

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

September 2019



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

- The Mother

Year 10

Issue 6

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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 10

Issue 6

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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 HOUSTON RALLY: CONSOLIDATING INDIAN UNITY BEYOND BORDERS

India is rapidly ascending the staircase of global recognition and assertion that was due her position as one of the world's oldest civilizations, one among the most diverse, religious and free societies, and, as a fount of the creative energy of the times. The recent address by PM Modi in Houston has added to this global recognition, which is important if India is to stand high as a source of inspiration for the rest of the world.

The Houston event was all about the expression of Indian nationalism on foreign soil amidst the Indian community living abroad. It consolidated not only the Indian-American community in a major way, but also opened up a new avenue for Indians living in India, as they saw first-hand the power of a consolidated Indian national identity.

There is little doubt that Indian diaspora in developed countries, like UK and USA, is amongst the most cultured, entrepreneurial and provides solid contributions to these countries. In general, the Indian diaspora is also more nationalistic than Indians brought up on the socialistic, secularist and self-deprecating education system within India. Indeed, it is surprising that non-BJP governments have not attempted to reach out to, and consolidate, this diaspora through nationalism.

When a 50,000-strong crowd of this powerful diaspora gathered together in one voice at the NRG stadium in Houston, Texas, it was a break from the past and a positive foundation for the future. ***The gathering was the largest ever gathering for a foreign leader on US soil.*** The gathering was impressive to the US politicians as well, massive by their standards also, as some of the Senators on the stage could be seen clicking photos of

the sea of people in the stadium, and after the event, many of the Senators with families, separately clicked pictures with Modi and posted them online with warm messages.

It was also a first that a sitting US President had joined – along with American Senators – such a community gathering, to address a joint rally with a foreign leader. For PM Modi and Indians, the experience was more emphatic and powerful. Although in 2015, he had been joined by UK Prime Minister David Cameron at the Wembley Stadium, while addressing a crowd of 60,000 British Indians, this time the intensity was stronger as was the fact that Trump jointly addressed the rally with Modi. ***This event was also highly political and nationalistic, instead of being merely a rousing community reception, accorded to a foreign leader.***

In recent times, much like the powerful Jewish lobby in US, which has immensely benefitted US-Israel relationship, the Indian American lobby too is becoming powerful, due to its success in the American system. Currently, there are 4.6 million Indian origin people in US, with 2.6 million born in India. Indian-born people are the second largest immigrant group in the US, with many Indian Americans coming from South India (Kapur, 2019).

Despite the fact that they form less than 1% of the vote-share, their command over income and socio-economic resources is formidable, with nearly double the median household income compared to native-born and overall immigrant households, and constituting the richest and most successful ethnic group in the US. The fact that ‘The Texas India Forum’ was quickly able to mobilize \$2.5 million for the event logistics, sent yet another signal about the political and economic heft of the community.

Politically, Indian origin people have had various appointments within the US government as well as Congress. Indeed, when in 1998, the Clinton administration was about to impose severe sanctions on India for conducting nuclear tests, the lobbying by this community helped to prevent the escalation of negativities between India and the US.

Till now, this powerful community has been heavily inclined to vote for the Democrats in US election, with roughly about 80% Indian Americans voting for Hillary Clinton in 2016 Presidential elections. It is clear that given their flourishing status, and, their representation in the US Congress, why Trump and Republicans would like to endear themselves to this community. They would also broaden Trump's core white voter base.

The Indian American community, in turn, may no longer be that averse to supporting Trump, since there is a rising polarization in US politics. Despite the fact that they may bear economic costs due to Trump's visa policy, many members of the community are tilting towards Republicans due to the Leftist and – in the garb of multiculturalism – an increasingly Islamist shift within the Democrats.

The fact that Democrats have also taken anti-India positions on a number of issues have not made them endearing, since Modi – more than the BJP also – is a favourite within this community. The nationalism within this community has also been higher. Since 2014, this has been meticulously taken to new heights by Modi.

PEOPLE'S NATIONALISTIC CONSOLIDATION AND WIDER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Unlike the previous massive foreign addresses by PM Modi,

what stood out about the Houston rally was the message of nationalism. Trump joining Modi to give his speech, not only showed a ringing endorsement of the approach of the Indian government by the US, but also indicated that US government is very much on the same page with regard to security issues.

Indeed, ***one of the most momentous instances came when Trump declared that India and US are committed to protecting innocent civilians from the threat of “radical Islamic terrorism.” This was met with a standing ovation from nearly the entire stadium as people took to their feet, cheering, with even the Indian delegation, led by Modi and Jaishankar, standing up and clapping.***

Yet, another charged moment in the stadium came when Modi began to explain the abrogation of Article 370 and India’s fight against terrorists and separatists. Then with Trump sitting in the audience and listening, Modi took a swipe at Pakistan declaring that attackers of both 9/11 and 26/11 came from the same country, and that Pakistan alone had a problem with the abrogation of Article 370. This was met with even greater rousing cheers by the audience.

While the rest of the speeches of, both, Modi and Trump were usual, these two statements by the both the premiers animated the audience like no other. ***The overall tenor of the rally made it clear that it was a purely political exercise. Trump had different objectives in mind from it – particularly enhancing his own national appeal before the 2020 elections.***

Modi had different objectives – to connect to and rally his core domestic and international Indian audience and to deliver a clear and sharp message about India’s role as an assertive power. Indeed, when Modi took the stage for the second time after Trump, he delivered his speech in Hindi.

The rally was also relevant politically as it put India firmly in the US's corner. The first-ever spectacle of Modi and Trump together at Houston, including the obvious bonhomie between the leaders and diplomats of both the countries, sent out one message to the rest of the world viz. India will not turn against the US.

Modi's endorsement of Trump was also quite open. His reference to 'Ab ki Bar Trump Sarker' was obviously misconstrued by the media, since he was referring to Trump's 2016 election bid and how the slogan was raised then. But it clearly sounded like an endorsement, nonetheless. And regardless of whether it referred to 2016 elections, Modi mentioning the statement prior to the 2020 US elections seemed to declare that Modi is endorsing Trump – something that was completely wrong and could have been avoided.

Other than this, Modi did not leave any stone unturned to woo Trump. Multiple times, Modi asked the cheering crowd to give a standing ovation to Trump and he himself heaped praises on Trump. What could be the reason?

This may be because of Trump's truly American utilitarianism and desire for bare talk and results instead of diplomacy. Going by the Trump playbook and striking a personal chord goes a long way in at least creating a congenial atmosphere, even if nothing gets achieved on the policy front. Foreign policy is highly personalized under Trump. Examples abound in the form of Trump's to-and-fro on China trade issues, the unexpected personal rapprochement with North Korea, and, the soft corner for Putin despite being at odds with US establishment. He was willing to reconcile with Iran also if he had got his nuclear 'deal'.

India has not been able to offer Trump multi-billion dollar defence deals, like Saudi Arabia. Trump is the only US President to not have visited India during his Presidency, including cunningly turning down the Republic Day invite. He comes across as calculative, utilitarian and transactional. India realized this half-way through his Presidency. Therefore, the Indian approach to US, under Trump, has to be as unique as Trump himself.

India has to not only manage a difficult US administration that is hell-bent on destroying India's trade interests and hell-bent on making Indian working professionals suffer due to its approach towards visa, but has to manage these things by constantly pampering Trump's ego, which many of the world leaders have started doing, to some extent. Those who did not do it found themselves humiliated unnecessarily, like Germany and France and Japan, even if they were allies.

Since Trump is so utilitarian, the prospect of getting the backing of the wealthy Indian Americans – who have been Democrat voters traditionally – for 2020 elections is something that he sees as useful. India made sure – through the Houston event – that Modi was seen as endearing Trump to this community.

These considerations as well as the overall spectacular optics and success of the Houston event have contributed a warmth and positivity to India-US relations which cannot be filled up simply through transactional deals. Especially since there is very little on which we agree with the US – trade, human rights areas, and, ties with other nations. There needs to be a deeper connection, especially at the level of a people who hold such immense sway in the US system, to take ties beyond mere calculations.

Especially, in the coming years, with demographic changes, as the white population will get overtaken by non-whites, it is bound to affect existing political lobbies. Through these changes, Indians based in US will play an important role. It will never do for India to remain cut-off from this budding community, as the non-BJP governments have done. Indeed, it was only after 1999, with BJP in power, that Indian diaspora began to be given policy attention in India. Otherwise, the socialist and secularist coalitions of the past have been narrow-minded and mechanical about such soft power aspects of foreign policy.

The self-deprecation, needless guilt and need for constant justification of our actions has always characterized our foreign policy. Modi has put a halt to this guilt syndrome and provided a vision for a confident and resurgent India, rather than a self-deprecating one, pandering to the recriminations and lectures of intellectuals and human rights brigade.

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THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (36)

6. INDIAN POLITY

V. The True Nature of the Indian Polity and the Basic Points of Difference Between the Ancient Indian and the European Polity

D. The Rule of the Dharma and the Progression of the Four Traditional Ages (Yugas) of Indian Society

“The right order of human life as of the universe is preserved according to the ancient Indian idea by each individual being following faithfully his swadharma, the true law and norm of his nature and the nature of his kind and by the group being, the organic collective life, doing likewise. The family, clan, caste, class, social, religious, industrial or other community, nation, people are all organic group beings that evolve their own dharma and to follow it is the condition of their preservation, healthy continuity, sound action. There is also the dharma of the position, the function, the particular relation with others, as there is too the dharma imposed by the condition, environment, age, *yugadharma*, the universal religious or ethical dharma, and all these acting on the natural dharma, the action according to the Swabhava, create the body of the Law. The ancient theory supposed that in an entirely right and sound condition of man, individual and collective, – a condition typified by the legendary Golden Age, Satya Yuga, Age of Truth, – there is no need of any political government or State or artificial construction of society, because all then live freely according to the truth of their enlightened self and God-inhabited being and therefore spontaneously according to the inner divine Dharma. The self-

determining individual and self-determining community living according to the right and free law of his and its being is therefore the ideal. But in the actual condition of humanity, its ignorant and devious nature subject to perversions and violations of the true individual and the true social dharma, there has to be superimposed on the natural life of society a State, a sovereign power, a king or governing body, whose business is not to interfere unduly with the life of the society, which must be allowed to function for the most part according to its natural law and custom and spontaneous development, but to superintend and assist its right process and see that the Dharma is observed and in vigour and, negatively, to punish and repress and, as far as may be, prevent offences against the Dharma. A more advanced stage of corruption of the Dharma is marked by the necessity of the appearance of the legislator and the formal government of the whole of life by external or written law and code and rule; but to determine it – apart from external administrative detail – was not the function of the political sovereign, who was only its administrator, but of the socio-religious creator, the Rishi, or the Brahminic recorder and interpreter. And the Law itself written or unwritten was always not a thing to be new created or fabricated by a political and legislative authority, but a thing already existent and only to be interpreted and stated as it was or as it grew naturally out of pre-existing law and principle in the communal life and consciousness. The last and worst state of the society growing out of this increasing artificiality and convention must be a period of anarchy and conflict and dissolution of the dharma, – Kali Yuga, – which must precede through a red-grey evening of cataclysm and struggle a recovery and a new self-expression of the spirit in the human being.”¹

E. The Function of the Political Sovereign and the System of a Complex Communal Freedom and Self-determination

“The main function of the political sovereign, the king and council and the other ruling members of the body politic, was therefore to serve and assist the maintenance of the sound law of life of the society: the sovereign was the guardian and administrator of the Dharma. The function of society itself included the right satisfaction of the vital, economic and other needs of the human being and of his hedonistic claim to pleasure and enjoyment, but according to their right law and measure of satisfaction and subject and subordinated to the ethical and social and religious dharma. All the members and groups of the socio-political body had their Dharma determined for them by their nature, their position, their relation to the whole body and must be assured and maintained in the free and right exercise of it, must be left to their own natural and self-determined functioning within their own bounds, but at the same time restrained from any transgression, encroachment or deviation from their right working and true limits. That was the office of the supreme political authority, the sovereign in his Council aided by the public assemblies. It was not the business of the state authority to interfere with or encroach upon the free functioning of the caste, religious community, guild, village, township or the organic custom of the region or province or to abrogate their rights, for these were inherent because necessary to the sound exercise of the social Dharma. All that it was called upon to do was to coordinate, to exercise a general and supreme control, to defend the life of the community against external attack or internal disruption, to repress crime and disorder, to assist, promote and regulate in its larger lines the economic and industrial welfare, to see to the provision of facilities, and to use for these purposes the powers that passed beyond the scope of the others.

Thus in effect the Indian polity was the system of a very complex communal freedom and self-determination, each group unit of the community having its own natural existence and administering its own proper life and business, set off from the rest by a natural demarcation of its field and limits, but connected with the whole by well-understood relations, each a co-partner with the others in the powers and duties of the communal existence, executing its own laws and rules, administering within its own proper limits, joining with the others in the discussion and the regulation of matters of a mutual or common interest and represented in some way and to the degree of its importance in the general assemblies of the kingdom or empire. The State, sovereign or supreme political authority was an instrument of coordination and of a general control and efficiency and exercised a supreme but not an absolute authority; for in all its rights and powers it was limited by the Law and by the will of the people and in all its internal functions only a co-partner with the other members of the socio-political body.

This was the theory and principle and the actual constitution of the Indian polity, a complex of communal freedom and self-determination with a supreme coordinating authority, a sovereign person and body, armed with efficient powers, position and prestige, but limited to its proper rights and functions, at once controlling and controlled by the rest, admitting them as its active co-partners in all branches, sharing the regulation and administration of the communal existence, and all alike, the sovereign, the people and all its constituent communities, bound to the maintenance and restrained by the yoke of the Dharma. Moreover the economic and political aspects of the communal life were only a part of the Dharma and a part not at all separate but inextricably united with all the rest, the religious, the ethical, the higher cultural aim of the social

existence. The ethical law coloured the political and economic and was imposed on every action of the king and his ministers, the council and assemblies, the individual, the constituent groups of the society; ethical and cultural considerations counted in the use of the vote and the qualifications for minister, official and councillor; a high character and training was expected from all who held authority in the affairs of the Aryan people. The religious spirit and the reminders of religion were the head and the background of the whole life of king and people. The life of the society was regarded not so much as an aim in itself in spite of the necessary specialisation of parts of its system, but in all its parts and the whole as a great framework and training ground for the education of the human mind and soul and its development through the natural to the spiritual existence.”²

“THE SOCIO-POLITICAL evolution of Indian civilisation, as far as one can judge from the available records, passed through **four historical stages, first the simple Aryan community, then a long period of transition in which the national life was proceeding through a considerable variety of experimental formations in political structure and synthesis, thirdly, the definite formation of the monarchical state coordinating all the complex elements of the communal life of the people into regional and imperial unities, and last the era of decline in which there was an internal arrest and stagnation and an imposition of new cultures and systems from western Asia and Europe.** The distinguishing character of the first three periods is a remarkable solidity and stability in all the formations and a sound and vital and powerful evolution of the life of the people rendered slow and leisurely by this fundamental conservative stability of the system but all the more sure in its building and living and complete in its structure. And **even in the decline this solidity opposes a strong resistance to the process of demolition. The structure breaks up at the top under foreign**

pressure, but preserves for a long time its basis, keeps, wherever it can maintain itself against invasion, much of its characteristic system and is even towards the end capable of attempts at revival of its form and its spirit. And now too though the whole political system has disappeared and its last surviving elements have been ground out of existence, the peculiar social mind and temperament which created it remains even in the present social stagnation, weakness, perversion and disintegration and may yet in spite of immediate tendencies and appearances, once it is free to work again at its own will and after its own manner, proceed not along the Western line of evolution, but to a new creation out of its own spirit which may perhaps lead at the call of the demand now vaguely beginning to appear in the advanced thought of the race towards the inception of the third stage of communal living and a spiritual basis of human society. In any case **the long stability of its constructions and the greatness of the life they sheltered is certainly no sign of incapacity, but rather of a remarkable political instinct and capacity in the cultural mind of India.**

The one principle permanent at the base of construction throughout all the building and extension and rebuilding of the Indian polity was the principle of an organically self-determining communal life, – self-determining not only in the mass and by means of the machinery of the vote and a representative body erected on the surface, representative only of the political mind of a part of the nation, which is all that the modern system has been able to manage, but in every pulse of its life and in each separate member of its existence. A free synthetic communal order was its character, and the condition of liberty it aimed at was not so much an individual as a communal freedom. In the beginning the problem was simple enough as only two kinds of communal unit had to be considered, the village and the clan, tribe or small regional people. The free organic life of the first was founded on the system of the self-governing village

community and it was done with such sufficiency and solidity that it lasted down almost to our own days resisting all the wear and tear of time and the inroad of other systems and was only recently steam-rolled out of existence by the ruthless and lifeless machinery of the British bureaucratic system. The whole people living in its villages mostly on agriculture formed in the total a single religious, social, military and political body governing itself in its assembly, *samiti*, under the leadership of the king, as yet without any clear separation of functions or class division of labour.

It was the inadequacy of this system for all but the simplest form of agricultural and pastoral life and all but the small people living within a very limited area that compelled the problem of the evolution of a more complex communal system and a modified and more intricate application of the fundamental Indian principle. The agricultural and pastoral life common at first to all the members of the Aryan community, *kṛṣṇāyāṅ*, remained always the large basis, but it developed an increasingly rich superstructure of commerce and industry and numerous arts and crafts and a smaller superstructure of specialised military and political and religious and learned occupations and functions. The village community remained throughout the stable unit, the firm grain or indestructible atom of the social body, but there grew up a group life of tens and hundreds of villages, each under its head and needing its administrative organisation, and these, as the clan grew into a large people by conquest or coalition with others, became constituents of a kingdom or a confederated republican nation, and these again the circles, *maḥāla*, of larger kingdoms and finally of one or more great empires. The test of the Indian genius for socio-political construction lay in the successful application of its principle of a communal self-determined freedom and order to suit this growing development and new order of circumstances.”³

“At the height of its evolution and in the great days of Indian civilisation we find an admirable political system efficient in the highest degree and very perfectly combining communal self-government with stability and order. The State carried on its work administrative, judicial, financial and protective without destroying or encroaching on the rights and free activities of the people and its constituent bodies in the same departments. The royal courts in capital and country were the supreme judicial authority coordinating the administration of justice throughout the kingdom, but they did not unduly interfere with the judicial powers entrusted to their own courts by the village and urban communes and, even, the regal system associated with itself the guild, caste and family courts, working as an ample means of arbitration and only insisted on its own exclusive control of the more serious criminal offences. A similar respect was shown to the administrative and financial powers of the village and urban communes. The king’s governors and officials in town and country existed side by side with the civic governors and officials and the communal heads and officers appointed by the people and its assemblies. The State did not interfere with the religious liberty or the established economic and social life of the nation; it confined itself to the maintenance of social order and the provision of a needed supervision, support, coordination and facilities for the rich and powerful functioning of all the national activities. It understood too always and magnificently fulfilled its opportunities as a source of splendid and munificent stimulation to the architecture, art, culture, scholarship, literature already created by the communal mind of India. In the person of the monarch it was the dignified and powerful head and in the system of his administration the supreme instrument – neither an arbitrary autocracy or bureaucracy, nor a machine oppressing or replacing life – of a great and stable civilisation and a free and living people.”⁴

VI. The Secret of the Difficulty in the Political Unification in Ancient India

A. The Charge of Incapacity for Political Unifications Against the Indian People

“...Indian civilisation evolved an admirable political system, built solidly and with an enduring soundness, combined with a remarkable skill the monarchical, democratic and other principles and tendencies to which the mind of man has leaned in its efforts of civic construction and escaped at the same time the excess of the mechanising turn which is the defect of the modern European State. I shall consider afterwards the objections that can be made to it from the evolutionary standpoint of the West and its idea of progress.

But there is another side of politics on which it may be said that the Indian political mind has registered nothing but failure. The organisation it developed may have been admirable for stability and effective administration and the securing of communal order and liberties and the well-being of the people under ancient conditions, but even if its many peoples were each of them separately self-governed, well governed and prosperous and the country at large assured in the steady functioning of a highly developed civilisation and culture, yet that organisation failed to serve for the national and political unification of India and failed in the end to secure it against foreign invasion, the disruption of its institutions and an age-long servitude. The political system of a society has to be judged, no doubt first and foremost by the stability, prosperity, internal freedom and order it ensures to the people, but also it must be judged by the security it erects against other States, its unity and power of defence and aggression against external rivals and enemies. It is not perhaps altogether to the credit of humanity that it should

be so and a nation or people that is inferior in this kind of political strength, as were the ancient Greeks and mediaeval Italians, may be spiritually and culturally far superior to its conquerors and may well have contributed more to a true human progress than successful military States, aggressive communities, predatory empires. But the life of man is still predominatingly vital and moved therefore by the tendencies of expansion, possession, aggression, mutual struggle for absorption and dominant survival which are the first law of life, and a collective mind and consciousness that gives a constant proof of incapacity for aggression and defence and does not organise the centralised and efficient unity necessary to its own safety, is clearly one that in the political field falls far short of the first order. India has never been nationally and politically one. India was for close on a thousand years swept by barbaric invasions and for almost another thousand years in servitude to successive foreign masters. It is clear therefore that judgment of political incapacity must be passed against the Indian people.”⁵

“Here again the first necessity is to get rid of exaggerations, to form a clear idea of the actual facts and their significance and understand the tendencies and principles involved in the problem that admittedly throughout the long history of India escaped a right solution. And first if the greatness of a people and a civilisation is to be reckoned by its military aggressiveness, its scale of foreign conquest, its success in warfare against other nations and the triumph of its organised acquisitive and predatory instincts, its irresistible push towards annexation and exploitation, it must be confessed that India ranks perhaps the lowest in the list of the world’s great peoples. At no time does India seem to have been moved towards an aggressive military and political expansion beyond her own borders; no epic of world dominion, no great tale of far-borne invasion or expanding

colonial empire has ever been written in the tale of Indian achievement. The sole great endeavour of expansion, of conquest, of invasion she attempted was the expansion of her culture, the invasion and conquest of the Eastern world by the Buddhistic idea and the penetration of her spirituality, art and thought-forces. And this was an invasion of peace and not of war, for to spread a spiritual civilisation by force and physical conquest, the vaunt or the excuse of modern imperialism, would have been uncongenial to the ancient cast of her mind and temperament and the idea underlying her Dharma. A series of colonising expeditions carried indeed Indian blood and Indian culture to the islands of the archipelago, but the ships that set out from both the eastern and western coast were not fleets of invaders missioned to annex those outlying countries to an Indian empire but of exiles or adventurers carrying with them to yet uncultured peoples Indian religion, architecture, art, poetry, thought, life, manners. The idea of empire and even of world-empire was not absent from the Indian mind, but its world was the Indian world and the object the founding of the imperial unity of its peoples.”⁶

“This idea, the sense of this necessity, a constant urge towards its realisation is evident throughout the whole course of Indian history from earlier Vedic times through the heroic period represented by the traditions of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and the effort of the imperial Mauryas and Guptas up to the Mogul unification and the last ambition of the Peshwas, until there came the final failure and the levelling of all the conflicting forces under a foreign yoke, a uniform subjection in place of the free unity of a free people. The question then is whether the tardiness, the difficulty, the fluctuating movements of the process and the collapse of the long effort were due to a fundamental incapacity in the civilisation or in

the political consciousness and ability of the people or to other forces. **A great deal has been said and written about the inability of Indians to unite, the want of a common patriotism – now only being created, it is said, by the influence of Western culture – and the divisions imposed by religion and caste. 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.”**⁷

B. The Logic of the Indian Mind in Its First Seeking Spiritual and Cultural Oneness Before Seeking Political Unity

“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. 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.**”⁸

“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?**"⁹

C. The Sense in Which the Earlier Mind of India Understood the Problem of Unification

"..spiritual unity is a large and flexible thing and does not insist like the political and external on centralisation and uniformity; rather it lives diffused in the system and permits readily a great diversity and freedom of life. **Here we touch on the secret of the difficulty in the problem of unifying ancient India. It could not be done by the ordinary means of a centralised uniform imperial State crushing out all that made for free divergence, local autonomies, established communal liberties, and each time that an attempt was made in this direction, it has failed after however long a term of apparent success, and we might even say that the guardians of India's destiny wisely compelled it to fail that her inner spirit might not perish and her soul barter for an engine of temporary security the deep sources of its life.** The ancient mind of India had the intuition of its need; its idea of empire was a uniting rule that respected every existing regional and communal liberty, that unnecessarily crushed out no living autonomy, that effected a synthesis of her life and not a mechanical oneness. Afterwards

the conditions under which such a solution might securely have evolved and found its true means and form and basis, disappeared and there was instead an attempt to establish a single administrative empire. That endeavour, dictated by the pressure of an immediate and external necessity, failed to achieve a complete success in spite of its greatness and splendour. It could not do so because it followed a trend that was not eventually compatible with the true turn of the Indian spirit. It has been seen that the underlying principle of the Indian politico-social system was a synthesis of communal autonomies, the autonomy of the village, of the town and capital city, of the caste, guild, family, *kula*, religious community, regional unit. The state or kingdom or confederated republic was a means of holding together and synthesising in a free and living organic system these autonomies. The imperial problem was to synthesise again these states, peoples, nations, effecting their unity but respecting their autonomy, into a larger free and living organism. **A system had to be found that would maintain peace and oneness among its members, secure safety against external attack and totalise the free play and evolution, in its unity and diversity..**"¹⁰

"This was the sense in which the earlier mind of India understood the problem. The administrative empire of later times accepted it only partially, but its trend was, very slowly and almost subconsciously, what the centralising tendency must always be, if not actively to destroy, still to wear down and weaken the vigour of the subordinated autonomies. The consequence was that whenever the central authority was weak, the persistent principle of regional autonomy essential to the life of India reasserted itself to the detriment of the artificial unity established..."¹¹

D. The Ancient Rishis' Perception of the Solution of the Problem: the Ideal of the Chakravarti

“The failure to achieve Indian unity of which the invasions and the final subjection to the foreigner were the consequence, arose therefore at once from the magnitude and from the peculiarity of the task, because the easy method of a centralised empire could not truly succeed in India, while yet it seemed the only device possible and was attempted again and again with a partial success that seemed for the time and a long time to justify it, but always with an eventual failure. I have suggested that the early mind of India better understood the essential character of the problem. The Vedic Rishis and their successors made it their chief work to found a spiritual basis of Indian life and to effect the spiritual and cultural unity of the many races and peoples of the peninsula. But **they were not blind to the necessity of a political unification.** Observing the constant tendency of the clan life of the Aryan peoples to consolidate under confederacies and hegemonies of varying proportions, *vairājya*, *sāmrajya*, they saw that to follow this line to its full conclusion was the right way **and evolved therefore the ideal of the Chakravarti, a uniting imperial rule, uniting without destroying the autonomy of India’s many kingdoms and peoples, from sea to sea.** This ideal they supported, like everything else in Indian life, with a spiritual and religious sanction, set up as its outward symbol the Aswamedha and Rajasuya sacrifices, and made it the dharma of a powerful King, his royal and religious duty, to attempt the fulfilment of the ideal. He was not allowed by the Dharma to destroy the liberties of the peoples who came under his sway nor to dethrone or annihilate their royal houses or replace their archons by his officials and governors. His function was to establish a suzerain power possessed of sufficient military strength to preserve

internal peace and to combine at need the full forces of the country. And to this elementary function came to be added the ideal of the fulfilment and maintenance under a strong uniting hand of the Indian dharma, the right functioning of the spiritual, religious, ethical and social culture of India.

The full flowering of the ideal is seen in the great epics. The Mahabharata is the record of a legendary or, it may be, a historic attempt to establish such an empire, a *dharmarajya* or kingdom of the Dharma. There the ideal is pictured as so imperative and widely acknowledged that even the turbulent Shishupala is represented as motivating his submission and attendance at the Rajasuya sacrifice on the ground that Yudhisthira was carrying out an action demanded by the Dharma. And in the Ramayana we have an idealised picture of such a Dharmarajya, a settled universal empire. Here too it is not an autocratic despotism but a universal monarchy supported by a free assembly of the city and provinces and of all the classes that is held up as the ideal, an enlargement of the monarchical state synthetising the communal autonomies of the Indian system and maintaining the law and constitution of the Dharma. The ideal of conquest held up is not a destructive and predatory invasion annihilating the organic freedom and the political and social institutions and exploiting the economic resources of the conquered peoples, but a sacrificial progression bringing with it a trial of military strength of which the result was easily accepted because defeat entailed neither humiliation nor servitude and suffering but merely a strengthening adhesion to a suzerain power concerned only with establishing the visible unity of the nation and the Dharma. The ideal of the ancient Rishis is clear and their purpose: it is evident that they saw the military and political utility and necessity of a unification of the divided and warring peoples of the land, but they saw also that it ought not to be secured at

the expense of the free life of the regional peoples or of the communal liberties and not therefore by a centralised monarchy or a rigidly unitarian imperial State.”¹²

“There is no historical evidence that this ideal was ever successfully carried into execution, although the epic tradition speaks of several such empires preceding the Dharmarajya of Yudhisthira. At the time of Buddha and later when Chandragupta and Chanakya were building the first historic Indian empire, the country was still covered with free kingdoms and republics and there was no united empire to meet the great raid of Alexander. It is evident that if any hegemony had previously existed, it had failed to discover a means or system of enduring permanence. This might however have evolved if time had been given, but a serious change had meanwhile taken place which made it urgently necessary to find an immediate solution. The historic weakness of the Indian peninsula has always been until modern times its vulnerability through the north-western passes. This weakness did not exist so long as ancient India extended northward far beyond the Indus and the powerful kingdoms of Gandhara and Vahlka presented a firm bulwark against foreign invasion. But they had now gone down before the organised Persian empire and from this time forward the trans-Indus countries, ceasing to be part of India, ceased also to be its protection and became instead the secure base for every successive invader. The inroad of Alexander brought home the magnitude of the danger to the political mind of India and from this time we see poets, writers, political thinkers constantly upholding the imperial ideal or thinking out the means of its realisation. The immediate practical result was the rise of the empire founded with remarkable swiftness by the statesmanship of Chanakya and constantly maintained or restored through eight or nine centuries, in spite of periods of weakness and

incipient disintegration, successively by the Maurya, Sunga, Kanwa, Andhra and Gupta dynasties. The history of this empire, its remarkable organisation, administration, public works, opulence, magnificent culture and the vigour, the brilliance, the splendid fruitfulness of the life of the peninsula under its shelter emerges only from scattered insufficient records, but even so it ranks among the greatest constructed and maintained by the genius of the earth's great peoples. **India has no reason, from this point of view, to be anything but proud of her ancient achievement in empire-building or to submit to the hasty verdict that denies to her antique civilisation a strong practical genius or high political virtue.**"¹³

E. The Muslim Conquest and Its Aftermath

"This conquest took place at a time when the vitality of ancient Indian life and culture after two thousand years of activity and creation was already exhausted for a time or very near exhaustion and needed a breathing space to rejuvenate itself by transference from the Sanskrit to the popular tongues and the newly forming regional peoples. The conquest was effected rapidly enough in the north, although not entirely complete there for several centuries, but the south long preserved its freedom as of old against the earlier indigenous empire and there was not so long a distance of time between the extinction of the kingdom of Vijayanagara and the rise of the Mahrattas. The Rajputs maintained their independence until the time of Akbar and his successors and it was in the end partly with the aid of Rajput princes acting as their generals and ministers that the Moguls completed their sway over the east and the south. And this was again possible because – a fact too often forgotten – the Mussulman domination ceased very rapidly to be a foreign rule. The vast mass of the Mussulmans in the country were and are Indians by race, only a very small admixture of Pathan, Turkish and Mogul blood took place, and

even the foreign kings and nobles became almost immediately wholly Indian in mind, life and interest. If the race had really like certain European countries remained for many centuries passive, acquiescent and impotent under an alien sway, that would indeed have been a proof of a great inherent weakness; but the British is the first really continuous foreign rule that has dominated India. The ancient civilisation underwent indeed an eclipse and decline under the weight of a Central Asiatic religion and culture with which it failed to coalesce, but it survived its pressure, put its impact on it in many directions and remained to our own day alive even in decadence and capable of recovery, thus giving a proof of strength and soundness rare in the history of human cultures. And in the political field it never ceased to throw up great rulers, statesmen, soldiers, administrators. Its political genius was not in the decadence sufficient, not coherent enough or swift in vision and action, to withstand the Pathan, Mogul and European, but it was strong to survive and await every opportunity of revival, made a bid for empire under Rana Sanga, created the great kingdom of Vijayanagara, held its own for centuries against Islam in the hills of Rajputana, and in its worst days still built and maintained against the whole power of the ablest of the Moguls the kingdom of Shivaji, formed the Mahratta confederacy and the Sikh Khalsa, undermined the great Mogul structure and again made a last attempt at empire. On the brink of the final and almost fatal collapse in the midst of unspeakable darkness, disunion and confusion it could still produce Ranjit Singh and Nana Fadnavis and Madhoji Scindia and oppose the inevitable march of England's destiny. These facts do not diminish the weight of the charge that can be made of an incapacity to see and solve the central problem and answer the one persistent question of Fate, but considered as the phenomena of a decadence they make a sufficiently remarkable record not easily paralleled under similar circumstances and certainly put a different complexion on the total question than the crude statement that India has been always subject and politically incapable.

The real problem introduced by the Mussulman conquest was not that of subjection to a foreign rule and the ability to recover freedom, but the struggle between two civilisations, one ancient and indigenous, the other mediaeval and brought in from outside. That which rendered the problem insoluble was the attachment of each to a powerful religion, the one militant and aggressive, the other spiritually tolerant indeed and flexible, but obstinately faithful in its discipline to its own principle and standing on the defence behind a barrier of social forms. There were two conceivable solutions, the rise of a greater spiritual principle and formation which could reconcile the two or a political patriotism surmounting the religious struggle and uniting the two communities.”¹⁴

“Two remarkable creations embodied in the period of disintegration the last effort of the Indian political mind to form the foundations of a new life under the old conditions, but neither proved to be of a kind that could solve the problem. The Mahratta revival inspired by Ramdas’s conception of the Maharashtra Dharma and cast into shape by Shivaji was an attempt to restore what could still be understood or remembered of the ancient form and spirit, but it failed, as all attempts to revive the past must fail, in spite of the spiritual impetus and the democratic forces that assisted its inception. The Peshwas for all their genius lacked the vision of the founder and could only establish a military and political confederacy. And their endeavour to found an empire could not succeed because it was inspired by a regional patriotism that failed to enlarge itself beyond its own limits and awaken to the living ideal of a united India. The Sikh Khalsa on the other hand was an astonishingly original and novel creation and its face was turned not to the past but the future. Apart and singular in its theocratic head and democratic soul and structure, its profound spiritual beginning, its first attempt to combine the deepest elements of Islam and Vedanta, it was a premature drive towards

an entrance into the third or spiritual stage of human society, but it could not create between the spirit and the external life the transmitting medium of a rich creative thought and culture. And thus hampered and deficient it began and ended within narrow local limits, achieved intensity but no power of expansion. The conditions were not then in existence that could have made possible a successful endeavour.

Afterwards came the night and a temporary end of all political initiative and creation. The lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the West has been no true indication of the political mind and genius of the Indian people. But again amid all the mist of confusion there is still the possibility of a new twilight, not of an evening but a morning Yuga-sandhya. **India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples.** And that which must seek now to awake is not an anglicised oriental people, docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the Occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti recovering her deepest self, lifting her head higher towards the supreme source of light and strength and turning to discover the complete meaning and a vaster form of her Dharma."¹⁵

References:

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Not Too Much But Rather Too Little of Religion In India

*“Religion has been a central preoccupation of the Indian mind; some have told us that too much religion ruined India, precisely because we made the whole of life religion or religion the whole of life, we have failed in life and gone under. I will not answer, adopting the language used by the poet in a slightly different connection, that our fall does not matter and that the dust in which India lies is sacred. The fall, the failure does matter, and to lie in the dust is no sound position for man or nation. But the reason assigned is not the true one. **If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religion in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell....***

*But if we give rather to religion the sense of the following of the spiritual impulse in its fullness and define spirituality as the attempt to know and live in the highest self, the divine, the allembracing unity and to raise life in all its parts to the divinest possible values, then it is evident that **there was not too much of religion, but rather too little of it** – and in what there was, a too one-sided and therefore an insufficiently ample tendency.”*

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 20: pp. 38-39)