, dictator, head of a small active minority, the Nazi, Fascist or Communist party, and supported by a militarised partisan force; there is a rapid crystallisation of the social, economic, political life of the people into a new rigid organisation effectively controlled at every point; there is the compulsory casting of thought, education, expression, action, into a set iron mould, a fixed system of ideas and life-motives, with a fierce and ruthless, often a sanguinary repression of all that denies and differs; there is a total unprecedented compression of the whole communal existence so as to compel a maximum efficiency and a complete unanimity of mind, speech, feeling, life.” (CWSA 25: 204-06)

4. The End of the Curve of Reason

“If Reason were the secret highest law of the universe or if man the mental being were limited by mentality, it might be possible for him by the power of the reason to evolve out of the dominance of infrarational Nature which he inherits from the animal. He could then live securely in his best human self as a perfected rational and sympathetic being, balanced and well-ordered in all parts, the sattwic man of Indian philosophy; that would be his summit of possibility, his consummation. But his nature is rather transitional; the rational being is only a middle term of Nature’s evolution. A rational satisfaction cannot give him safety from the pull from below nor deliver him from the attraction from above. If it were not so, the ideal of intellectual Anarchism might be more feasible as well as acceptable as a theory of what human life might be in its reasonable perfection; but, man being what he is, we are compelled in the end to aim higher and go farther.” (CWSA 25: 219)

A. The Defects of the Rationalist Collectivist Idea of Society Leading to its Failure

“The Rational collectivist idea of society has at first sight a powerful attraction. There is behind it a great truth, that every society represents a collective being and in it and by it the individual lives and he owes to it all that he can give it. More, it is only by a certain relation to the society, a certain harmony with this greater collective self that he can find the complete use for his many developed or developing powers and activities. Since it is a collective being, it must, one would naturally suppose, have a discoverable collective reason and will which should find more and more its right expression and right working if it is given a conscious and effective means of organised self-expression and execution. And this collective will and intelligence, since it is according to the original idea that of all in a perfect equality, might naturally be trusted to seek out and work out its own good where the ruling individual and class would always be liable to misuse their power for quite other ends. The right organisation of social life on a basis of equality and comradeship ought to give each man his proper place in society, his full training and development for the common ends, his due share of work, leisure and reward, the right value of his life in relation to the collective being, society. Moreover it would be a place, share, value regulated by the individual and collective good and not an exaggerated or a depressed value brought to him fortuitously by birth or fortune, purchased by wealth or won by a painful and wasteful struggle. And certainly the external efficiency of the community, the measured, ordered and economical working of its life, its power for production and general well-being must enormously increase, as even the quite imperfect development of collective action in the recent past has shown, in a well-organised and concentrated State.” (CWSA 25: 208)

“The pity of it is that this excellent theory, quite as much as the individualist theory that ran before it, is sure to stumble over a discrepancy between its set ideas and the actual facts of human nature; for it ignores the complexity of man’s being and all that that complexity means. And especially it ignores the soul of man and its supreme need of freedom, of the control also of his lower members, no doubt, – for that is part of the total freedom towards which he is struggling, – but of a growing self-control, not a mechanical regulation by the mind and will of others. Obedience too is a part of its perfection, – but a free and natural obedience to a true guiding power and not to a mechanised government and rule. The collective being is a fact; all mankind may be regarded as a collective being: but this being is a soul and life, not merely a mind or a body. Each society develops into a sort of sub-soul or group-soul of this humanity and develops also a general temperament, character, type of mind, evolves governing ideas and tendencies that shape its life and its institutions. But the society has no discoverable common reason and will belonging alike to all its members; for the group-soul rather works out its tendencies by a diversity of opinions, a diversity of wills, a diversity of life, and the vitality of the group-life depends largely upon the working of this diversity, its continuity, its richness. Since that is so, government by the organised State must mean always government by a number of individuals, – whether that number be in theory the minority or the majority makes in the end little fundamental difference. For even when it is the majority that nominally governs, in fact it is always the reason and will of a comparatively few effective men – and not really any common reason and will of all – that rules and regulates things with the consent of the half-hypnotised mass.” (CWSA 25: 209-10)

“In the old infrarational societies, at least in their inception,

what governed was not the State, but the group-soul itself evolving its life organised into customary institutions and self-regulations to which all had to conform; for the rulers were only its executors and instruments. This entailed indeed a great subjection of the individual to the society, but it was not felt, because the individualistic idea was yet unborn and such diversities as arose were naturally provided for in one way or another, – in some cases by a remarkable latitude of social variation which government by the State tends more and more to suppress. As State government develops, we have a real suppression or oppression of the minority by the majority or the majority by the minority, of the individual by the collectivity, finally, of all by the relentless mechanism of the State. Democratic liberty tried to minimise this suppression; it left a free play for the individual and restricted as much as might be the role of the State. Collectivism goes exactly to the opposite extreme; it will leave no sufficient elbow-room to the individual free-will, and the more it rationalises the individual by universal education of a highly developed kind, the more this suppression will be felt, – unless indeed all freedom of thought is negated and the minds of all are forced into a single standardised way of thinking. Man needs freedom of thought and life and action in order that he may grow, otherwise he will remain fixed where he was, a stunted and static being. If his individual mind and reason are ill-developed, he may consent to grow, as does the infrarational mind, in the group-soul, in the herd, in the mass, with that subtle half-conscious general evolution common to all in the lower process of Nature. As he develops individual reason and will, he needs and society must give him room for an increasing play of individual freedom and variation, at least so far as that does not develop itself to the avoidable harm of others and of society as a whole. Given a full development and free play of the

individual mind, the need of freedom will grow with the immense variation which this development must bring with it, and if only a free play in thought and reason is allowed, but the free play of the intelligent will in life and action is inhibited by the excessive regulation of the life, then an intolerable contradiction and falsity will be created. Men may bear it for a time in consideration of the great and visible new benefits of order, economic development, means of efficiency and the scientific satisfaction of the reason which the collectivist arrangement of society will bring; but when its benefits become a matter of course and its defects become more and more realised and prominent, dissatisfaction and revolt are sure to set in in the clearest and most vigorous minds of the society and propagate themselves throughout the mass.... On the other hand, if from the first freedom of thought is denied, that means the end of the Age of Reason and of the ideal of a rational society. Man the mental being disallowed the use – except in a narrow fixed groove – of his mind and mental will, will stop short in his growth and be even as the animal and as the insect a stationary species. This is the central defect through which a socialistic State is bound to be convicted of insufficiency and condemned to pass away before the growth of a new ideal.” (CWSA 25: 211-12)

B. The Inability of Reason to Deal Successfully with Life and the Key to the True Solution of Our Problems

“Life differs from the mechanical order of the physical universe with which the reason has been able to deal victoriously just because it is mechanical and runs immutably in the groove of fixed cosmic habits. Life, on the contrary, is a mobile, progressive and evolving force, – a force that is the increasing expression of an infinite soul in creatures and, as it progresses, becomes more and more aware of its own subtle variations,

needs, diversities. The progress of Life involves the development and interlocking of an immense number of things that are in conflict with each other and seem often to be absolute oppositions and contraries. To find amid these oppositions some principle or standing-ground of unity, some workable lever of reconciliation which will make possible a larger and better development on a basis of harmony and not of conflict and struggle, must be increasingly the common aim of humanity in its active life-evolution, if it at all means to rise out of life's more confused, painful and obscure movement, out of the compromises made by Nature with the ignorance of the Life-mind and the nescience of Matter. This can only be truly and satisfactorily done when the soul discovers itself in its highest and completest spiritual reality and effects a progressive upward transformation of its life-values into those of the spirit; for there they will all find their spiritual truth and in that truth their standing-ground of mutual recognition and reconciliation. The spiritual is the one truth of which all others are the veiled aspects, the brilliant disguises or the dark disfigurements, and in which they can find their own right form and true relation to each other. This is a work the reason cannot do. The business of the reason is intermediate: it is to observe and understand this life by the intelligence and discover for it the direction in which it is going and the laws of its self-development on the way. In order that it may do its office, it is obliged to adopt temporarily fixed view-points none of which is more than partially true and to create systems none of which can really stand as the final expression of the integral truth of things. The integral truth of things is truth not of the reason but of the spirit." (CWSA 25: 213-14)

“...the logical mind in building its social idea takes no sufficient account of the infrarational element in man, the vital

egoism to which the most active and effective part of his nature is bound: that is his most constant motive and it defeats in the end all the calculations of the idealising reason, undoes its elaborate systems or accepts only the little that it can assimilate to its own need and purpose. If that strong element, that ego-force in him is too much overshadowed, cowed and depressed, too much rationalised, too much denied an outlet, then the life of man becomes artificial, top-heavy, poor in the sap of vitality, mechanical, uncreative. And on the other hand, if it is not suppressed, it tends in the end to assert itself and derange the plans of the rational side of man, because it contains in itself powers whose right satisfaction or whose final way of transformation reason cannot discover.” (CWSA 25: 218-219)

“The solution lies not in the reason, but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution, no other can replace it. But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where they can be met, baffled or deflected by opposite reasonings and other discordant instincts. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the brotherhood or, let us say, – for this is another feeling than any vital or mental sense of brotherhood, a calmer more durable motive-force, – the spiritual comradeship which is the expression of an inner realisation of oneness. For so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in

each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race; for the Spirit, the inmost self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all, in the universal life and nature.

This is a solution to which it may be objected that it puts off the consummation of a better human society to a far-off date in the future evolution of the race. For it means that no machinery invented by the reason can perfect either the individual or the collective man; an inner change is needed in human nature, a change too difficult to be ever effected except by the few. This is not certain; but in any case, if this is not the solution, then there is no solution, if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind. Then the terrestrial evolution must pass beyond man as it has passed beyond the animal and a greater race must come that will be capable of the spiritual change, a form of life must be born that is nearer to the divine. After all there is no logical necessity for the conclusion that the change cannot begin at all because its perfection is not immediately possible. A decisive turn of mankind to the spiritual ideal, the beginning of a constant ascent and guidance towards the heights may not be altogether impossible, even if the summits are attainable at first only by the pioneer few and far-off to the tread of the race. And that beginning may mean the descent of an influence that will alter at once the whole life of mankind in its orientation and enlarge for ever, as did the development of his reason and more than any development of the reason, its potentialities and all its structure." (CWSA 25: 220-21)

HIGHLIGHTS:

I. AFGHANISTAN: TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARDS AN ANTI-TALIBAN ALLIANCE

The inking of the power-sharing deal between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah has finally been achieved after months of acrimony and stalemate. Under the deal,

- Ashraf Ghani will continue to be the President.
- Both leaders will select an equal number of ministers
- Abdullah Abdullah will head the reconciliation and peace council, leading the future negotiations with the Taliban.

While the power-sharing arrangement is now in place, intra-Afghan talks involving Afghan government and the Taliban still seem to be for the future. Last month, Taliban walked out of the tentative talks since the prisoner swap deal with the government could not be agreed upon. In recent times, Taliban has upped the ante by conducting frequent and deadly terrorist attacks, the most recent one being an attack on a maternity ward in Kabul which killed mothers, babies and nurses. More recently, Taliban has made an offer of temporary Eid ceasefire, leading to a release of some Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government.

However, the Afghan government continues to resist talking to Taliban on the latter's terms and refuses to be used blindly by the US. In response to Taliban's antics, the Afghan government has instructed its army to go on the offensive instead of being only defensive. The only reason why the Afghan government would try to talk to Taliban is because of the US pressure and aid. The US has played a selfish and negative role in the whole process. Signing its own deal with Taliban and securing its exit

in late February, the US is constantly overlooking Taliban terrorism. Increasingly brazen terrorist attacks by Taliban are officially being attributed by the US to 'ISIS' – a convenient, vague and weak stooge.

Already the ripple effects of this deteriorating situation are being felt in India. Pakistan – being Taliban's originator and benefactor – has brazenly, but unsuccessfully, tried to up the ante in Kashmir and along LoC, confident in the knowledge that US will not call it out. Both Afghan government and India have blamed Pakistan for being the source of terrorism in the two countries. India has reduced its presence in Afghanistan.

More recently, the Taliban and the Afghan government were engaged in a war of words over India. The Taliban alleged that India has been playing a 'negative role' in Afghanistan for the last 40 years and went on to say that India should change its Afghan policy and that the Taliban would 'welcome' talking to India. US has also been putting pressure on India to change its Afghan policy, as have many other former ambassadors and security advisors. Furthermore, in the effort to gain moral legitimacy by somehow getting the Indian government to talk to it, the Taliban even went to the extent of issuing a formal statement asserting that it was an independent entity and that it believed that Kashmir is an "internal matter of India". It has attempted to distance itself from Pakistan in recent times.

But India has persistently refused to budge. The situation is different from what it was during the first phase of Taliban rule (1996-2001), when India found support in other countries of the anti-Taliban alliance. But today, all countries – China, Iran, Central Asian countries, Russia, US, EU etc. – are talking to the Taliban and indulgently overlooking Pakistani terrorism in the

neighbourhood. But India has remained confident of its position of not talking to terrorists, regardless of what other countries do and regardless of however much ‘international recognition’ the Taliban gets. India continues to retain the capabilities to teach Pakistan a lesson from time-to-time. For, it has understood that Pakistan’s main strength – enabling it to evade sanctions, unlike Iran and North Korea, despite being responsible for a much greater loss of lives and terrorism than these two countries – lies in operating through sleazy and proxy political tactics, ranging from selective terrorism to nauseating appeasement of West. It went on a backfoot during and after Balakot strikes, never expecting that India would take this action.

Therefore, despite all appearances, pressures and denigrations, India continues to remain firm in its stand towards the Taliban. The formation of the unity Afghan government and increasingly weak likelihood of intra-Afghan talks bodes well for India, as it will prevent the Taliban from staking any official claim to form government. In that case, the Taliban can only usurp power by force (as in 1990s) and until then it can only continue with terrorism, albeit at a more heightened level. Regardless of however strong the Taliban is looking at present, other countries like China and Iran are no real fans of theirs and may prefer to hinder the rise of the Taliban, even if done through covert means.

2. THE NEW DOMICILE RULES IN KASHMIR: A GAME-CHANGER IF IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT LEGAL AND POLITICAL HICCUPS

Taking advantage of the medical emergency due to COVID19, the absence of any power centre in Kashmir and the paralysis and distraction of the legal, opposition and intellectual ecosystem, the central government finalized the domicile rules for Jammu and Kashmir – the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of

Domicile Certificate (procedure) rules, 2020 were issued in the last week of May. They have the following key features:

- Fast tracked issuance of Kashmiri domicile certification – within 15 days – to people from any part of India.
- Non-compliance of rules on the part of any involved government officer involves a penalty of salary deduction of Rs. 50,000 from the officer's salary.
- Domicile certification is compulsory for availing employment and purchasing immovable property in the state.
- Already, people eligible under the new rules – who were not eligible earlier – include migrants, government employees, Army personnel and their families, among others residing in the state.
- More significantly, the 'permanent residents' of the state have been replaced by the 'domicile' status of the citizens, which will be determined wholly by the Indian government.
- This means that ultimately, even if Kashmiris want to apply for jobs and property ownership in J&K, they will have to prove themselves eligible for domicile status. Their 'permanent residence' certificates are no longer conclusive and no longer carry anything more than an indicative value.
- Both these points combined – the ability of any Indian citizen to apply for domicile status in Kashmir after staying there for a fixed period, and, the irrelevance of the previously sacrosanct permanent residency laws – constitute a significant development that can lead to longer term changes in Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the Delimitation Commission for J&K – despite its formation facing a challenge in the Supreme Court – also has already held its second meeting.

3. INDIA'S BOOST TO DEFENCE ACTIVITIES AND NEW FACE-OFFS

India has decided to implement the recommendations in the Shetkar Committee Report, speeding up strategic road and infrastructure construction along border areas, by ramping up modern construction plants and equipment/machinery, deploying new technologies to increase the speed of construction and accelerating environmental clearances.

Recently, India has been engaged in minor face-offs with Nepal and China. Both are related to India ramping up construction activities along the border. Nepal has accused India of building the Lipulekh pass to connect to Kailash Mansarovar in its territory (which India has said is a part of Uttarakhand state), at the trijunction of India, China and Nepal. This road has been completed and inaugurated. ***Interestingly, the decision to build this road to Kailash Mansarovar was undertaken jointly by India and China – as early as 2015 – without consulting Nepal.***

Nepal even went to the extent of issuing new maps showing parts of Uttarakhand as its territory, although these maps have not yet been approved by the Parliament or issued formally. The Nepalese PM urged the country's Army Chief to give a reply to India, to which the latter refused saying that Nepali army does not dabble in politics.

The major part of the problem has to do with the domestic crisis that the Nepali PM is facing, having been cornered by the opposition and losing popularity. His government was on the verge of collapse, due to allegations of rampant corruption, economic discontent and failure to handle the logistics of the corona crisis. Thus, targeting India as a convenient punching bag

– in an attempt to divert attention from his domestic failures – seems to have become an appealing option. Even in this, he finds himself isolated, as many of his own party members and other Parliamentarians have been opposed to his extreme position with regard to India, with the opposition calling him out for his insensitive and denigrating words against India. Oli even went to the extent of saying that “Indian virus is more dangerous than the coronavirus.”

More recently, Oli has wielded the new weapon of managing to mobilize anti-India sentiment by bringing the opposition on board in altering maps, showing areas of Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as its territory. These maps will soon be tabled in the Parliament and are expected to be passed with 2/3rd majority. On its part, India has reacted dismissively, saying that Nepal is “family” and all issues will be sorted out. The Maoist secularist government in Nepal has revealed its extreme hatred for India and for Hindutva. Communists were assisted in usurping power in Nepal after the destruction of the royal family by the subtle intelligence engineering undertaken by India’s Congress party.

In a separate development, China and India have faced-off in north Sikkim and eastern Ladakh. There have been a few scuffles with Chinese troops and with both sides flying helicopters and reinforcements. India has, till date, reacted calmly and dismissively, stating that scuffles occurred at two points – ‘finger areas’ of Pangong Tso lake in eastern Ladakh and Naku La in north Sikkim – and that these were normal differences of perception that generally escalated in summer months as the patrolling becomes easier. This is ***related to the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldi (DBO) road which India built***, to connect Leh to the Karakoram Pass. India is rapidly building up strategic infrastructure along its borders with all countries.

These developments have been dismissed by both China and India, despite attempts by media to misrepresent and exaggerate developments and provoke a reaction. ***According to defence experts, commercial satellite images have shown that, except for a small ingress at the Galwan valley area, there is not a single Chinese army troop anywhere on the Indian side. Despite this, major sections of the mainstream media twisted and excluded these facts – even stealing them from proprietary intelligence reports, without any credit – to give the impression of Chinese ingress into Indian territory. Once it became evident that this charge won't stick for long, they started peddling a new conspiracy theory*** – China engaged in a troop build-up at LAC just as a gimmick to take away attention from its domestic and other problems. All these theories are floating about without any evidence and in contravention of satellite images, diplomatic exchanges etc. Media attempted its best to create a bogey – perhaps with sinister attempts to provoke a deterioration of bilateral relations – where none existed. It has failed in it, leaving its credibility more vulnerable than before.

4.FRESH CONTROVERSY ON STATE CONTROL OVER HINDU TEMPLES:

In late April, the Tamil Nadu government issued a controversial circular asking 47 Hindu temples under its control to contribute nearly Rs. 10 crore of their surplus to Chief Minister's Relief Fund for COVID19. After this led to a furore and petitions were filed in the Madras High Court against it, the government withdrew it. However, the episode has renewed debate over the colonial and Nehruvian era question of justification of government control over Hindu temples.

The state control over temples in Tamil Nadu is governed by the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments

Act of 1959 passed under a Congress government. With DMK coming to power in 1967, the law has further been strengthened. Under Section 36-B of the Act, the temple trustees can allot money from the temple's surplus funds for meeting the food and infrastructural needs of the poor. This section was added in 1983 during the government of AIADMK's MG Ramachandran.

What led to the present controversy was the government diktat – which RSS and other Hindu groups termed as akin to the 'jizya tax' – not just asking temples to contribute from their surplus funds, but also highlighting how much amount each temple should give. This move, if at all, should have voluntarily emerged out of decision of trustees, instead of a government diktat. The move also comes at a time when the temples have been completely closed for over 40 days.

Worse, not only were mosques and churches not asked to contribute, but coinciding with this time, the government had given Rs. 22 crore out of its fund to Ramzan-related activities, indicating the levels of minority appeasement and anti-Hindu mindset prevalent despite 6 years of a nationalistic government.

5. COVID19 UPDATES: INDIA AND THE WORLD:

India's COVID19 cases are about to cross 2 lakh, making it the country with seventh highest number of cases in the world – and increasing at a fast rate. In the ten days, between May 18 and May 28, India's average daily growth rate was 6.5%. It is still continuing. India's average daily growth rate of COVID19 cases is more than almost all other countries, in the world. Most of the countries which crossed 1 lakh cases – Germany, Iran, France, Peru, Spain and Italy – saw their cases peaking and the curve flattening after they crossed 1 lakh cases. But this did not happen so clearly in India.

Ironically, India is now being forced to open the nearly two-and-a-half month old lockdown – the world’s most stringent – at a time when the cases are rapidly rising to the level of lakhs, while it imposed the lockdown when the country had just 500 cases and 10 deaths.

In response to the escalating crisis and economic hardship, the government announced a Rs. 20 lakh crore package in May. However, the measures amount to less a real stimulus and actual relief in terms of finances and more cosmetic changes aimed at boosting economic sentiment. In real terms, as the government continues to run short of finances, faces revenue shortfalls and deep losses due to COVID19 and continues to maintain fiscal conservatism, the huge figure being quoted in the package amounts to a little less than 10% of the current nominal GDP.

However, in real terms, the fiscal burden to the government is estimated as ranging only between 0.8% to 1.2% of the GDP (Saha, 2020). Most of the relief is about potential future estimated gains out of structural reforms and changes in regulatory measures and covers government’s contingent liabilities and actions already undertaken, but adds little in terms of new expenditure. The sentiment-boosting measures constitute nearly 75% of the package, followed by monetary measures at 15% and actual fiscal support measures at 10% (Saha, 2020). In a straightforward estimate, nearly half of the package – Rs. 10 lakh crore – was already covered by the regulatory steps taken by the government and the RBI since January this year.

The steps announced for MSMEs also relate more to creating conditions for generating liquidity so that banks can be enabled to lend more freely and with the government instilling confidence by undertaking sovereign credit guarantees. In a way,

this might be a better option than actual stimulus, since most of that is usually pocketed by the corrupt officials.

The state governments also attempted to change labour laws so as to attract investment away from China. Not only has this run into legal hurdles, with many governments now reversing their earlier positions, but the claim of generating employment through foreign investment is also dubious since most of these companies are capital, and not labour, intensive.

6. ASSAM: MYANMAR HANDS OVER TERRORISTS TO INDIA:

In the middle of May, India-Myanmar cooperation – which has increased and shown tremendous results since 2015 – yielded another positive outcome. Myanmar handed over around 22 ethnic Assamese and Meitei insurgents to India, from among the insurgents holed up fighting the Indian government in areas of India-Myanmar border.

These militants were arrested by the Myanmar army last year, when it raided the headquarters of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) in the Naga Self-Administered Zone of Sagaing Region. Myanmar is looking towards India – which has already helped it – in fighting the insurgent Rohingya Arakan liberation force in the Rakhine state. More pressure could be steadily expected along the border on the nearly 2000 Indian insurgents belonging to six groups.

A Deeper Perspective on Our Present Problems

We have been trying to solve our problems from a centre of focus other than the one to which they belong. In a way this insolubility of our problems is a grace in disguise because humanity in its present state, especially in its surface physical nature, is very crude and will not make the necessary effort for self-discovery in any other way “Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped: as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 13, p. 210)