

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

March 2021



*“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)

# A PERSPECTIVE ON MODERN POLITY IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO (3)

## III. INDIA'S EXPERIENCE OF THE RATIONAL AGE, THE PRESENT CONDITION AND THE FUTURE WORK

### 1. THE ASIATIC CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY – THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY THAT INDIA MUST REDISCOVER FOR HERSELF

*"...the foundations of Hinduism are truth and manhood, esha dharmah sanatanah. Hinduism is no sect or dogmatic creed, no bundle of formulas, no set of social rules, but a mighty, eternal and universal truth. It has learned the secret of preparing man's soul for the divine consummation of identity with the infinite existence of God; rules of life and formulas of belief are only sacred and useful when they help that great preparation. And the first rule of life is that man must live the highest life of which he is capable, overcoming selfishness, overcoming fear, overcoming the temptation to palter with truth in order to earn earthly favours. The first formula of belief is satyannasti paro dharmah there is no higher law of conduct than truth." (CWSA 7: 928)*

"Asia is not Europe and never will be Europe. The political ideals of the West are not the mainspring of the political movements in the East, and those who do not realise this great truth, are mistaken; for they suppose that the history of Europe is a sure and certain guide to India in her political development. A great deal of the political history of Europe will be repeated in Asia, no doubt; democracy has travelled from the East to the West in the shape of Christianity, and after a long struggle with the feudal instincts of the Germanic

racess has returned to Asia transformed and in a new body. But when Asia takes back democracy into herself she will first transmute it in her own temperament and make it once more Asiatic . Christianity was an assertion of human equality in the spirit, a great assertion of the unity of the divine spirit in man, which did not seek to overthrow the established systems of government and society but to inform them with the spirit of human brotherhood and unity. It was greatly hampered in this work by the fact that the European races were in a state of transition from the old Aryan civilization of Greece and Rome to one less advanced and enlightened. The German nations were wedded to a military civilization which was wholly inconsistent with the ideals of Christianity, and the new religion in their hands became a thing quite unrecognizable to the Asiatic mind which had engendered it. When Mahomedanism appeared, Christianity vanished out of Asia, because it had lost its meaning. Mahomed tried to re-establish the Asiatic gospel of human equality in the spirit. All men are equal in Islam, whatever their social position or political power, nor is any man debarred from the full development of his manhood by his birth or low original station in life. All men are brothers in Islam and the bond of religious unity overrides all other divisions and differences. But Islam also was limited and imperfect, because it confined the ideal of brotherhood and equality to the limits of a single creed, and was farther deflected from its true path by the rude and undeveloped races which it drew into its embrace. Another revelation of the old truth is needed.” (CWSA 7: 929-30)

We know the terrible result of the above mentioned failure of Islam – the bloody story of a millennium of Islam in India. Islam, apparently due to some historical accidents, but

really due to the action of Adversary (Satanic) Powers, utterly failed to widen itself and live in the spirit and genius of Prophet Mohammed who had, singlehandedly united the disparate and utterly divided people of Arabia. The intensity inherited from the Prophet remained but only to serve, increasingly, the ends of the Adversaries. During the past few decades Islam's intolerance of other faiths – even other sects or subsects within its sects – seems to have reached a fever pitch and beginning this century, Islamic terrorism has become one of the most serious perils faced by humanity at this juncture where, even otherwise, its future survival is in question. Thus there is no hope on this front either from Christianity or from Islam. The only remaining potential source for the revelation of the old truth is India.

“India from ancient times had received the gospel of Vedanta which sought to establish the divine unity of man in spirit; but in order to secure an ordered society in which she could develop her spiritual insight and perfect her civilization, she had invented the system of caste which by corruptions and departures from caste ideals came to be an obstacle to the fulfilment in society of the Vedantic ideal. From the time of Buddha to that of the saints of Maharashtra every great religious awakening has sought to restore the ancient meaning of Hinduism and reduce caste to its original subordinate importance as a social convenience, to exorcise the spirit of caste pride and restore that of brotherhood and the eternal principles of love and justice in society. But the feudal spirit had taken possession of India and the feudal spirit is wedded to inequality and the pride of caste.

When the feudal system was broken in Europe by the rise of the middle class, the ideals of Christianity began to emerge



once more to light, but by this time the Christian Church had itself become feudalized, and the curious spectacle presents itself of Christian ideals struggling to establish themselves by the destruction of the very institution which had been created to preserve Christianity. When the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity were declared at the time of the French Revolution and mankind demanded that society should recognise them as the foundation of its structure, they were associated with a fierce revolt against the relics of feudalism and against the travesty of the Christian religion which had become an integral part of that feudalism. This was the weakness of European democracy and the source of its failure. It took as its motive the rights of man and not the dharma of humanity; it appealed to the selfishness of the lower classes against the pride of the upper; it made hatred and internecine war the permanent allies of Christian ideals and wrought an inextricable confusion which is the modern malady of Europe. It was in vain that the genius of Mazzini rediscovered the heart of Christianity and sought to remodel European ideas; the French Revolution had become the starting point of European democracy and coloured the European mind. Now that democracy has returned to Asia, its cradle and home, it will be purged of its foreign elements and restored to its original purity. The movements of the nineteenth century in India were European movements, they were coloured with the hues of the West. Instead of seeking for strength in the spirit, they adopted the machinery and motives of Europe, the appeal to the rights of humanity or the equality of social status and an impossible dead level which Nature has always refused to allow. Mingled with these false gospels was a strain of hatred and bitterness, which showed itself in the condemnation of Brahminical priest craft, the hostility to Hinduism and the

ignorant breaking away from the hallowed traditions of the past. What was true and eternal in that past was likened to what was false or transitory, and the nation was in danger of losing its soul by an insensate surrender to the aberrations of European materialism. Not in this spirit was India intended to receive the mighty opportunity which the impact of Europe gave to her. When the danger was greatest, a number of great spirits were sent to stem the tide flowing in from the West and recall her to her mission; for, if she had gone astray the world would have gone astray with her.

Her mission is to point back humanity to the true source of human liberty, human equality, human brotherhood. When man is free in spirit, all other freedom is at his command; for the Free is the Lord who cannot be bound. When he is liberated from delusion, he perceives the divine equality of the world which fulfils itself through love and justice, and this perception transfuses itself into the law of government and society. When he has perceived this divine equality, he is brother to the whole world, and in whatever position he is placed he serves all men as his brothers by the law of love, by the law of justice. When this perception becomes the basis of religion, of philosophy, of social speculation and political aspiration, then will liberty, equality and fraternity take their place in the structure of society and the Satya Yuga return. This is the Asiatic reading of democracy which India must rediscover for herself before she can give it to the world. It is the dharma of every man to be free in soul, bound to service not by compulsion but by love; to be equal in spirit, apportioned his place in society by his capacity to serve society, not by the interested selfishness of others; to be in harmonious relations with his brother men, linked to them by mutual love and service, not by shackles of servitude, or

the relations of the exploiter and the exploited, the eater and the eaten. It has been said that democracy is based on the rights of man; it has been replied that it should rather take its stand on the duties of man; but both rights and duties are European ideas. Dharma is the Indian conception in which rights and duties lose the artificial antagonism created by a view of the world which makes selfishness the root of action, and regain their deep and eternal unity. Dharma is the basis of democracy which Asia must recognise, for in this lies the distinction between the soul of Asia and the soul of Europe. Through Dharma the Asiatic evolution fulfils itself; this is her secret." (CWSA 7: 930-32)

Not only the other countries in Asia, but even free India is far from moving significantly in the direction pointed by Sri Aurobindo more than hundred years ago when few people had faith even in the freedom of India from the clutches of the British in the foreseeable future. Speaking on how nothing could ever be done without faith he wrote, "All that we do and attempt proceeds from faith, and if we are deficient in faith nothing can be accomplished. When we are deficient in faith our work begins to flag and failure is frequent; but if we have faith things are done for us. No great work has ever been done without this essential courage. Misled by egoism, we believe that we are working, that the results of what we do are our creation, and when anything has to be done we ask ourselves whether we have the strength, the means, the requisite qualities, but in reality all work is done by the will of God and when faith in Him is the mainspring of our actions, success is inevitable. Sometimes we wish a thing very intensely and our wish is accomplished. The wish was in fact a prayer, and all sincere prayer receives its answer. It need not be consciously addressed to God, because prayer is not

a form of words but an aspiration. If we aspire, we pray. But the aspiration must be absolutely unselfish, not alloyed by the thought of petty advantages or lower aims if it is to succeed. When we mingle self with our aspirations, we weaken to that extent the strength of the prayer and the success is proportionately less.” (CWSA 7: 937)

“Whoever believes in God, rises above his lower self; for God is the true self of the Universe and of everything within the Universe. When we rely upon our lower self, we are left to that lower self, and succeed or fail according to our strength of body or intellect under the law of our past life and actions. There is one law for the lower self and another for the higher. The lower self is in bondage to its past; the higher is lord of the past, the present and the future. So the will of the lower self is born of ahankara and limited by ahankara, but the will of the higher self is beyond ahankara and cannot be limited by it. It is omnipotent. But so long as it works through the body, it works under the laws of time, space and causality, and we have to wait for its fulfilment till the time is ready, the environment prepared, the immediate causes brought about. The will once at work infallibly brings about the necessary conditions; all we have to do is to allow it to work.” (CWSA 7: 937-38)

In our later discussion it will be shown how what Sri Aurobindo perceived more than hundred years ago is just the thing that needs to happen to India for it to be able to get out of the seemingly impossible difficulties faced by her in moving towards national regeneration and resurgence.

## **2. THE EARLY INDIAN POLITY AND ITS NATURAL GROWTH OUT OF LIFE**

“The principle of popular rule is the possession of the reins of government by the mass of the people, but by the

possession is not intended necessarily the actual exercise of administration. When the people are able to approve or to disapprove of any action of the Government with the certainty that such approval or disapproval will be absolutely effective, the spirit of democracy is present even if the body is not evolved. India in her ancient polity possessed this spirit of democracy. Like all Aryan nations she started with the three great divisions of the body politic, King, Lords and Commons, which have been the sources of the various forms of government evolved by the modern nations. In the period of the Mahabharata we find that the King is merely the head of the race, possessed of executive power but with no right to legislate and even in the exercise of his executive functions unable to transgress by a hair's breadth the laws which are the sum of the customs of the race. Even within this limited scope he cannot act in any important matter without consulting the chief men of the race who are usually the elders and warriors; often he is a cipher, a dignified President, an ornamental feature of the polity which is in the hands of the nobles. His position is that of first among equals, not that of an absolute prince or supreme ruler. We find this conception of kingship continued till the present day in the Rajput States; at Udaipur, for instance, no alienation of land can take place without the signature of all the nobles; although the Maharaja is the head of the State, the sacred descendant of the Sun, his power is a delegated authority. The rule of the King is hereditary, but only so long as he is approved of by the people. A tyrannical king can be resisted, an unfit heir can be put aside on the representation of the Commons. This idea of kingship is the old Aryan idea, it is limited monarchy and not the type of despotism which is called by the Western writers Oriental, though it existed for centuries in Europe and has never been universal in Asia." (CWSA 7: 943-44)

“The growth of large States in India was fatal to the continuance of the democratic element in the constitution. The idea of representation had not yet been developed, and without the principle of representation democracy is impossible in a large State. The Greeks were obliged to part with their cherished liberty as soon as large States began to enter into the Hellenic world; the Romans were obliged to change their august and cherished institutions for the most absolute form of monarchy as soon as they had become a great Empire; and democracy disappeared from the world until the slow development of the principle of representation enabled the spirit of democracy to find a new body in which it could be reborn. The contact with Greek and Persian absolutism seems to have developed in India the idea of the divinity of Kinghood which had always been a part of the Aryan system; but while the Aryan King was divine because he was the incarnate life of the race, the new idea saw a divinity in the person of the King as an individual, – a conception which favoured the growth of absolutism. The monarchy of Chandragupta and Asoka seems to have been of the new type, copied perhaps from the Hellenistic empires, in which the nobles and the commons have disappeared and a single individual rules with absolute power through the instrumentality of officials. The Hindu King, however, never became a despot like the Caesars, he never grasped the power of legislation but remained the executor of laws over which he had no control nor could he ignore the opinion of the people. When most absolute, he has existed only to secure the order and welfare of society, and has never enjoyed immunity from resistance or the right to disregard the representations of his subjects. The pure absolutist type of monarchy entered India with the Mahomedans who had taken it from Europe and Persia and it has never been accepted in its

purity by the Hindu temperament.” (CWSA 7: 945-46)

“Sri Aurobindo: The old Indian system grew out of life, it had room for everything and every interest. There were monarchy, aristocracy, democracy. Every interest was represented in the government, while the Western system grew out of the mind. In Europe they are led by reason and want to make everything cut and dry without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only and no room for anything else. They cannot be plastic. India is now trying to imitate the West. Parliamentary government is not suited to India. But we always take up what the West has thrown off.” (Purani, Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, 2007: 584-85)

“Disciple: It seems political ideas and ideals are not worth fighting for. Thousands fought for democracy, and now they are in a hurry to give it up! Nothing seems to be permanent in the political field.

Sri Aurobindo: Quite so. All human values are half values – they are relative. They have no permanence or durability about them.

Disciple: Perhaps if men became more mentalised, they would understand things better.

Sri Aurobindo: By being mentalised? No! The difficulty is that men don’t follow the principles of life.

Disciple: How is that?

Sri Aurobindo: Life compromises between different elements, but mind, when acting on its own, does not compromise. Mind takes up one thing and makes it absolute, considers it as apart from and opposed to all other things.

Hegel boasted that in Europe they had succeeded in

separating reason from life, and you see their philosophy – it has nothing to do with life; it is all mental gymnastics, it does not form part of life. While in India, philosophy has always been a part of life; it has an aim to realise everything.

So also in the political philosophy of Europe you find that if they accept democracy, it is only democracy – all the rest is opposed to it. If monarchy, then it is only monarchy. That is what happened in Greece. They fought for democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, and in the end they were conquered by the Romans.

Disciple: Then what is the truth in all these attempts at political organisation?

Sri Aurobindo: If you want to arrive at something true and lasting, you have to look at life and learn from it, that is to say, you must learn the nature of the oppositions and contradictions and then reconcile them.

As regards government, life shows that there is a truth in monarchy – whether hereditary or elective, there is a man at the top who governs. Life also shows that there is a truth in aristocracy, whether it is of strong men, or rich men, or intellectuals. The current fiction is that it is the majority that rules, but the fact is that it is the minority, the aristocracy. Life also shows that the rule of the king or the aristocracy should be with the consent, silent or vocal, of the people.

In ancient India, they recognised the truth of these things. That is why India has lasted through millenniums – and China also.” (Purani, Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, 2007: 675-76)



# HIGHLIGHTS

## NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act (GNCTD) was passed in 1991, by adding Article 239AA to the Constitution via the 69th Amendment Act. Under the existing Act, the government of Delhi is empowered to legislate on all matters except public order, police and land. The central government recently made amendments to the GNCTD Act and it was passed through both the Houses of the Parliament. The new Bill amends Sections 21, 24, 33 and 44 of the 1991 Act.

The Bill enhances the powers of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi and curtails the powers of the Delhi government and of the Delhi assembly. Claiming to give effect to the 2018 and 2019 judgments of the Supreme Court on the powers of the LG and the Delhi government, the Bill has the following key provisions:

First, the Bill states that the term “government” referred to in any law made by the Legislative Assembly will imply Lieutenant Governor (LG).

Second, the Procedure and Conduct of Business in the assembly and Rules to govern the same can be framed by the assembly but must be consistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha.

Third, the Bill prohibits the Delhi assembly from making any rule to enable itself or its Committees to:

(i) Consider the matters of everyday administration of Delhi.

(ii) Conduct any inquiry in relation to administrative decisions.

The Bill also applies this retrospectively by stating that all such rules made before the enactment of the Bill will be void.

Fourth, the Bill requires the LG to reserve the following type of Bills for the consideration of the President:

(i) Those which may diminish the powers of the High Court of Delhi,

(ii) Those which the President may direct to be reserved,

(iii) Those dealing with the salaries and allowances of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and members of the Assembly and the Ministers,

(iv) Those relating to official languages of the Assembly or of Delhi.

(v) Those which incidentally cover any of the matters outside the purview of the powers of the Legislative Assembly.

Fifth, the Bill specifies that all executive action by the government must be taken in the name of the LG. Further, on certain matters, as specified by the LG, his opinion must be obtained before taking any executive action.

#### IMPLICATIONS:

The Bill has been passed by both the Houses of the Parliament due to the numerical advantage of the ruling NDA, despite Opposition protests, and is set to become a law.

The ruling party in Delhi, Aam Admi Party (AAP), has asserted that it will appeal the amendment in the Supreme Court, as it goes against the 2018 Supreme Court judgement. The 2018 Court judgement had stated that giving undue

powers to LG undermines the principles of representative democracy, and had therefore, held that the Delhi government need not obtain LG's prior concurrence on matters other than law & order, land and police. It had also held that decisions of the government would need to be communicated to the LG post-facto. The judgment was ambiguous on the role of LG and the Delhi government, stating that the LG is not a Governor but an administrator in a limited sense, and that the Delhi government must remember that Delhi is not a state.

The ambiguous judgement has left scope for drafting the present Bill, which more clearly defines the role of LG and the government of Delhi. Even if AAP challenges it legally, the approach of the Centre in passing the Bill is legally valid as it gives effect to a Court judgement. Moreover, the 2018 and 2019 Court judgements re-affirmed the powers of the LG under proviso to Article 239AA(4) of the Constitution, which empowers the LG to act on advice of the President.

Practically, the role of the Delhi government has been diminished completely. While the implications of the Bill will become evident only in practice, the effect might be seen in the following significant domains:

First, it may reduce the misuse of power by Delhi government for protecting the riot accused and the criminals. The delay in granting sanction for prosecution in cases like JNU violence, Delhi riots and others have made the national capital a hub for an unrepentant Leftist-Islamist ecosystem.

Second, the tussle over bureaucratic/administrative transfers is settled, and the Delhi government will not be able to exercise power over officers. It will also have to take LG's advice prior to acting on any cabinet decision. Populist policy

decisions, such as supply of free power, water etc., will come under the ambit of prior consultation with the LG.

Third, assembly committee inquiries on contentious issues like Delhi riots and other contentious issues, administrative matters and others will be curtailed.

### **PM MODI'S BANGLADESH VISIT**

PM Modi's recent visit to Bangladesh – his first since the COVID19 pandemic started last year – strengthened the bilateral ties further. PM Modi visited the country to commemorate the 50th anniversary celebrations of Bangladesh's independence, 50th year of establishment of ties between India and Bangladesh and 100th birth anniversary celebrations of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. The three together are being celebrated in Bangladesh as 'Mujib Borsho' (The Year of Mujib). The joint agreement from the visit listed cooperation in a range of areas, from connectivity and people-level ties to border management, COVID19 vaccines and energy projects.

Modi also unveiled the foundation stone for the first memorial to be built in Bangladesh to honour Indian soldiers who fought in Bangladesh's liberation war of 1971. His act of conferring the Gandhi Peace award on Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman is also a significant indication on India's part of the goodwill it wants to infuse in ties with Bangladesh. Modi also met the Community leaders including representatives of minorities in Bangladesh, Bangladeshi Mukhtijoddhas, Friends of India and others. He also interacted with leaders of some opposition political parties in Bangladesh.

However, the key takeaway from the visit lay in the

psychological impact it made in Bangladesh and India. This is visible in three domains,

**First, India's soft power:** India has rapidly enhanced its strategic projects with Bangladesh, which are positively expanding its footprint in the country, going beyond mere rhetoric. Since 2014, border issues have been resolved very well, Sheikh Hasina has proved an important partner in helping root out terrorism in Bangladesh and cross-border insurgency in India. Having resolved these issues, the countries are now focusing on connectivity projects, with India actively involved in the development of strategic infrastructure in Bangladesh.

Rail links, bridges providing port connectivity, activation of waterways have been boosted, and the overall connectivity of India's east with Bangladesh has improved from the point of view of trade and security. Bangladesh is also on board with the tri-lateral highway project between India, Myanmar and Thailand. India-specific Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Bangladesh are set to facilitate regional manufacturing value chains.

This is important from the point of view of China – not to counterbalance or compete with rising Chinese footprint in Indian subcontinent, but, in China's own statement following Xi Jinping's India visit, to ensure that India and China work together in third countries. Only a strong India with its own presence can complement China in this way, without allowing the latter to take it for granted.

**Second, faint beginnings of India's role as a global ambassador of Sanatan Dharma:** Coinciding with Bengal's first phase of elections, Modi's Bangladesh visit further reinforced the ruling BJP's unhesitating commitment to a

syncretic Hindutva, not seen in previous political leaders. Thus, in the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh, Modi's visit was highlighted through his worship at two famous Hindu temples of Jessorshwari Kali Devi and the Orakandi temple (the birthplace of Matua gurus, Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur).

The Orakandi temple, the cradle of Matua Mahasangh, is particularly significant for the Matua community – a Namasudra community. The community plays a powerful role in West Bengal politics, being a key Scheduled Caste community exercising influence in as many as 30 assembly constituencies, and sought after by all major political parties. The community shifted towards BJP about two years back, due to the party's outreach and its implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019.

Modi's outreach to minority Hindus in Bangladesh is rare for an Indian leader visiting abroad. It not only sends out a signal to foreign governments that Hindu minorities in Islamic states need to be treated well, but also indicates the faint beginning of the role of an India that has begun to seamlessly interweave its culture of syncretic Hinduism with its political dealings with the world and the nations.

Third, the Islamic backlash: In response to Modi's successful visit to Bangladesh and his unprecedented visit to Hindu temples, the Islamic elements unleashed riots in the country. This was expected, as these elements had been protesting prior to Modi's visit also. These elements included not only Islamists, but also madrasa students and clerics, and Leftists and intellectuals. After Modi's visit, the protests turned into massive destruction and violence, with attacks on Hindus, temples and public property. At least 11 people

were killed in the violence and in the strong police response. To bring the situation under control, Hasina government had to deploy the specialized and brutal Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) forces.

These were led by the mischievous radical Islamist outfit, Hefazat-e-Islam – a long-standing security threat to Hasina government, but one that is highly popular in Bangladesh. It was setup in 2010 to obstruct the government's efforts to undo the Islamization of the country unleashed under Khaleda Zia's rule. Efforts by the government to bring Constitutional changes in favour of secularism and a policy for women's equal right to property were the trigger for the formation of the group. In 2013, they protested widely and issued a 13-point radical Islamist agenda, including institutionalization of blasphemy laws. That year, the security forces also unleashed a bloody crackdown on the group.

Since this failure of 2013, the group has avoided clashing directly with the government. However, it has become a de facto powerful opposition pressure group, playing a key role in Bangladesh polity, exercising pressure on government. The government also had to give in to various demands of the group over the years, thereby raising its stature and legitimizing it further. Hasina government was already battling Jamaat-i-Islami, which it viewed as a bigger threat.

The riot-like situation created in the wake of Modi's visit has been blamed by Bangladeshi Parliament on Pakistan, but it also marks a turning point in Hefazat's relationship with the government. Psychologically, it represents Islamists' absolute abhorrence to the prospect of a rising and powerful Hindutva India in the region. Modi's temple visit triggered such an extreme reaction, and played an important role in bringing to

fore the poison that needs to be dealt with.

## THE QUAD SUMMIT

The summit between Quadrilateral security dialogue countries – India, US, Japan and Australia – this month marks the first-ever leader-level summit for the QUAD. The summit marked a break from previous bureaucratic and ministerial level meetings, emphasizing not just military cooperation, but also strengthening supply chains in the Indo-Pacific region as a counter to China, though the summit did not name China. The summit fell early in the Presidentship of Joe Biden, who has from the beginning, emphasized US's priority to counterbalance China. In many ways, minus the rhetoric of Trump, Biden has taken an equal or more hardline stand towards China. The importance given to Indo-Pacific is a part of this strategy.

While the Quad was first born in 2007, it could only revive after 2018, with an upswing in relations of India with US, Australia and Japan. Importantly, India's vigorous construction work in the border areas, bringing it face-to-face with China, also helped change the status-quo. In more recent times, Quad has received a big boost in Biden's Presidency, due to its vision to work on something substantive, instead of the just the Indo-Pacific rhetoric.

India's emerging role as an arms supplier and its growing connectivity projects in its eastern backyard has revealed its potential to become a net security provider in the region. Most importantly, from an economic point of view, India's manufacturing capability is now being eyed to be harnessed at a regional level.



This capability was displayed well last year during the COVID19 pandemic. When the pandemic started, India was manufacturing zero protective PPE kits. The whole world was securing supplies from China. However, soon, India not just started manufacturing its own PPE kits, but also started exporting them, producing a million kits a day. The same capability was seen in ventilators and other essential supplies, such as drugs being used for COVID19 trials.

India's unprecedented supply of vaccines to the world under its 'Vaccine Maitri' programmed, has surpassed China, making the least developed countries heavily dependent on Indian vaccines. Even developed countries like UK, Canada and developing countries sourced vaccines from India. The temporary halt in the supply of Indian vaccines adversely affected the UK's vaccination drive. The syringes, needed to administer vaccines, again led them to Indian manufacturers.

The rise in India's manufacturing capacity has propelled Quad to envisage India as a manufacturing base for producing a billion COVID19 vaccines for the Indo-Pacific region. It is a strong India on the back of which the success of Quad has taken off and now rests. As long as India was reluctant and hesitant, the Quad simply remained a paper tiger.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN MAHARASHTRA**

The Maharashtra government presently stands on a shaky ground, as a series of crime and corruption scandals have implicated its top leadership. The handover of the Antilla bomb scare case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has led to a sequence of events which may threaten the existence of the present government.

The gelatin sticks and the death threat letter planted outside industrialist, Mukesh Ambani's residence, Antilla, in Mumbai, was a case initially being investigated by the state law enforcement agencies. However, it soon ended up being linked to an Indian Mujahideen cell whose member was operating from Delhi's Tihar jail. This provided an opportunity for the central government to deem it a terror case and transfer it to the NIA.

With NIA investigation directly implicating and arresting celebrated, albeit low-ranked, encounter police officer, Sachin Vaze (who was also involved in arresting journalist and Republic TV CEO Arnab Goswami infamously from his house early morning, in a separate case last year), the case directly impacted the Mumbai police. Vaze was arrested for the murder of his long-time associate, Mansukh Hiren, whose car was used to plant the incriminating explosives outside Antilla. While Vaze could have been made a scapegoat, the expansion of NIA from terror investigation to Hiren murder case, further complicated the issue for the state government, as it might implicate a lot of top police officers too.

As a result, the next turning point for the state government came when Mumbai police chief, Parambir Singh, levelled allegations of corruption against Maharashtra Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh (of NCP). He accused Deshmukh of instructing Vaze to collect Rs. 100 crore per month from restaurants and other such joints in Mumbai. He also approached the Supreme Court for a CBI investigation against Deshmukh, but to no avail. Further, IAS Rashmi Shukla also accused the government of running a police transfer racket. To make matters worse, Opposition leader, Devendra Fadnavis (of BJP) had managed to get hold of incriminating evidence against the

government in the corruption scandal case, and submitted it to the Centre.

As the situation stands at present, the cards are clearly in BJP's hands, but the party is treading cautiously in the state. It may be the single largest party, yet it is aware of how regional media and public forums are biased against it. It also realizes that it needs the aid of extra legislators to form the government. The BJP is treading cautiously, working on building strong public sentiment against the present government before going any further.

“The world is fighting for its spiritual life menaced by the rush of hostile and undivine forces.

Lord, we aspire to be Thy valiant warriors so that Thy glory may manifest upon the earth.”

— The Mother  
(CWM 12 : 93-94)