

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

November 2020



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

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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)

BIHAR ELECTIONS AND THE BY-POLLS: BJP'S VICTORIES SIGNAL NEW POLITICAL CHANGES

The return to power of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar marks the steady consolidation of nationalistic forces across the country. While the NDA returned with a majority, it was a closely fought election in which nearly all the exit polls had predicted a massive victory of the opposition-led Mahagathbandhan (MGB). A perception about the popularity, youth and campaign of Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Tejashwi Yadav had been created, which did not prove to be accurate on the ground.

National, as well as international media, had also widely made this first post-pandemic lockdown election a referendum on a range of massive changes that had swept across the country – the pandemic, the lockdown, the migrant crisis, the economic slump and the loss of jobs. All these factors combined with the anti-incumbency of 15 years of Nitish Kumar's rule was expected to dent the NDA. However, defying these assumptions and thoroughly disproving the exit polls, the NDA's return to power shows how national identity and issues are slowly beginning to dominate over pure regional politics.

DECODING BIHAR RESULTS: BJP STRENGTHENS ITSELF

The Bihar election results have widely undermined the expectations of the exit polls which had predicted a wave in favour of the MGB. However, the BJP's successful campaign during the later phase of campaigning swung the outcome in favour of NDA.

NDA's performance was pulled down by JD(U)'s dip in popularity and due to LJP damaging the alliance in JD(U)-contested seats. **While many traditional BJP voters stayed away from the NDA in JD(U)-contested seats and many voted**

for LJP instead, in BJP-contested seats only around three-fourths of traditional BJP voters voted for the NDA (Sardesai, Kumar, & Palshikar, 2020). Had it not been for this factor, the election results could have favoured the NDA over the MGB with a much greater margin. Interestingly, the vote transfer within the MGB was very smooth. Despite this, the Congress performed poorly.

OVERALL VOTE SHARE:

Party	2015 (%)	2020 (%)
NDA	34.1 (BJP+LJP+RLSP+HAM)	37.26 (BJP+JDU+HAM+VIP)
MGB	41.9 (JDU+RJD+INC)	37.23 (RJD+INC+Left)
BJP	24.4	19.46
JD(U)	16.8	15.39
RJD	18.4	23.11
INC	6.7	9.48
LJP	4.8	5.66
CPI	1.4	0.83
CPM	0.6	0.65
CPI(ML)	1.5	3.16
RLSP	2.6	1.77
HAM	2.3	0.89
VIP	-	1.52

SEAT SHARES:

In these elections, the NDA won 125 seats to the MGB's 110 seats.

Party	No. of seats won (2020)	No. of seats won (2015)
BJP (NDA)	74	53
JD(U) (NDA)	43	71

HAM(S) (NDA)	4	1
VIP (NDA)	4	-
RJD (MGB)	75	80
INC (MGB)	19	27
Left (MGB)	16 (CPI-ML: 12; CPI:2; CPM: 2)	CPI-ML: 3
LJP	1	2
AIMIM	5	-
BSP	1	-
Independent	1	4

Source: The Indian Express (2020)

While the RJD emerged as the single-largest party with 75 seats, the BJP was close behind with 74 seats. The BJP also had the largest contested vote share in these elections.

CONTESTED VOTE SHARES:

In terms of vote share analyzed by examining the number of seats contested and won, the BJP emerged clearly with the top performance.

Party	2015 contest- ed vote share % (Assembly elections)	2019 contest- ed vote share % (Lok Sabha elections)	2020 contest- ed vote share % (Assembly elections)
BJP	37.5	56.5	42.5
JD(U)	40.7	51.8	32.8
RJD	44.4	32.9	38.9
CPI	3.4	12.8	33.2
CPI(ML)	3.8	14.9	41.3
CPI(M)	3.3	2.9	37.2
INC	39.5	33.6	32.8
LJP	28.8	55.2	10.2

Source: The Hindu (2020)

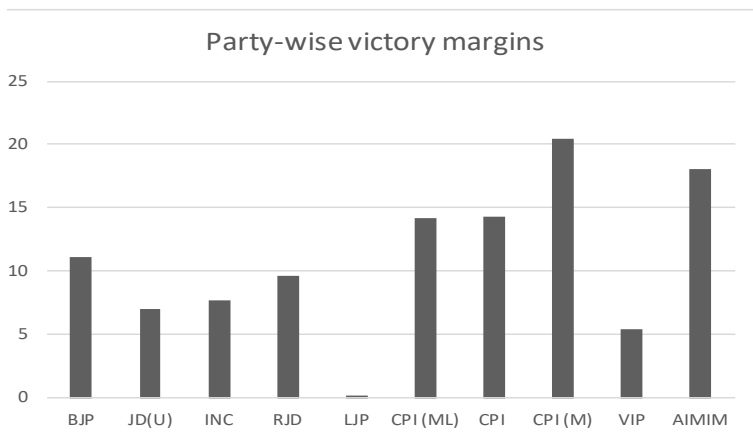
The BJP increased its contested vote share from the 2015 state elections, while JD(U), RJD, and, Congress saw a substantial decline in their performance. The Left parties – CPI, CPM and CPI(ML) – increased their contested vote share massively compared to their 2015 performance. This shows that being in alliance with the RJD worked very well in making the Left more relevant to Bihar’s political scenario, while contesting alone, as in 2015 and 2019, made them absolutely irrelevant.

STRIKE RATE:

In terms of strike rates, the BJP’s performance was the best. Within the NDA, the BJP managed to win 7 out of every 10 seats it contested. Its strike rate was 67.3. The JD(U) managed to win just 4 out of every 10 seats it contested. Its strike rate of 37.4. Within the MGB, the RJD managed to win almost half of every 10 seats it contested, with a strike rate of 52.1. The Congress managed to win just 3 out of every 10 seats contested, with a strike rate of 27.1.

VICTORY MARGINS:

In terms of victory margins, the smaller parties – such as communist parties and AIMIM – had higher victory margins,



although amongst the major parties, BJP's victory margins were better than the rest.

CASTE-WISE VOTING PATTERNS:

In terms of caste-wise voting patterns, there was a clear and expected mobilization of the Muslim-Yadav vote behind the MGB, while the Dalit vote got comparatively more divided.

Caste	MGB (vote share %)	NDA (vote share %)	LJP (vote share %)	GDSF (RSLP, AIMIM, BSP, and others) (vote share %)	Others (vote share %)
Brahmin	15	52	7	1	25
Bhumihar	19	51	3	< 1	26
Rajput	9	55	11	4	20
Other Upper Castes	16	59	< 1	< 1	24
Yadav	83	5	2	3	6
Kurmi	11	81	3	< 1	5
Koeri	16	51	6	8	18
Other OBC/EBC	18	58	4	3	18
Ravidas	34	27	9	13	18
Dusadh/Paswan	22	17	32	3	27
Musahar	24	65	1	1	8
Other Dalits	24	30	4	7	34
Muslims	76	5	2	11	6

Source: Sardesai, Kumar, & Palshikar (2020)

Amongst the divided Dalit vote, only Ravidas community

and Dusadhs voted more for the MGB than for the NDA. Here too, Dusadhs are the traditional vote-bank of LJP. Had LJP not acted as a vote-cutter for the JD(U), the MGB’s performance among Dalits would have been much worse.

During the final phases of voting, the Dalit vote turned in NDA’s favour, due to non-Yadav Hindu consolidation behind the NDA. The Muslim vote in the Seemanchal area got divided due to AIMIM’s rising popularity among the Muslims.

GENDER AND YOUTH VOTING PATTERNS:

In terms of youth voting preferences, the perceived media popularity of Tejashwi Yadav among the youth turned out to be a myth. The NDA was equally popular among young people and far more popular among women.

Age Group	MGB (vote share %)	NDA (vote share %)	LJP (vote share %)	GDSF (vote share %)	Others (vote share %)
18-29 years	37	36	5	6	16
30-39 years	37	39	5	4	14
40-49 years	35	36	7	5	16
50-59 years	38	38	5	4	14
60-69 years	41	36	5	3	14

Source: Sardesai, Kumar, & Palshikar (2020)

Age-wise voting patterns show that no significant insight can be drawn from these patterns. **The MGB showed no advantage among young voters. It is the caste and community axis that matters the most.**

Age group by gender	Vote Share (%)				
	MGB	NDA	LJP	GDSF *	Others
18-29 years (men)	39	33	5	5	18
30-39 years (men)	39	39	6	4	12
18-29 years (women)	36	40	5	7	12
30-39 years (women)	34	39	5	5	17

Source: Sardesai, Kumar, & Palshikar (2020)

Amongst women voters – both young and middle-aged – BJP was ahead of MGB. However, amongst young men voters (18-29 years), MGB was substantially ahead. **The women vote as well as larger women turnout (almost 5% more than male turnout), due to factors like liquor ban, and, special schemes for women, played a significant part in the NDA’s overall victory.**

MIGRANT VOTING PATTERNS:

One of the most-watched issues of this election the reaction to the **migrant crisis triggered during the COVID-19 lockdown**, which forced thousands of migrants to walk back home – many from Bihar and UP. However, **anger due to this crisis had to be borne by the JD(U) instead of the BJP**. Vote shares across low migrant and high migrant constituencies reveal this.

The RJD’s average contested vote share rose from 37% in the low migration constituencies to 41% in the high migration constituencies. Against the RJD, the JD(U) dropped from a 46% strike rate in low migration constituencies to a strike rate of just 24% in high migration constituencies, **while the BJP’s strike rate was very good in both low (71%) and high (58%)**

**Grand Democratic Secular Front (GDSF) is an alliance of 6 Parties, namely, AIMIM, BSP, RLSP, SJDD, SBSP and JP-S.*

migration constituencies (Sircar, 2020).

The overall analysis of key data shows that,

First, there was significant community mobilization during the final phase of voting, and, there was the dominance of caste-based voting patterns.

Second, the victory margin of the NDA over the MGB would have been much higher if LJP had not dented the JD(U). LJP played a spoiler in nearly 34 seats for the JD(U). It also dented the NDA vote-bank among the Dusadh/Paswan Dalit community.

Third, strong assumptions about 15 years of anti-incumbency, migrant crisis during lockdown, economic decline, joblessness and the raging pandemic did not bear out on the ground and did not dent the NDA.

Finally, women vote played an important role in propelling the NDA's victory.

NEW POLITICAL EQUATIONS

The results of these elections have signalled the emergent new political equations in the state. **The BJP has emerged as a key player in Bihar politics and the erstwhile regional dominance of JD(U)-RJD rivalry is now being replaced by BJP-RJD contest.** The decline of JD(U), Congress and LJP has been palpable, while the **rise of AIMIM and the Left parties is more contextual than anything else** – the Left has been proven to be more successful as a result of the alliance rather than when it contests alone, while the AIMIM is an exclusively Muslim party.

The immediate implications of the new political equations are that **the stranglehold of regional parties in a key north-Indian state has been broken to some extent, and BJP has expanded its base in the state. This is important as regional**

parties have often deviated from issues of national interest and tend to support such issues only if it satisfies their own political ambitions. Within the NDA, despite Nitish Kumar being the Chief Minister, the BJP, rather than the JD(U), will dictate the terms of the alliance. It may also ensure that JD(U) lends the necessary support during the passage of key bills in the Parliament, without indulging in politics.

The political game of exploiting and amplifying caste divisions that has traditionally been the mainstay of regional parties in Indian states is increasingly coming under challenge in these changing times. In key northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, national as well state election trends show that **majority of Hindu castes are able to come together under a common religious and national identity when the need arises. In the Bihar election, this was prominently visible,** as BJP was able to successfully forge a non-Yadav Hindu alliance in the later phases of the election. This caste-religion dynamic has trumped all other vote-banks – such as youth disgruntled with economic and employability issues, which RJD had sought to mobilize.

CONCLUSION

The present round of elections has been significant, politically, in consolidating the position of the ruling party, despite unprecedented and unpredictable national and global challenges. The most obvious indicator of the changing mood of the people is that the worn-out edifice of secularism is clearly crumbling, political regionalism is weakening and nationalism is increasingly taking its place. The results also indicate that **one cannot repose one's faith in appearances alone, as presented to us by public forums such as media.**

In an era of rampant fake news, skewed/biased exit polls, media-amplified burning nation-wide protests (as in Hathras

case), much ado over the economy and the pandemic and other such seemingly unnerving appearances, **it is easy to lose sight of the larger direction in which the country is inevitably moving. India is moving more and more towards gathering her fragmented energies for national consolidation.** The era of blackmail politics which had become dominant during the last 3 or 4 decades – whether by regional parties or by lobbies of vested interests – is increasingly under challenge. As the present round of elections indicate, despite serious obstacles and setbacks, the movement towards nationalism is now gradually becoming more steady.

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HIGHLIGHTS

THE BY-POLL RESULTS

By-polls were held in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, UP, Haryana, Telangana, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Nagaland. While in Madhya Pradesh, BJP won 19 out of the 28 seats it contested, in others it won 21 out of 25 seats it contested, making it an impressive by-poll performance.

State	Seats contested	Seats won	Incumbents
Gujarat	8	BJP – 8; Congress – 0	BJP - 0, Congress - 8
Uttar Pradesh	7	BJP – 6, SP – 1	BJP- 6, SP - 1
Jharkhand	2	JMM – 1, Congress – 1	JMM -1, Congress -1
Manipur	5	BJP – 4; Independent (BJP-supported) – 1	Congress - 5
Karnataka	2	BJP – 2	JD(S) - 1, Congress - 1
Odisha	2	BJD – 2	BJD - 1, BJP - 1
Chhattisgarh	1	Congress – 1	Marwahi seat (reserved) –Janata Congress Chhattisgarh (Ajit Jogi's party)
Nagaland	2	NDPP (BJP ally) – 1, Ind – 1	NDPP - 1, NPF - 1
Telangana	1	BJP	TRS
Haryana	1	Congress	Congress
Bihar	1	JD(U)	JD(U)
Madhya Pradesh	28	BJP – 19, Congress – 9	BJP - 1, Congress - 27

The by-election results show a clean sweep for the BJP across the country. The results in Madhya Pradesh were the most significant. Here 25 out of 28 seats on which by-elections were held were those that had witnessed revolt by the Congress MLAs against the Kamal Nath government. In 3 seats, MLAs had passed away. Except for the Agar seat, where the incumbent was BJP (who had died) and the winner was Congress, on all other seats, Congress had been the incumbent.

Except for Haryana, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, BJP performed well in all other states in the by-polls. Two particularly interesting states were UP and Telangana. In Telangana, the BJP candidate, Raghunandan Rao – one of the most prominent faces of the party in the state – won narrowly by 1100 votes. What is interesting about the Dubbaka seat in Telangana is that it has been a turf of TRS. Its neighbouring seats are Gajwel (represented by KCR), Siricilla (represented by KCR's son, KTR) and Siddipet (represented by KCR's nephew, T. Harish Rao).

The battle for the Dubbaka seat was fierce, as KCR deployed the entire state machinery to fight the BJP, even overseeing police raids on Raghunandan Rao's house and lathicharging the BJP state President. The BJP was equally aggressive, with Raghunandan Rao having started the campaigning well before his name was even announced by the party. The BJP cadre in the state was also full of aggression.

TRS had already received a shock in Lok Sabha elections, as KCR's daughter had lost to BJP from the Nizamabad seat, and BJP had also won the Karimnagar seat which was the turf of KTR. Only KCR's powerful nephew, Harish Rao, was unbeatable. The changing political dynamics in Telangana had made the battle for Dubbak particularly fierce and of greater importance to BJP's national leadership than other elections.

In UP, it was interesting the note that while BJP won 6 out

of 7 seats that had gone to by-polls, 3 of those seats (Tundla (SC seat), Amroha, and Bulandshahr) were in western UP and neighbouring Hathras – which had seen much national outrage and debate over the gangrape case and the subsequent questions and linkages exposed in it thereafter. The opposition had made the Hathras issue their campaigning point in these seats. In all three seats, the BJP won by large margins. In Tundla, almost 1/3rd voters were Dalits. In Bulandshahr, while BJP won by a margin of 21000 votes, BSP came second, Bhim Army came a distant third (with just 13,000 votes), while Congress came fourth. This seat has over 52000 Jatav Dalits and over 1.2 lakh Muslim voters. Despite good reception to Bhim Army rallies, its electoral performance remained poor.

UP’s by-polls in these three seats have come as a shock to the opposition, with the realization that their attempts to create caste conspiracy out of the Hathras case have failed miserably, with BJP performing handsomely even in the neighbouring Scheduled Caste seat. Ever since these results, neither the opposition nor the media has raised this issue.

US ELECTION RESULTS:

The United States Presidential results have finally been called, with Democratic candidate Joe Biden winning with 306 electoral votes and Donald Trump securing 232 electoral votes. A candidate needs more than 270 electoral votes to win the election.

The voter turnout – at 66.4% (60.1% in 2016) – was the highest since 1900.

Vote Share	2016	2020
Democrat	66m (48%)	78m (50.8%)
Republican	63m (45.9%)	73m (47.4%)

BATTLEGROUND STATES:

In key battleground states, the competition was tough.

Key Battle-ground States	% of votes won by Biden	% of votes won by Trump	No. of electoral votes
Arizona	49.4	49.1	11
Colorado	55.4	41.9	9
Florida	47.9	51.2	29
Georgia	49.5	49.3	16
Iowa	44.9	53.2	6
Michigan	50.6	47.8	16
Minnesota	52.4	45.3	10
Nevada	50.1	47.7	6
Pennsylvania	49.7	49	20
Ohio	45.2	53.3	18
North Carolina	48.6	50	15
Wisconsin	49.5	48.8	10

Trump won some important battleground states – Florida, North Carolina, Ohio and Iowa. In Arizona, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Georgia – which were won by Biden – the race was extremely close.

OTHER IMPORTANT STATES:

Biden made narrow gains in Georgia, Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, thereby managing to flip the results in his favour. Trump won in the strongholds that he had already won last time, such as Idaho, Utah, Arkansas and Tennessee.

In 2016 elections, Trump had won Wisconsin, Michigan, Arizona and Georgia. Georgia and Arizona had not been won

by the Democrats since 1990s, while Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania had always been Democrat strongholds, but had voted for Trump in 2016. In this election, they have again flipped towards Democrats.

KEY VOTING PATTERNS:

WHITE VOTERS:

Trump lost some ground with white voters, while making some progress in gaining support of non-college non-white voters. Trump lost among educated white men and women. Biden made gains among white voters – with 36% vote share among whites, compared to Hillary Clinton’s 32% in 2016. Thus, the Democrats’ made a 4-point swing among the educated white voters.

HISPANICS AND BLACKS:

Trump increased his support among non-college educated non-white voters from 20% (in 2016) to 25% (in 2020). Trump made significant headway with Hispanic voters in key states like Florida and Texas. In Florida, the Cuban community voted for Trump by 55% compared to 42% for Biden. Compared to 2016 elections, the Latino vote shifted in favour of Trump by 8 percentage points nationally.

While Blacks voted overwhelmingly for Biden, there was a very slight shift in favour of Trump.

Social group	2016 (vote %)	2020 (vote %)
White men	R- 62, D- 31	R- 61, D- 38
White women	R- 52, D- 43	R- 55, D- 44
Black men	R- 13, D- 82	R- 19, D- 79
Black women	R- 4, D- 94	R- 9, D- 90
Latino men	R- 32, D- 63	R-36, D- 59
Latino women	R- 25, D- 69	R- 30, D- 69

Other	R- 31, D- 61	R- 38, D- 58
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*Source: Edison Research (*R = Republican, D = Democrat)*

The most marked was the dynamic of the Latino support for Trump and erosion in Democrats’ Hispanic base as reflected in Florida and Texas, which increased in 2020 elections. In Texas, three Latino counties in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, while still supporting Biden, all swung by 19+ points toward Trump compared to 2016. Trump became the first Republican presidential candidate to carry the small, 94% Hispanic Zapata County in Texas since 1920 (Rothschild & Kight, 2020).

AGE-WISE OUTCOMES:

In 2016, while younger voters had voted for Democratic Party, older voters had gone towards Trump. In 2020, while younger voters still voted for Biden, older voters were split between Biden and Trump.

Age Group (years)	2016 (vote share %)	2020 (vote share %)
18-29	R- 36, D- 55	R- 36, D- 60
30-44	R- 41, D- 51	R- 46, D- 52
45-64	R- 52, D- 44	R- 50, D- 49
65+	R- 52, D- 45	R- 52, D- 47

Source: Edison Research

In 2020, older voters (65+ years) made up a larger share of total voting population – around 22% – than in 2016 (around 6 percentage points more than in 2016). The Democrats beat Trump in almost all age groups in 2020, as compared to 2016, except the age group of 30-44 years (Hall & Gal, 2020).

RURAL-URBAN AND EDUCATIONAL VOTING PATTERNS:

While cities voted heavily for Biden, rural areas voted for Trump. The suburbs swung from Trump towards Biden in this election. While overall, rural areas voted more for Trump, yet

there was a slight dip in his rural support compared to 2016, from 61% to 57%, while Biden gained 8 percentage points in rural areas and suburbs.

In terms of education, the higher the level of education, the more decline was there in Republican support. Trump gained 3 percentage points among voters who had never attended college.

MALE-FEMALE VOTING PATTERNS:

Both, in 2016 and 2020, men voted more for Republicans, while women voted more for Democrats.

Democrats have gained among both men and women, even as Republicans' share continues to be the same.

A CONTROVERSIAL ELECTION:

The 2020 US Presidential election stood out due to many surprise elements. A record number of votes were cast through mail-in ballots and through in-person votes. While Democrats' secured advantage in mail-in ballots and absentee voters, Republicans secured more advantage in in-person votes. More mail-in ballots were cast as compared to in-person votes.

As of November 23rd, the in-person votes cast were 35,811,062, while mail-in ballots returned/accepted were 65,642,049 (McDonald, 2020). These figures do not include certain states which do not make a distinction between in-person votes and mail-in ballots.

Donald Trump has refused to accept the election results as authentic, alleging an electoral fraud in mail-in ballots cast. He has alleged that many mail-in ballots were bogus or fake, due to double counting frauds, fake identities etc. His vast mass of supporters also took to the streets of Washington to hold massive protest rallies. His team had filed at least 7 lawsuits in

various courts. However, with several of his lawsuits challenging the results not holding sway, now his team has now begun preparing for transition of power.

The entire controversy reflected the speedy polarization of US politics and communities. The gap between 71 million people who voted for Trump and more than 80 million people who voted for Biden appears unbridgeable and increasingly hostile. The election process reflected how easy it is to discredit the current democratic process, whose inadequacies contain its own seeds of failure.

Current technology has made it easier to manipulate systems than ever before. The extent to which US elections – as the sitting President, his team and the rest of Republican party is doing – can be questioned will remain mysterious. However, the discontent with the current system is increasing by the day. As many observers have correctly concluded, Trump may have gone for now, but, it seems, Trumpism is here to stay in the United States.

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THE FUTURE

Under the crushing pressure of a looming moral and ecological disaster, the conditions are going to be increasingly ripe to lead humanity – specially India – to undertake a fundamental re-evaluation of the value of Science and the modern gospel of Economic Growth for its true fulfillment. The lead in the direction of this inner change is going to be provided by India because, as the Mother declared, **“India has become the symbolic representation of all the difficulties of modern mankind. India will be the land of its resurrection – the resurrection to a higher and truer life.”** (CWM-13: 376)