

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

April 2022



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

Year 13

Issue 1

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

Year 13

Issue 1

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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)

THE TRUTH ABOUT MODERN POLITY – 6

(Continued from the December 2021 Issue)

4. THE PRESENT CONDITION OF INDIA

B. *The Current Scenario*

All who have cared to look seriously into the past history of India know how during the last millennium it got subjected to plunder, murder, enslavement and rape of its people and land by the souls hypnotized and fallen under the net of the distorted^[3] Semitic religions. According to some estimates, about 80 to 100 million Hindus perished as a result of persistent wars, unspeakable cruelties, tortures, injustices and mass starvations during the bloody millennium – an unsurpassed historical record of sufferings to which, perhaps, no other people had ever been subjected to.

As we had seen in the earlier section, how after the Independence in 1947, there ensued the rule of Macaulay's children who had virtually no understanding or emotional sympathy for India's great spiritual culture. Their approach, inspite of all their professions to the contrary – uttered only to keep peace with the masses still practicing or clinging to their ancient practices and roots of culture – was basically to copy the West and they began pushing the country in that direction. In charting the course for the economy, the inspiration was drawn from the socialistic and communistic

^[3] It is well known in spiritual and Occult circles that the Life (Vital) Powers – the popular Adversaries of the Divine – have always attempted to falsify – and often most successfully in the absence of a continuous spiritual tradition – the Original Teachings of the Great Spiritual Founders of Religions. As pointed out by Sri Aurobindo in 1936, "...What previous vital descents have done is to falsify the Light that came down as in the history of Christianity where it took possession of the teaching and distorted it and deprived it of any widespread fulfilment." (CWSA 32: 605)

approach of the Eastern Europe, just as the recourse to parliamentary democracy was taken under the inspiration of the liberal Western Europe – especially the English. Most of the laws and the legal and administrative system set up by the English for their purposes was kept intact even after they left. Even the newly drafted constitution of 1950 is in effect, more or less, a copy of the Act of 1935 under which Congress and Muslim League ministries were formed after the elections were held under its provisions. The socialistic approach was abandoned after a standstill of four decades. As we have seen before, during the course of the past seven decades, the political and administrative machinery inherited from the English has grown so extensive, all-pervasive and intricate that it is proving inimical to the health and functioning of the individual and national life. In the following pages an attempt is made to describe the present condition by way of discussing the background and the present form of some of the most serious problems facing the country.

(i) Secularism

a. The Historical Background and Record

The principles of secularism were not in the original Constitution of 1950 but were inserted into it in 1976 during the Emergency by way of the forty second Amendment by the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi. The concept of secularism implying no discrimination – favour or disfavour of people simply because of their faith in a particular sect or religion came to be practised in Europe to prevent any repetition of its history of the large scale persecution and murder of people on religious grounds. For example, the war waged by successive Catholic and Protestant Monarchs on people following a faith different from their own. The bitter memories of these experiences led to the introduction of this principle in European polity.

Although the principle of secularism was inducted into the Constitution of India only in 1976, most liberal leaders like Pundit Nehru had begun to mouth slogans of secularism along with democratic socialism from the very beginning of the nineteen-fifties. These ideas were popular throughout the non-aligned nations of Asia and Africa which resented their colonial masters and looked up to East European socialist and communist states because of their avowed sympathy for all the nations that had or were struggling against the imperialism of the West European countries. Initially, the Congress party of Pundit Nehru brought these ideas to the forefront of the national consciousness and began, increasingly, to pursue them as articles of faith. Pundit Nehru never really felt the need for the appeasement of various groups to stay in power. So overwhelming was the dominance of the INC (Indian National Congress) in the first twenty years after Independence that it faced practically no threat from the opposition – left or right. Besides, the lack of any empathy for India's traditional spiritual Hindu culture kept him in the good graces of the Christians and Muslims. Mrs Indira Gandhi felt the need to go out of her way to appease the minorities and attract the votes of the poor masses through slogans like 'Garibi hatao' and the like, especially after the debacle of 1977 when for the first time the INC lost power at the Centre after an undisputed rule during the first thirty years after Independence. In light of the hopeless/disruptive division of the Hindus into castes, languages and ideologies, regional parties sprang up in UP, Bihar, Bengal, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala who went whole hog and outdid the Congress in the appeasement of Muslims and dominant (united) caste groups in these states. This at times led to the end of the uninterrupted rule of the INC in these states and often – for a varying number of years – at the Centre where the INC was forced, even when in power, to seek the help of these regional secular parties and the Left parties which had their strong base in Kerala and West Bengal. The INC, Left and regional secular parties which naturally

competed for the votes of the Muslims, began attempts to outdo each other in trying to pose as more secular or a greater lover/supporter of the Muslims. Since the leadership of these parties was mostly Hindu – although in name only – they had to expressly make a show of their secular credentials by visiting and paying respect at Muslim shrines and specially celebrating Muslim festivals and shunning Hindu festivals. They tried their best to be seen as not visiting temples or participating in Hindu festivals.

Since competition was cut-throat on this front, by the time of the UPA II government, the impeccable credentials for secularism came to imply a show of dislike for all that pertained to Hindu religion and culture – which was already being shown in poor light in history and literature that was promoted and written with this kind of mentality. It often went to the extent of sympathising – not always openly expressed – with Muslims even if they were known terrorists who attacked Hindu shrines and the country’s national institutions. Sri Tarek Fatah, a free and learned Islamic thinker, has most aptly defined this “Secularism”. According to him India is a country which has a superior culture, yet it is the only country where people are taught to hate their great culture. A great effort is made to educate people to eulogise the attackers and invaders who came to destroy this culture. And this foolishness is called secularism.

The Hindu population of India has never been really politically organised around the idea or the basis of its culture and religion (Sanatana Dharma) for it had never given itself any name. The people belonging to this land came to be called Hindu by foreigners according to the name of the famous river, Sindhu. This culture gave itself no name because, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, “...it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An

immense many-sided many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.” (CWSA 20: 179)

The secular writers are never tired of pointing out that it was the incapacity of the Hindus to unite that was responsible for their subjection to the yoke of the foreigners during the last millennium. A digression here is necessary to clear a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding that prevails on this issue which is universally cited and accepted as an incontrovertible proof of a basic defect in Indian Culture in the political field, however great it may have been in the field of religion and culture. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, “A great deal has been said and written about the inability of Indians to unite, the want of a common patriotism ... Admitting even in their full degree the force of these strictures, – all of them are not altogether true or rightly stated or vitally applicable to the matter, – they are only symptoms and we have still to seek for the deeper causes.” (CWSA 20: 427-28)

“The whole basis of the Indian mind is its spiritual and inward turn, its propensity to seek the things of the spirit and the inner being first and foremost and to look at all else as secondary, dependent, to be handled and determined in the light of the higher knowledge and as an expression, a preliminary, field or aid or at least a pendent to the deeper spiritual aim, – **a tendency therefore to create whatever it had to create first on the inner plane and afterwards in its other aspects. This mentality and this consequent tendency to create from within outwards being given, it was inevitable that the unity India first created for herself should be the spiritual and cultural oneness.** It could not be, to begin with, a political unification effected by an external

rule centralised, imposed or constructed, as was done in Rome or ancient Persia, by a conquering kingdom or the genius of a military and organising people. It cannot, I think, justly be said that this was a mistake or a proof of the unpractical turn of the Indian mind and that the single political body should have been created first and afterwards the spiritual unity could have securely grown up in the vast body of an Indian national empire.

The problem that presented itself at the beginning was that of a huge area containing more than a hundred kingdoms, clans, peoples, tribes, races, in this respect another Greece, but a Greece on an enormous scale, almost as large as modern Europe^[4]. **As in Greece a cultural Hellenic unity was necessary to create a fundamental feeling of oneness, here too and much more imperatively a conscious spiritual and cultural unity of all these peoples was the first, the indispensable condition without which no enduring unity could be possible. The instinct of the Indian mind and of its great Rishis and founders of its culture was sound in this matter.**

And even if we suppose that an outward imperial unity like that of the Roman world could have been founded among the peoples of early India by military and political means, we must not forget that the Roman unity did not endure, that even the unity of ancient Italy founded by the Roman conquest and organisation did not endure, and it is not likely that a similar attempt in the vast reaches of India without the previous spiritual and cultural basis would have been of an enduring character. It cannot be said either, even if the emphasis on spiritual and cultural unity be pronounced to have been too engrossing or excessive and the insistence on political and external unity too feeble, that the effect of this precedence has been merely disastrous and without any advantage. It is due to this original peculiarity, to this indelible spiritual stamp, to this underlying oneness amidst all diversities that if India is not yet a single organised political

nation, she still survives and is still India.” (CWSA 20: 429-30)

“After all the spiritual and cultural is the only enduring unity and it is by a persistent mind and spirit much more than by an enduring physical body and outward organisation that the soul of a people survives. This is a truth the positive Western mind may be unwilling to understand or concede, and yet its proofs are written across the whole story of the ages. The ancient nations, contemporaries of India, and many younger born than she are dead and only their monuments left behind them. Greece and Egypt exist only on the map and in name, for it is not the soul of Hellas or the deeper nation-soul that built Memphis which we now find at Athens or at Cairo. Rome imposed a political and a purely outward cultural unity on the Mediterranean peoples, but their living spiritual and cultural oneness she could not create, and therefore the east broke away from the west, Africa kept no impress of the Roman interlude, and even the western nations still called Latin could offer no living resistance to barbarian invaders and had to be reborn by the infusion of a foreign vitality to become modern Italy, Spain and France. But India still lives and keeps the continuity of her inner mind and soul and spirit with the India of the ages.

Invasion and foreign rule, the Greek, the Parthian and the Hun, the robust vigour of Islam, the levelling steam-roller heaviness of the British occupation and the British system, the enormous pressure of the Occident have not been able to drive or crush the ancient soul out of the body her Vedic Rishis made for her.

At every step, under every calamity and attack and domination, she has been able to resist and survive either with an active or a passive resistance. And this she was able to do in her great days by her spiritual solidarity and power of assimilation and reaction, expelling all that would not be absorbed, absorbing all that could not be expelled, and even after the beginning of the decline she was

still able to survive by the same force, abated but not slayable, retreating and maintaining for a time her ancient political system in the south, throwing up under the pressure of Islam Rajput and Sikh and Mahratta to defend her ancient self and its idea, persisting passively where she could not resist actively, condemning to decay each empire that could not answer her riddle or make terms with her, awaiting always the day of her revival. And even now it is a similar phenomenon that we see in process before our eyes. And what shall we say then of the surpassing vitality of the civilisation that could accomplish this miracle and of the wisdom of those who built its foundation not on things external but on the spirit and the inner mind and made a spiritual and cultural oneness the root and stock of her existence and not solely its fragile flower, the eternal basis and not the perishable superstructure?” (CWSA 20: 430-31)

Now to revert to the main theme, during the years of the rise and domination of the INC and its love of secularism and the increasingly perverted form it took, the true spirit of India was not altogether asleep and was throwing up movements and organisations sympathetic – though not fully expressive of its depths and genius – to it and designed to protect it from the acid of movements and organisations aiming to remould India into the image of Western European (secular democratic) and East European (socialistic) social, political and economic structure and thought. The RSS – a cultural and national service and security organisation – was founded in 1925 by Dr. Hedgewar and its political wing, Jana Sangha (renamed BJP in 1981) was founded by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. These organisations have been branded communal and therefore untouchable by the “secular” parties occupying most of the political bandwidth. Even the BJP did not escape the secular infection and its prominent leaders began to manifest its effects more and more to escape from the political stigma and untouchability. As the dissatisfaction with the Congress and its dictatorial tendencies grew,

the opposition to it got organised and the Jana Sangha got its first chance of a share in political power during the little over two years of the Janata government during 1977-79. It was for the first time in 1998 that the NDA coalition government headed by BJP's Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee was formed and ruled for over six years. For all the people who had longed to see a government sympathetic to India's spiritual Hindu culture it was the dream come true. However, the short-sighted political instinct of the BJP leaders made them behave like any other secular party and the Vajpayee government also sought to appease the minorities for their votes without worrying – because of their established Hindu credentials – about a possible Hindu backlash which secular parties had to take account of in their calculations. A good number of people, sympathetic to the Hindu national cause, found that they could no longer take the risk of such a government coming to power again and the NDA was replaced by the UPA, headed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi with the titular Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh. The UPA won for a second time in the 2009 election and felt more secure because of the BJP's poorer performance this time and further when the BJP's Sri Lal Krishna Advani got side lined when he tried to establish his secular credentials by visiting Pakistan and going so far as to brand Sri Jinnah as secular. The secular agenda of the Congress and the Left approached rabid proportions during the last two years of the UPA II government.

Sri Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat during the riots of February 2002 in the state for which he was castigated by the secular media. When the UPA came to power at the Centre in 2004, many enquiry commissions were appointed with a view to somehow, anyhow, implicate Sri Modi of wrongdoing during these riots. All such attempts failed and no fault could be found in Sri Modi's handling of the crisis during which the state government machinery had genuinely worked hard to minimize the damage. Sri

Narendra Modi was re-elected in December 2002, 2007 and 2012 and continued as the CM of Gujarat until he became the Prime Minister after the NDA won an overwhelming majority in the parliamentary elections of 2014 under his leadership.

Under Sri Narendra Modi's leadership the BJP recovered the trust of all the nationalist elements of the country which it had lost during the NDA government under the leadership of Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. After getting a feel for things at the national level of governance, Sri Modi has been busy, primarily, (i) to assert India's independent views and to secure a prominent place for the country in the community of nations – something that, given its contribution to the world in various fields and its size, it deserved all along but never really had except in the first decade after Independence under Pundit Nehru; (ii) to wield together diverse elements – castes and language groups and geographical areas – giving each its due and proper place in the lap of Mother India. This meant a reassertion of the claims of India's traditional/original spiritual culture – the Sanatana Dharma – to play a leading role in the country and the world at large to uplift the present conditions of humanity. During the first seven decades after Independence the country was moving to wholly copy not only the legal, political, economic, educational, institutional set-up which was already in place at the time of Independence in 1947, but also the values and culture of the West in all the spheres of activity and in all walks of life. As pointed out before, this resulted into the pursuit by politicians of a worse form of appeasement of Semitic religious groups and castes for getting votes. It all became so disgustingly acute that, more and more, everything got judged according to a person's caste or religion with the utmost importance being given to the most organised castes or minority religions. If one was simply a Hindu and religious, it was a great political liability and one ran the risk of being branded communal (reactionary in Pundit Nehru's days) or at least not-secular.

During the first few years after Independence, the memory of Partition and the atrocities perpetrated against Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan kept the notion of secularism from showing its true distorted form but after Mrs Indira Gandhi came to power in 1966, the perversion began to increase. It progressively deteriorated under Sri Rajiv Gandhi and reached its culmination during the UPA II government. All these years Hindus remained somewhat oblivious of the growing perversion of secularism and no effective organisation of Hindus took place until the 1990s when the agitation for Ram Mandir led to the sacrifice of the Kar-Sevaks in Ayodhya. As a result of this Hindu awakening, Sri A.B.Vajpayee, heading the newly formed NDA, came to power in 1998. Such was the policy pursued by the NDA that the Hindus were glad to see it thrown out and welcomed the UPA government. The conduct of the UPA put tremendous pressure on the Hindus to get together but they could not repose their faith in the BJP given the tendency of some of its top leaders to appease the minorities for political gains. When Sri Narendra Modi was chosen as the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP for the 2014 parliamentary election, the Hindu psyche recognised that they may have found a leader who could be trusted to follow a nationalist course and enable the neglected and maligned majority to assert its culture and values and make them count in the forming of the national policies.

During his first tenure, being new to national politics, Sri Modi took his time to feel the ground and then began to change course. All along, the secular brigade tried their best to discredit the Modi government both within the Parliament – where passage of bills by the Modi government was obstructed – and outside. Pakistan and Pak supported terrorism was buttressed by the opposition denying the authenticity of all strong, effective measures taken by the Modi government against Pakistan. The media and secular intellectuals eagerly joined these efforts and for months before the Parliamentary

Elections of 2019, a persistent effort was made to create an impression that the ‘chowkidar chor’ Prime Minister Modi and his government were on their way out to be replaced by the government of a secular alliance.

The Parliamentary elections of 2019 decisively gave Sri Narendra Modi an even more resounding mandate than the previous one in 2014. This gave Sri Modi the opportunity to begin implementing the national agenda of the BJP which it has been promising for a long time. The forming of Congress governments in the states of Rajasthan, MP and Chhattisgarh after the elections at the end of 2018 and the failure of the BJP to form a government in Maharashtra had kept up the hopes of the secular brigade and they have been trying to block Sri Modi’s efforts to fulfil the BJP’s promised national agenda and even to unseat him by inciting minorities and some intellectuals against his government. The persistent violent demonstrations against the Citizenship Amendment Act were a case in point. The passing of the Triple Talak Bill, the abrogation of Article 370 and the Supreme Court’s unanimous verdict on the Ram Mandir had so unnerved the secularists that they went all out to oppose the government after the Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act. None of the above actions, nor the proposed Uniform Civil Code infringe in any way on the equal rights or interests of the minorities but only remove some of the special privileges and glaring distortions against the constitutional provisions of the fundamental equality of all Indian citizens. The national psyche has been awakened and is so charged that none of the above actions of the Modi government can be undone by the secularists even if they were to come to power at the Centre in the near future. The country is on its way to assert its identity and to the flowering of its great spiritual culture. During the forthcoming resurgence of India, after a millennium of cruel subjugation to a

foreign yoke, Indians will witness a growing spirit of nationalism fed by the increasingly glowing achievements of their country and their countrymen around the world in all fields of endeavour. For the first time, after a very difficult millennium, Indians will have something to take pride in and this true pride and, based on it, the growing spirit of nationalism will tend to dissolve all the problems of their collective life which have become so very acute due to a blind and mechanical following of the western spirit and forms in this field. We all know that the problem had become so critical in the political field that it was threatening the integrity and even the very existence of the country. Love of power, money and progeny had become the common denominator of all the participants in the political arena. Now, with coming of the new Modi government, the flowering of the spirit of true – true, because consecrated to the divine as India has always been – nationalism will increasingly transmute all these lower loves into an all-consuming love for the Motherland.

All this does not mean that India will stop at Nationalism, for, as pointed by Sri Aurobindo during the first decade of the last century when he was the heart and soul of the then Nationalist spirit, “In India we do not recognise the nation as the highest synthesis to which we can rise. There is a higher synthesis, humanity; beyond that there is a still higher synthesis, this living, suffering, aspiring world of creatures, the synthesis of Buddhism; there is a highest of all, the synthesis of God, and that is the Hindu synthesis, the synthesis of Vedanta. With us today Nationalism is our immediate practical faith and gospel not because it is the highest possible synthesis, but because it must be realised in life if we are to have the chance of realising the others. We must live as a nation before we can live in humanity. ... A man must be strong and free in himself before he can live usefully for others, so must a nation. But that does not justify us in forgetting the ultimate aim of evolution. God in the nation becomes the

realisation of the first moment to us because the nation is the chosen means or condition through which we rise to the higher synthesis, God in humanity, God in all creatures, God in Himself and ourself.” (CWSA 8 : 84-85)

At present India has to chart its course out of two opposite attractions that it has been facing since the nineteenth century and still does – the move towards the orthodox religious spirit or the modern materialistic scientific culture of the West. With the new revival of the nationalistic Hindu spirit this struggle, which seemed to have been moving decisively towards the materialism of the West during the last seventy years after Independence, has become animated again. Even though there is practically hardly any risk of India falling into any kind of orthodoxy, whether native (Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist) or semitic (Muslim or Christian) still we cannot completely rule out the possibility. More than a hundred years ago, Swami Vivekananda – seeing behind appearances with his penetrating spiritual gaze – had seen this issue very clearly. He stated, “There are two great obstacles on our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy, and not for the Europeanised system; for the old orthodox man may be ignorant, he may be crude, but he is a man, he has a faith, he has strength, he stands on his own feet; while the Europeanised man has no backbone, he is a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source – and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonised. He does not stand on his own feet, and his head is turning round and round. Where is the motive power of his work? – in a few patronizing pats from the English people. His schemes of reforms, his vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs, have, as the mainspring, some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evils? Because the Europeans say so. That is about

the reason he gives. I would not submit to that. Stand and die in your own strength, if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death. These unbalanced creatures are not yet formed into distinct personalities; what are we to call them – men, women, or animals? While those old orthodox people were staunch and were men. There are still some excellent examples, and the one I want to present before you now is your Raja of Ramnad. Here you have a man than whom there is no more zealous a Hindu throughout the length and breadth of this land; here you have a prince than whom there is no prince in this land better informed in all affairs, both oriental and occidental, who takes from every nation whatever he can that is good. “Learn good knowledge with all devotion from the lowest caste. Learn the way to freedom, even if it comes from a Pariah, by serving him. If a woman is a jewel, take her in marriage even if she comes from a low family of the lowest caste.” Such is the law laid down by our great and peerless legislator, the divine Manu. This is true. **Stand on your own feet, and assimilate what you can; learn from every nation, take what is of use to you. But remember that as Hindus everything else must be subordinated to our own national ideals. Each man has a mission in life, which is the result of all his infinite past Karma. Each of you was born with a splendid heritage, which is the whole of the infinite past life of your glorious nation. Millions of your ancestors are watching, as it were, every action of yours, so be alert. And what is the mission with which every Hindu child is born? Have you not read the proud declaration of Manu regarding the Brahmin where he says that the birth of the Brahmin is “for the protection of the treasury of religion”? I should say that that is the mission not only of the Brahmin, but of every child, whether boy or girl, who is born in this blessed land “for the protection of the**

treasury of religion". And every other problem in life must be subordinated to that one principal theme. That is also the law of harmony in music. There may be a nation whose theme of life is political supremacy; religion and everything else must become subordinate to that one great theme of its life. But here is another nation whose great theme of life is spirituality and renunciation, whose one watchword is that this world is all vanity and a delusion of three days, and everything else, whether science or knowledge, enjoyment or powers, wealth, name, or fame, must be subordinated to that one theme. The secret of a true Hindu's character lies in the subordination of his knowledge of European sciences and learning, of his wealth, position, and name, to that one principal theme which is inborn in every Hindu child – the spirituality and purity of the race. Therefore between these two, the case of the orthodox man who has the whole of that life-spring of the race, spirituality, and the other man whose hands are full of Western imitation jewels but has no hold on the life-giving principle, spirituality – of these, I do not doubt that every one here will agree that we should choose the first, the orthodox, because there is some hope in him – he has the national theme, something to hold to; so he will live, but the other will die. Just as in the case of individuals, if the principle of life is undisturbed, if the principal function of that individual life is present, any injuries received as regards other functions are not serious, do not kill the individual, so, as long as this principal function of our life is not disturbed, nothing can destroy our nation. But mark you, if you give up that spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materialising civilisation of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round." (CWSV 3: 151-53) "... the way out is that first and foremost we must keep a firm hold on spirituality – that inestimable

gift handed down to us by our ancient forefathers. Did you ever hear of a country where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent not to kings, not to robber-barons living in old castles who plundered poor travellers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forest? Did you ever hear of such a land? This is the land. In other countries great priests try to trace their descent to some king, but here the greatest kings would trace their descent to some ancient priest. Therefore, whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of the national life, you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life; and out of that a wonderful, glorious, future India will come – I am sure it is coming – a greater India than ever was. Sages will spring up greater than all the ancient sages; and your ancestors will not only be satisfied, but I am sure, they will be proud from their positions in other worlds to look down upon their descendants, so glorious, and so great.

Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was – this motherland of ours. The idea of God was nowhere else ever so fully developed as in this motherland of ours, for the same idea of God never existed anywhere else. Perhaps you are astonished at my assertion; but show me any idea of God from any other scripture equal to ours; they have only clan-Gods, the God of the Jews, the God of the Arabs, and of such and such a race, and their God is fighting the Gods of the other races. But the idea of that beneficent, most merciful God, our father, our mother, our friend, the friend of our friends, the soul of our souls, is here and here alone. And may He who is the Shiva of the Shaivites, the Vishnu of the Vaishnavites, the Karma of the Karmis, the Buddha of the

Buddhists, the Jina of the Jains, the Jehovah of the Christians and the Jews, the Allah of the Mohammedans, the Lord of every sect, the Brahman of the Vedantists, He the all-pervading, whose glory has been known only in this land – may He bless us, may He help us, may He give strength unto us, energy unto us, to carry this idea into practice. May that which we have listened to and studied become food to us, may it become strength in us, may it become energy in us to help each other; may we, the teacher and the taught, not be jealous of each other! Peace, peace, peace, in the name of Hari!” (CWSV 3:153-54)

“Let them talk of India’s regeneration as they like. Let me tell you as one who has been working – at least trying to work – all his life, that there is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual. Not only so, but upon it depends the welfare of the whole world. For I must tell you frankly that the very foundations of Western civilisation have been shaken to their base. The mightiest buildings, if built upon the loose sand foundations of materialism, must come to grief one day, must totter to their destruction some day. The history of the world is our witness. Nation after nation has arisen and based its greatness upon materialism, declaring man was all matter. Ay, in Western language, a man gives up the ghost, but in our language a man gives up his body. The Western man is a body first, and then he has a soul; with us a man is a soul and spirit, and he has a body. Therein lies a world of difference. All such civilisations, therefore, as have been based upon such sand foundations as material comfort and all that, have disappeared one after another, after short lives, from the face of the world; but the civilisation of India and the other nations that have stood at India’s feet to listen and learn, namely, Japan and China, live even to the present day, and there are signs even of revival among them. Their lives are like that of the Phoenix, a thousand times destroyed, but ready to spring up again more glorious. But a

materialistic civilisation once dashed down, never can come up again; that building once thrown down is broken into pieces once for all. Therefore have patience and wait, the future is in store for us.

Do not be in a hurry, do not go out to imitate anybody else. This is another great lesson we have to remember; imitation is not civilisation. I may deck myself out in a Raja's dress, but will that make me a Raja? An ass in a lion's skin never makes a lion. Imitation, cowardly imitation, never makes for progress. It is verily the sign of awful degradation in a man. Ay, when a man has begun to hate himself, then the last blow has come. When a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. Here am I, one of the least of the Hindu race, yet proud of my race, proud of my ancestors. I am proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am one of your unworthy servants. I am proud that I am a countryman of yours, you the descendants of the sages, you the descendants of the most glorious Rishis the world ever saw. Therefore have faith in yourselves, be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them. And do not imitate, do not imitate!" (CWSV 3: 380-81)

These words of Swami Vivekananda should leave one in no doubt about the vulgarity of the course we have been following in India, especially after Independence. It is right that we tolerate all faiths and beliefs and assert a man's right to chart his chosen course in life so long as he does not refuse the right of others to do the same. Semitic religions have still to learn this kind of tolerance. As long as they maintain a spirit of conversion forced or otherwise, one has to be on one's guard against the tendency and defend oneself by whatever means necessary. India suffered for almost a millennium at the hands of savage and uncivilised hoards largely because of the failure of Indians to rise to the true virile spirit of Sanatana Dharma sticking, instead, tamasicly to the tolerant spirit of Sanatana Dharma

even going so far as to be tolerating that which ought not to be tolerated for the good of everyone. Forceful resistance – certainly India was not without a great deal of it – to such tyranny or intolerance is in line with the true spirit of Sanatana Dharma and brings about the real well-being of all including of the perpetrators of tyranny. To see things clearly is to know that “it is also the divine compassion that smites down the strong tyrant and the confident oppressor, not in wrath and with hatred, – for these are not the high divine qualities, the wrath of God against the sinner, God’s hatred of the wicked are the fables of half-enlightened creeds, as much a fable as the eternal torture of the Hells they have invented, – but, as the old Indian spirituality clearly saw, with as much love and compassion for the strong Titan erring by his strength and slain for his sins as for the sufferer and the oppressed who have to be saved from his violence and injustice.” (CWSA 19: 58-59)

b. The Roots of the Secular Spirit and Its Play in India

As pointed out before, the modern concept of secularism owes its origin to the historical record of violent strife between the two sects of Christianity – the Catholics and the Protestants in Europe. The Catholic kings tended to persecute their Protestant subjects and vice versa. With the advent and progression of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the unquestionable authority of the Church came to be increasingly questioned by the philosophers and the scientists and the concept of a secular state became popular. This resulted into the separation of the State from the Church.

In Indian polity, normally, there was no room for religious oppression and intolerance and the need for a settled policy of this kind was unthinkable for the Indian mentality. “The monarch might personally favour a particular sect or creed and his active preference might evidently have a considerable propagandist influence, but at

the same time he was bound to respect and support in his public office all the recognised religions of the people with a certain measure of impartiality, a rule that explains the support extended by Buddhist and Brahmin emperors to both the rival religions. At times there were, mainly in the south, instances of petty or violent State persecutions, but these outbreaks were a violation of the Dharma due to momentary passion at a time of acute religious ferment and were always local and of a brief duration.” (CWSA 20: 393). Thus, ordinarily, there was little or no room in the traditional Indian political system for the autocratic freak of monarchical violence and the savage cruelty and tyranny which was so common an occurrence in the history of some nations and which was witnessed in India in its full intensity during the first 6-7 centuries after the coming of the foreign invaders.

It was from its origin in the West that the idea of secularism found its roots in the mentality of educated Indians – Macaulay’s children – enamoured of the Occidental culture and values due to the power of its science and industry which allowed it to exercise sway over their country. The English education tended to further isolate them from their native spiritual culture and its genius. A tendency to blindly accept and copy the Western lifestyle and values developed among the educated and well-to-do classes who in their English education learned much more about the British and their history than about India. Given the bloody history of religious persecution in Britain, the value of secularism as part of a modern state’s polity seemed obvious, especially in a Semitic religious state. The record of our neighbouring Islamic states should leave no room for doubt on this score.

Still – as pointed out earlier – the idea of secularism was not explicitly introduced in the Indian constitution which came into effect on 26-01-1950. Perhaps this was because Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma is entirely different from other religions in this respect and

in its fundamental nature and spirit it is a truly – not a merely mental – secular religion. Its tolerant and all-inclusive spirit is so vast and unbounded that – when free from the element of intolerance – not only all other religions but even agnostics and atheists find room in its simultaneously all-comprehending and all-negating approach to the Absolute Reality untroubled even by the ultimate antinomy of Existence and Non-existence. In this light, the Sanatana Dharma is not at all a religion in the popular narrow sense of religion prevalent in modern societies.

The pursuit of mental ideals by modern societies – not uplifted (broadened and heightened) by the truth of the spirit behind of which it is a partial (mental) expression – tends to be exclusive and full of intolerance and falsehood. The reason is that the pursuit of any mental ideal – as if it was sufficient in itself – tends to refrigerate the deeper spiritual parts (the true springs of Knowledge, Power and Love) of man's being and thus deprives him or at least makes it very difficult for him to remain open to their uplifting influence. This inevitably results in the corruption of the human psyche and an uncontrollable invasion by the lower nature making it increasingly more self-centred and purblind. The result is that such infected individuals and collectivities fall prey to the ever-growing utilitarian spirit which is destructive of all that is good in human life. The record of the past two centuries amply bears this out. Now, we have reached a point in our human journey where the prospect of extinction looms large if the ever-growing, all pervading utilitarian spirit is not brought to a halt. The invasion and progression of the utilitarian spirit in India – assisted by the pursuit of the mental ideals such as Socialism, Secularism, Democracy, Progress, as all sufficient in themselves – has to be perceived as most disastrous given the native spiritual genius of the country where such a thing should have faced the greatest possible resistance. This has to be seen in the light of a proper

perspective provided by the deeper truth of the workings of the spirit in collectivities. One way to see it is that the extremes of a malady must be faced by one who is going to be able to cure it – for he who would save the race must share its pain. India is the one and the only country – given the genius of its spiritual culture founded on Sanatana Dharma – where the utilitarian spirit can be and must be brought to a halt to save humanity from itself.

The pursuit of Sanatana Dharma leads one towards the eternal fountain of Truth, Power, Love and Beauty and any part of the life of an individual or a society which is practically deprived of its uplifting dynamic influence begins to wilt and stink. The popular Semitic religions and secularism are inversely related to each other. In the case of Sanatana Dharma this relation is direct and just the opposite of the normal. The more strictly one adheres to the wholly tolerant – not just tolerant but also loving and catholic – spirit of the Sanatana Dharma, more invincibly secular one tends to become. This native secularism of a true adherent of Sanatana Dharma tends to be invincible in the sense that it will not fall or be uprooted when faced with the first storm of selfishness and desire as the modern secular and materialistic ideals are seen, inevitably, to do and survive only by pandering to the selfishness and the animal appetites of its vocal adherents. This magical power of India's religion and spirituality must have been in the heart and soul of Swami Vivekananda when – as quoted earlier – he warned the Indians that if they gave up their native spirituality and followed after the materialism of the West, in three generations they will be extinct. Something similar was in his mind when he posed the question, 'Shall India Die?' And answered resolutely that such a thing could never come to pass because in the absence of the influence of the Indian spiritual culture, all ideality and sweetness will be extinct in human nature and the duality of Lust and Luxury as the Deities with money for

their priest shall reign in the world.

Now the question that invariably arises is that what is so precious and unique about the spiritual religion and culture of India that enabled it to survive a millennium of violent relentless attacks and subjugation by the barbarian and materialistic hordes from the West. The situation at present is no different, if anything even more difficult – for the invaders now are in a subtle body and therefore invisible and more deadly because more difficult to counter behind the alluring masks of popular materialistic ideals – but the genius of India’s spiritual culture can still be relied upon for its successful emergence out of the present difficulties. To provide a perspective and throw light on all the above questions, we can do nothing better than to quote the following selected inspiring words of Sri Aurobindo “...the principle, the essential intention of Indian culture was extraordinarily high, ambitious and noble, the highest indeed that the human spirit can conceive. For what can be a greater idea of life than that which makes it a development of the spirit in man to its most vast, secret and high possibilities, – a culture that conceives of life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the universal in the individual, of the infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man, or holds that man can become not only conscious of the eternal and the infinite, but live in its power and universalise, spiritualise and divinise himself by self-knowledge? What greater aim can be for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence? And that is the whole sense of the striving of Indian culture.” (CWSA 20: 231)

Because of such high intention and spirit of this culture, Indian religion cannot be described by any of the popular definitions known to the modern materialistic mentality. “In its totality it has

been a free and tolerant synthesis of all spiritual worship and experience. Observing the one Truth from all its many sides, it shut out none. It gave itself no specific name and bound itself by no limiting distinction. Allowing separative designations for its constituting cults and divisions, it remained itself nameless, formless, universal, infinite, like the Brahman of its age long seeking. Although strikingly distinguished from other creeds by its traditional scriptures, cults and symbols, it is not in its essential character a credal religion at all but a vast and many-sided, an always unifying and always progressive and self-enlarging system of spiritual culture.”^[5] (CWSA 20: 193)

“Now just here is the first baffling difficulty over which the European mind stumbles; for it finds itself unable to make out what Hindu religion is. Where, it asks, is its soul? where is its mind and fixed thought? where is the form of its body? How can there be a religion which has no rigid dogmas demanding belief on pain of eternal damnation, no theological postulates, even no fixed theology, no credo distinguishing it from antagonistic or rival religions? How can there be a religion which has no papal head, no governing ecclesiastic body, no church, chapel or congregational system, no binding religious form of any kind obligatory on all its adherents, no one administration and discipline? For the Hindu priests are mere ceremonial officiants without any ecclesiastical authority or disciplinary powers and the Pundits are mere interpreters of the Shastra, not the lawgivers of the religion or its rulers. How again can Hinduism be called a religion when it admits all beliefs, allowing even a kind of high-reaching atheism and agnosticism and permits all possible spiritual experiences, all kinds of religious adventures?” (CWSA 20: 179-80)

“...if we are asked, “But after all what is Hinduism, what does it teach, what does it practise, what are its common factors?” we can answer that Indian religion is founded upon three basic ideas or

rather three fundamentals of a highest and widest spiritual experience. First comes the idea of the One Existence of the Veda to whom sages give different names, the One without a second of the Upanishads who is all that is and beyond all that is, the Permanent of the Buddhists, the Absolute of the Illusionists, the supreme God or Purusha of the Theists who holds in his power the soul and Nature, – in a word the Eternal, the Infinite. This is the first common foundation; but it can be and is expressed in an endless variety of formulas by the human intelligence. To discover and closely approach and enter into whatever kind or degree of unity with this Permanent, this Infinite, this Eternal, is the highest height and last effort of its spiritual experience. That is the first universal credo of the religious mind of India.

Admit in whatever formula this foundation, follow this great spiritual aim by one of the thousand paths recognised in India or even any new path which branches off from them and you are at the core of the religion. For its second basic idea is the manifold way of man's approach to the Eternal and Infinite. The Infinite is full of many infinities and each of these infinities is itself the very Eternal. And here in the limitations of the cosmos God manifests himself and fulfils himself in the world in many ways, but each is the way of the Eternal. For in each finite we can discover and through all things as his forms and symbols we can approach the Infinite; all cosmic powers are manifestations, all forces are forces of the One. The gods behind the workings of Nature are to be seen and adored as powers, names and personalities of the one Godhead. An infinite Conscious-Force, executive Energy, Will or Law, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti or Karma, is behind all happenings, whether to us they seem good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, fortunate or adverse. The Infinite creates and is Brahma; it preserves and is Vishnu; it destroys or takes to itself and is Rudra or Shiva. The supreme Energy beneficent in upholding and protection is or

else formulates itself as the Mother of the worlds, Luxmi or Durga. Or beneficent even in the mask of destruction, it is Chandi or it is Kali, the dark Mother. The One Godhead manifests himself in the form of his qualities in various names and godheads. The God of divine love of the Vaishnava, the God of divine power of the Shakta appear as two different godheads; but in truth they are the one infinite Deity in different figures.^[6] One may approach the Supreme through any of these names and forms, with knowledge or in ignorance; for through them and beyond them we can proceed at last to the supreme experience....

The third idea of strongest consequence at the base of Indian religion is the most dynamic for the inner spiritual life. It is that while the Supreme or the Divine can be approached through a universal consciousness and by piercing through all inner and outer Nature, That or He can be met by each individual soul in itself, in its own spiritual part, because there is something in it that is intimately one or at least intimately related with the one divine Existence. The essence of Indian religion is to aim at so growing and so living that we can grow out of the Ignorance which veils this self-knowledge from our mind and life and become aware of the Divinity within us. These three things put together are the whole of Hindu religion, its essential sense and, if any credo is needed, its credo.” (CWSA 20: 193-95)

“The inner principle of Hinduism, the most tolerant and receptive of religious systems, is not sharply exclusive like the religious spirit of Christianity or Islam; as far as that could be without loss of its own powerful idiosyncrasy and law of being, it has been synthetic, acquisitive, inclusive. Always it has taken in from every side and trusted to the power of assimilation that burns in its spiritual heart and in the white heat of its flaming centre to turn even the most unpromising material into forms for its spirit.” (CWSA 20: 133-34)

“The world moves through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life free from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the One. The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge,— that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul’s uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This *sanatana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world’s Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga.” (CWSA 8: 26)

In a nutshell, the aim of Hindu religion, its essential purpose, has been to link the human to the Divine and in so doing sublimate the human thought and life and flesh – the mind, vital and body – to such an extent that they admit the rule of the soul and spirit and become instrumental in the manifestation of the Divine in the terrestrial nature.

The true character of the ancient Indian polity and statecraft can be best understood when it is looked upon as an attempt to apply the essential intention of Indian spiritual culture to the

outwardly vital life of man, his ordinary political, economic and social being. Indian culture attempted to subject the whole body of this outwardly vital life to the pressure of its sublime ideals and conceptions. “Its method was to build up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economical well-being. These were directed on one side to success, expansion, opulence and the right art and relation of these activities, but on those motives, demanded by the very nature of the vital man and his action, was imposed the law of the Dharma, a stringent social and ethical ideal and rule – thus the whole life of the king as the head of power and responsibility was regulated by it in its every hour and function, – and the constant reminder of religious duty. In latter times a Machiavellian principle of statecraft, that which has been always and is still pursued by governments and diplomats, encroached on this nobler system, but in the best age of Indian thought this depravation was condemned as a temporarily effective, but lesser, ignoble and inferior way of policy. The great rule of the culture was that the higher a man’s position and power, the larger the scope of his function and influence of his acts and example, the greater should be the call on him of the Dharma. The whole law and custom of society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged to live and rule as the guardian and servant of the Dharma with only an executive power over the community which was valid so long as he observed with fidelity the Law. And as this vital aspect of life is the one which most easily draws us outward and away from the inner self and the diviner aim of living, it was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by religious rites,

ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a supraterrrestrial aim of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yugadharma. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to change custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary social web of binding rule and injunction. A rigid observation and discipline of the social law, a larger nobler discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of the religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection.” (CWSA 20: 228-29)

In the light of these enlightening words of Sri Aurobindo it is obvious that an attempt to isolate the individual or collective existence from the uplifting action of the Sanatana Dharma (not inconsistent with the real fundamental spirit of any religion) – as we have been trying progressively to do during the first seven decades of Independence under the shadow of the modern materialistic gospel of progress – is bound to prove suicidal by leading us (as it has been) towards a progressive erosion of national character and real well-being. Historically there is no record of such a moral degradation of individual and national life as we are experiencing now under the all-pervading influences of the utilitarian and selfish spirit of the modern materialistic culture.

Opposed to the present, “The spirit of ancient India was

aristocratic; its thought & life moulded in the cast of a high & proud nobility, an extreme & lofty strenuousness. The very best in thought, the very best in action, the very best in character, the very best in literature & art, the very best in religion and all the world well lost if only this very best might be attained, such was the spirit of ancient India. The Brahmin who devoted himself to poverty & crushed down every desire in the wholehearted pursuit of knowledge & religious self-discipline; the Kshatriya who, hurling his life joyously into the shock of chivalrous battle, held life, wife, children, possessions, ease, happiness as mere dust in the balance compared with honour & the Kshatriya dharma, the preservation of self-respect, the protection of the weak, the noble fulfilment of princely duty; the Vaishya, who toiling all his life to amass riches, poured them out as soon as amassed in self-forgetting philanthropy holding himself the mere steward & not the possessor of his wealth; the Shudra who gave himself up loyally to humble service, faithfully devoting his life to his dharma, however low, in preference to self-advancement & ambition; these were the social ideals of the age.

The imagination of the Indian tended as has been well said to the grand & enormous in thought and morals. The great formative images of legend & literature to the likeness with which his childhood was encouraged to develop & which his manhood most cherished were of an extreme & lofty type. He saw Harischundra give up all that life held precious & dear rather than that his lips should utter a lie or his plighted word be broken. He saw Prahlada buried under mountains, whelmed in the seas, tortured by the poison of a thousand venomous serpents, yet calmly true to his faith. He saw Buddha give up his royal state, wealth, luxury, wife, child & parents so that mankind might be saved. He saw Shivi hew the flesh from his own limbs to save one small dove

from the pursuing falcon; Karna tear his own body with a smile for the joy of making a gift; Duryodhan refuse to yield one inch of earth without noble resistance & warlike struggle. He saw Sita face exile, hardship, privation & danger in the eagerness of wifely love & duty, Savitri rescue by her devotion her husband back from the visible grip of death. These were the classical Indian types. These were the ideals into the mould of which the minds of men & women were trained to grow. The sense-conquering thought of the philosopher, the magnificent achievements of the hero, the stupendous renunciations of the Sannyasin, [the] unbounded liberality of the man of wealth, everything was exaggeration, extreme, filled with an epic inspiration, a world-defying enthusiasm.” (CWSA 07: 1095-97)

Now what was the secret of such a great and high spirit? It lay in the rigorous pursuit of the highest spiritual truth of our nature and soul. Under the web of Sanatana Dharma a deep and universally planted suggestion was that human life was meant to be a journey from the present undivine state of falsehood, darkness, and death to the divine state of Truth, Light and Immortality. This was to be achieved and the journey was to be completed by progressively making the whole life a Yajna (sacrifice). The real sense of Yajna is not correctly rendered by the English word sacrifice – for the word sacrifice has a negative popular connotation in English while Yajna is a very joyous thing – and its popular meaning would be “making sacred”. Yajna involves the offering of oneself to the Divine and whoever or whatever part of a person’s being gets so offered gets uplifted and becomes sacred and a giver of joy. For “...the true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object not self-effacement, but self-fulfilment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life, not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture, but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater

Ananda. There is only one thing painful in the beginning to a raw or turbid part of the surface nature; it is the indispensable discipline demanded, the denial necessary for the merging of the incomplete ego. But for that there can be a speedy and enormous compensation in the discovery of a real greater or ultimate completeness in others, in all things, in the cosmic oneness, in the freedom of the transcendent Self and Spirit, in the rapture of the touch of the Divine. Our sacrifice is not a giving without any return or any fruitful acceptance from the other side; it is an interchange between the embodied soul and conscious Nature in us and the eternal Spirit. For even though no return is demanded, yet there is the knowledge deep within us that a marvellous return is inevitable. The soul knows that it does not give itself to God in vain; claiming nothing, it yet receives the infinite riches of the divine Power and Presence.” (CWSA 23: 109) Under the Web of the Sanatana Dharma a conscious suggestion, that all life must be a Yajna if one was to undertake the real spiritual journey, tended to get planted in an individual by the time he reached a mature psychological state. All actions done in this spirit would naturally reach an excellence not at all attainable under any inferior selfish spirit, for here, all acts, however ordinary or mundane tended to be looked upon as a means of reaching the Divine. It is under such an impulsion that “The ancient Indian culture attached quite as much value to the soundness, growth and strength of the mind, life and body as the old Hellenic or the modern scientific thought, although for a different end and a greater motive. Therefore to everything that serves and belongs to the healthy fullness of these things, it gave free play, to the activity of the reason, to science and philosophy, to the satisfaction of the aesthetic being and to all the many arts great or small, to the health and strength of the body, to the physical and economical well-being, ease, opulence of the race, – there was never a national ideal of poverty in India as some would have us believe, nor was bareness or squalor the essential setting of her

spirituality, – and to its general military, political and social strength and efficiency. Their aim was high, but firm and wide too was the base they sought to establish and great the care bestowed on these first instruments.” (CWSA 20: 34)

Thus one can safely assert that, “...Indian civilisation has been the form and expression of a culture as great as any of the historic civilisations of mankind, great in religion, great in philosophy, great in science, great in thought of many kinds, great in literature, art and poetry, great in the organisation of society and politics, great in craft and trade and commerce. There have been dark spots, positive imperfections, heavy shortcomings; what civilisation has been perfect, which has not had its deep stains and cruel abysses? There have been considerable lacunae, many blind alleys, much uncultured or ill-cultured ground: what civilisation has been without its unfilled parts, its negative aspects? But our ancient civilisation can survive the severest comparisons of either ancient or mediaeval times. More high-reaching, subtle, many-sided, curious and profound than the Greek, more noble and humane than the Roman, more large and spiritual than the old Egyptian, more vast and original than any other Asiatic civilisation, more intellectual than the European prior to the eighteenth century, possessing all that these had and more, it was the most powerful, self possessed, stimulating and wide in influence of all past human cultures.” (CWSA 20: 79)

And where are we today under the thumb of modern utilitarian culture. Everywhere and in all walks of life, education, health, justice, administration, its corrosive effect is visible. As a result, under the labels of “secularism” and “service of the people”, seemingly unsurpassable heights of demagoguery have been reached in the field of politics. Although, politics is a field concerned with the pursuit of Power and Wealth which are the two things with greatest attraction for the human ego and, therefore, most

difficult to be sublimated and pursued in the spirit of Yajna; still, at one time – during the second half of the last century – it was hoped that, with the advent and further progression of the spiritual wave, the future politics will tend to become – at least in the case of some spiritually gifted political leaders – the politics, not of Sewa (service) but of Sadhana. At present, all such hopes seem to be belied in the face of the impervious hold that the Utilitarian Spirit and Science seem to be exercising on modern mentality.

As things are, the selfishness of most of the political leaders, – sinking ever to more and more degrading levels – has become so blatant that practically no one is deceived by their claims of being in politics only to serve the people and the country. No one can truly serve others without recourse to the power of one’s deeper parts that take one towards union with the all-pervading Divine. The web of Sanatana Dharma leads individuals towards a state where they come to entertain a conscious aspiration towards the Divine or at least some kind of Perfection. Deprived of its nourishing and uplifting waters, all things begin to malfunction as is witnessed today. Here, in this context, it is important to quote the following words of the Divine Command that Sri Aurobindo received in the Alipur Jail “Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the rishis, saints and avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatana Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word that it

is for the Sanatana Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the *dharma* and by the *dharma* that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country.” (CWSA 8: 10)

In the face of all the above, the important question that comes up is how can a country with such a rich spiritual heritage as India come to this kind of state where false surface notions of modern materialistic cultures dominate its life and thinking and push it on a suicidal course? How came the superficial modern spirit of secularism to plant itself so much on the Hindu mentality? What are the supporting bases or sources of this kind of mentality? Here we shall discuss this issue in terms of three different (but not mutually exclusive) factors responsible for apparently giving rise to it. One can easily understand why the minorities belonging to Semitic religions would vouch for it – even though for the earnest practitioners of these religions the very idea of secularism must be tantamount to a blasphemy – because they would like to get a preferred treatment and a special status for themselves. But why the Hindus should be so excited about it? Here we discuss the issue in terms of the three different (but overlapping) factors responsible for giving rise to it.

The teaching of a Falsified and Distorted Account of Indian History in Schools, Colleges and Universities

Before Independence, the available popular history of India was one that had been written mostly by foreigners – Muslims

or Christians. After Independence, the secular Congress government got it written by leftist historians, most of whom – having no use for India and its spiritual culture – looked up favourably towards the foreign invaders who came to plunder, destroy and humiliate the native Indians and their religion and culture, rape their women and enslave them and their country. With this kind of motive and mind-set, what got written in the name of objectivity was an entirely biased, perverted and often an outright false account. An attempt was always made to somehow, anyhow, show the invaders in the most favourable light and the native heroes and their heroic resistance in just the opposite. The text books contained – and still largely do – such biased material not only in history but in every subject and they never miss an opportunity to denigrate the Hindus and praise the Muslims. Although all the teaching material is full to the brim of the modern Western materialistic outlook on things and on India's present and past culture, the record of the English rule in India does not receive the kind of favourable treatment accorded to the Muslim rule. This may be, perhaps, because today there is not any significant English vote bank. Still the students are told about the good things that happened and came to India because of the English rule and it is never pointed out that whatever good that so came about was not because of the efforts of the English – who practically never showed any goodwill or understanding of India and its culture – but in spite of them. This kind of anti-national outlook and its presentation in the text books and media has been playing havoc with the tender psychology of Hindu youth – already uprooted from their root culture by the English education system – and has infused in them the mentality of eulogising the foreign rulers and looking up to them and looking down on all that is connected to India and its spiritual culture. All this gets done so subtly that they don't know what they are undergoing. The whole thing happens so

much in a matter-of-fact manner that they certainly have no sense of them being prejudiced against their own culture. In such a scenario, an implicit acceptance and almost a sympathy for some of the foreign invaders and their culture gets cultivated in the mentality of some of these. A large proportion of the secular brigade may belong to this category of people.

The Psychological Factors Behind the Secular Mentality in India

Most among those who like to think of themselves as liberal and take pride in their liberality tend to develop a secular mentality. During the latter half of the twentieth century till the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1990, it was fashionable for such ones to think of themselves as liberal leftists who, on every issue, invariably sided with the Soviet Union and its satellites in the Cold War against the imperial Western powers headed by the US.

At present, an individual's life in India has become so grossly utilitarian and self-centred that it is difficult to reconcile it with any kind of liberal mental ideal. This gives rise to a great need among individuals with an active mentality to somehow justify themselves and their selfish life. Some among such, spontaneously begin – perhaps to make things more palatable psychologically – to look upon themselves as generous, large hearted and open-minded without partiality. They prove this to themselves and others by showing an unusual sympathy for those belonging to a religious minority or to a weaker section of the society. For, it is a spontaneous tendency in human beings to side and sympathise with the underdog in a battle or a contest. Some such spontaneous and unconscious movement may be behind some of the people who vouch for secularism and take pride in their secular credentials. The satisfaction in such cases is mostly psychological and there

may be little or no motive for pecuniary or any other material gain.

Appeasement of Minorities for Political Power and Resultant Personal Gains

Some of the secular people belonging to the first and second category would tend to take up this kind of agenda if they are vitally strong – the wolves among the sheep. Such people, under favourable circumstances, end up setting up a regional political party of their own. Such a party tends to compete with the national parties like the Congress and the Left for the Muslim vote bank. Because the Hindus have remained largely unorganised because of their acute divisions of caste and language, they have been – until the emergence of Sri Narendra Modi – without much political clout. Therefore, it was possible for the regional secular parties to go to absurd lengths to outdo the national secular parties in their appeasement of Muslims without there being any risk of a significant Hindu backlash. The conduct of the SP in UP, the RJD in Bihar and the TMC in Bengal are the glaring examples of this kind of absurdity.

Among this category of seculars, there are some who do not belong to either of the first two categories and purely belong to this category. They have – in spite of their repeated public professions – no real sympathy for the Muslims and their secular agenda is purely for their personal gain. A good chunk of the Hindu leaders of the secular parties may be of this kind. These characters may be looked upon as shining examples of some of the purest flowers of the modern utilitarian Hindu culture. (*The Truth About Modern Polity*, pp. 98-143)

HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

“...this intuition of a greater Power than our apparent selves in the workings of the world is now growing upon the race and the vast sense of an unaccomplished aim in the urge of life is driving it to an unprecedented effort of human thought and energy. In such a moment even the hugest calamities cannot exhaust the life or discourage its impetus, but rather impel it to a new élan of endeavour; for the flames of thought rise higher than the flames of the conflagration that destroys and see in it a meaning and the promise of a new creation. In the destruction that has been effected, in the void that has been left the mind sees only more room for hope to grow and a wide space that the Spirit who builds in Time has cleared for his new structure.”
– Sri Aurobindo (CWSA 25, 1997, p. p. 614).

The above lines by Sri Aurobindo, written in the period between the First and the Second World Wars, are applicable in the present scenario. The situation in the Russia-Ukraine war has reached such a point wherein the inexhaustible hope and spirit of Ukrainians are standing firm against the Russian onslaught motivated by greed, ego and destruction.

Presently, the war is proceeding without any end in sight. The more this war continues, the more it is impacting and changing the world reality, reinforcing with greater certainty the complete abhorrence of the crudity with which this war was instigated. In recent weeks, the course of the war has seen many developments.

First, it has united the western world emotionally and psychologically like never before, to protect the integrity of their culture and values. Such an emotive unification is unprecedented. It has not been witnessed since the end of the Second World War. This is seen not only at the governmental levels, but more so at the level

of the common citizens, who have gone in large numbers to fight the war on Ukraine's side.

One of the most important aspects of this unity is the likely realization that the war has happened at an opportune time in history. It has awakened the western world from its gross materialistic preoccupations which were taking a turn for the worse due to advancements in technology. The fact that the war has struck at this time has made the West realize that they are, at least, well-equipped to defeat Russia. Had it taken place after few more years, it is likely that Russia would have grown far more economically and militarily powerful, and even the world situation would have changed for the worse due to its domination by the sole and exclusive technological-commercial motive. The war has, in unifying the West psychologically, checked its soulless materialistic advance towards its own doom.

Second, leading the unity of the western world, the Ukrainian spirit is at an all-time high, while Russia's morale is extremely low. Even the Ukrainians who had fled their country in the initial stages of Russia's invasion are coming back in large numbers to rebuild their country and contribute to its defence. The visuals of common Ukrainians taking up arms during the daytime and spending the after-hours cleaning up their cities have become very common. All these instances show how their spirit is meticulously conscious in every area of their national interest. For the world, it sets a great example of national self-giving and patriotism.

This Ukrainian spirit stands in stark contrast to the situation in Russia, where an estimated two hundred thousand people or more have left the country due to their opposition to the war (Mirovalev, 2022). While in some areas, people are supporting the war in Russia, in most cases, they are suffering from fear, economic hardship, isolation and losses. Russia's morale is completely down, whereas Ukraine's spirit has remained consistently high, right from the beginning of the war.

Third, there is brewing a tentative opposition to Putin within Russia also – albeit in muted voices due to fear. It is not only the people who are suffering but also, the powerful Russian elite and oligarchs – many of whom had initially supported the war – are now turning against the war, due to the hardship, national humiliation and excesses it is imposing on Russia itself. Such a backlash by the Russian elite is uncommon. These include sanctioned billionaires Mikhail Fridman – the founder of Russia’s largest private bank and one of the country’s richest men – and Oleg Deripaska, and Oleg Tinkov, among others. Three members of the Russian Duma – Vyacheslav Markhaev, Oleg Smolin and Mikhail Matveyev – also spoke out against the war.

Fourth, Russian military losses have been immense in recent weeks. Already, estimates suggest that Russia has lost more than 12 senior-rank Russia Generals, around 25000 troops, 1,110 tanks and 199 aircraft and 1,900 vehicles and fuel tanks. These figures exceed Soviet losses in ten years of fighting in Afghanistan. One of the Russian navy’s biggest losses was the sinking of lava Class cruiser Moskva, which symbolized Russian military power at the peak of its Soviet empire days and provided Russia strategic advantage in the Black Sea.

Fifth, in recent weeks, Europe and US have become even more proactive in providing military aid to Ukraine, including some of the most advanced weapons systems in the world which they had not given before.

At the same time, the war is taking a progressively heavy toll on the Russian economy. Russia has to spend an estimated \$900 million a day to sustain its war effort in Ukraine. Inflation is at a high, as are economic sanctions against Russia, and it is speculated that if this continues, the Russian economy could be set back by at least three decades (Staten, 2022).

Despite official rhetoric by Russia, much of the fighting by

Russian units is done using largely outdated equipment. Moreover, a new round of US sanctions is being levelled against Russian arms producers. The main goal of this package of sanctions will be to disrupt Russian military-industry supply chains, with critical materials, space-related technologies, and electronics to be targeted. Such lack of access to Western components will prevent the production of a wide array of Russian weaponry, thereby hobbling it in the war further.

Thus, in recent weeks, the condition of Russia has, on almost every front, gone from bad to worse, so much so that it has been reduced to engaging in nuclear threat propaganda. There is no immediate resolution of this war in sight, but one thing is for certain – the longer this war continues, the more it will unite the West and the world against the barbarism that Russia currently represents. It has also become an event that is acting as a catalyst for churning out the change in the whole of humanity, awakening its drowning collective conscience.

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA

In recent weeks, India has seen a spate of communal violence incidents across the country, particularly during the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions in the month of April. Incidents of violence were witnessed in the following:

The Khargone city of Madhya Pradesh, where stones were pelted at a Hindu procession during the Ram Navami. Several vehicles and houses were torched during the violence and many, including three police personnel, were injured in the clash. Over 95 people were arrested in connection with the violence, a curfew was also imposed, and 16 houses and 29 shops were razed by the MP government.

Communal violence also took place in West Bengal's Howrah city. The clash erupted after a speech at a Ram Navami rally.

Participants in the rally allege that it was the local Muslims in the area who started pelting stones at them. As expected, the West Bengal police heavily lathi-charged the Ram Navami procession and arrested 17 people.

Another area in Bengal in the Bankura district witnessed communal violence. A Ram Navami procession when stopped by the local police turned violent, as stones were hurled at the cops. This led the authorities to lathi-charging and use tear gas against the participants.

The BJP in Bengal has alleged police complicity in the attack on Hindus during Ram Navami violence in the state.

Gujrat's Khambhat and Himmatnagar cities witnessed Ram Navami violence between Hindus and Muslims. There was a death and many injuries, due to stone-pelting, setting fire to properties etc. Ram Navami procession was attacked by the Muslims.

Clashes were also reported in at least two districts of Jharkhand in the Lohardagga and Bokaro districts. The areas witnessed stone-pelting and arson attacks during Ram Navami processions. Three persons were reported to be critically injured in the clash.

In Delhi, violence took place first in the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University over the issue of meat-eating in the hostel diner during Navaratri. The next round of communal clashes took place in Northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area during Hanuman Jayanti, when Muslims pelted stones at a Hanuman Jayanti procession. Vehicles were also set on fire and police personnel were also attacked. The violence appeared to be pre-planned, as visuals showed that stones had already been stocked up. Around 21 people were arrested, and the Municipal Corporation razed some illegal settlements in the area.

In Karnataka's Hubballi, around the time of Hanuman Jayanti, communal violence took place over a social media post. A Muslim mob pelted stones at a police station, injuring several policemen. 40 people were arrested in this connection.

In Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool, communal violence took place on Hanuman Jayanti when the procession was crossing a mosque. Despite the fact that the procession switched off its loudspeakers near the mosque, some vocal chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' led to Muslims attacking the procession, leading to communal clashes, with around 15 people injured.

In Uttarakhand's Roorkee, the situation turned serious as a Hindu procession was pelted with stones on Hanuman Jayanti, injuring several people. This led to a communal conflagration as people from nearby villages gathered, but the police rapidly brought the situation under control. 9 arrests were made and 13 FIRs were lodged.

In Maharashtra's Amravati, members of Hindu and Muslim communities pelted each other with stones over a small issue. In Mumbai, localized communal clashes occurred during a Hindu 'Kalash Yatra' held near a temple, injuring several people. In both cases, the situation was rapidly brought under control and 25 arrests were made. In Mumbai again, the issue snowballed into a political one as an attempt was made to organize Hanuman Chalisa recitation outside CM Uddhav Thackrey's residence as a sign of protest against Shiv Sena's anti-Hindu attitude.

Rajasthan has witnessed a series of serious communal clashes at different places. Serious clashes took place in Karauli, Alwar and Jodhpur. In Karauli, a Hindu rally, on the event of the Hindu New Year, was attacked with heavy stone-pelting by the Muslim community. The clashes led to arson as shops and vehicles were set ablaze, while over two dozen people sustained injuries. In Alwar, tensions ran high when the administration demolished a 300-year old Shiva temple using bulldozers and removed the idols using cutters. On Eid, communal clashes erupted in Jodhpur between Hindus and Muslims over the hoisting of flags, wherein the Muslim community also clashed with the police when it tried to bring the situation under control.

In all of these incidents of violence, two things stood out:

First, there was a visible mobilization of Hindus against attempts to scuttle their voices. Unlike in the previous years, Hindus have, in recent times, begun to actively fight back, due to the rise of the national spirit.

Second, the violence resulting from the Muslim community has a clear-cut political pattern, with intelligence agencies suspecting the hand of organizations like the Popular Front of India (PFI) behind much of the present and previous anti-national violence. They said the role of the PFI was suspected in protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2018, Delhi riots in 2020, unrest in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh in 2021, the hijab row in Karnataka and Karauli violence in Rajasthan.

PFI has units in over 20 states and has been able to mobilize the Muslim youth quite a bit. Indeed, in Rajasthan and West Bengal, it even held massive rallies a few months back as a show of strength right under the patronage of the respective state governments. Just before the Karauli violence, PFI had even had the gumption to write a warning letter to Rajasthan CM, Mr Gehlot, saying that there might be a law and order problem in response to Hindu processions. Despite this, Mr Gehlot played politics over the issue and completely ignored the obvious role of radical Muslim organizations like PFI in instigating communalism.

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If human beings are ever going to truly come out of the repeated rounds of wasted efforts, emotions, untold suffering and useless strivings, they must first realize that the working of things in this universe is such that all works from within without and that nothing can really manifest unless it is already within. Therefore, what they (human beings) are within that alone they shall enjoy outside. It can never be otherwise. Essentially, there are hardly any world problems that cannot be traced to human agency and which could not be overcome, to a great extent, by appropriate changes in human behaviour brought about from within. The root cause of all our problems – even of the most external – is the severe inner constraints on our vision and values which are, to a great extent, the byproducts of our acute selfish concentration on our surface selves. As things stand at present, we contemplate changing almost everything on this earth – the whole media is full of the deafening noise of intellectuals and political and social leaders about such changes – but ourselves wherein lies the only key to the solution of all our problems.

– *The Truth about Modern Polity*, pp. 45-46