

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

September 2014



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

– The Mother

Year 5

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 5

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CONTENTS

A Deeper Perspective on National Development	6
The BJP's By-election Debacle	9
History of India – The Vedic Age (3)	12
II. The Aryan Invasion Theory	12
A. <i>The Captivation of the Indian Mind by the European Scholarship of the Past Few Centuries</i>	12
The Greatness of India and Its Culture (2)	17
II. Indian Civilisation and Culture	17
A. <i>The Fundamental Idea and the Essential Spirit</i>	17

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 13, Pages 124-25)

A DEEPER PERSPECTIVE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Development and progress are bandied about as the panacea of all evils of society. But what is their widest scope, the deeper implications and higher meaning, what are the psychological forces that push development? All this has been discussed and understood in a limited fashion, indeed only the surface has been scratched.

The driving force of a country's growth is the psychological push of its people which in turn is powered by what motivates them. In the modern era phenomenal results have been achieved by the concentrated power of nationalism – pride in one's country and concern for her well-being. An outstanding example is the transformation of Japan from a traditional medieval feudal culture into a modern industrialised nation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. When Russia was defeated by Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Russo-Japanese war, the rest of the world sat up in astonishment. No European country had been militarily defeated by an Asian one in modern times. Almost half a century later, as a consequence of the nuclear holocaust of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan was on her knees. But thirty-five years on, in 1980, Japan had one of the highest per capita incomes in the world and it was feared by some in the West that if her growth continued apace her GNP might equal or even exceed that of the US by the end of the century. That potential was never realised as her people became more self-centred with the exposure to Western modes of thinking and their main feeder of growth – intensity driven by a certain selflessness – dwindled almost to stagnation. The current PM of Japan realises that without rekindling her national spirit Japan cannot be pulled out of the doldrums.

The Western gospel of utilitarianism, a selfish concentration on narrow aims causes greater and greater dysfunction in the various parts of society. Utilitarianism has been transposed into materialism and everything is valued according to its money-making potential. The quality of goods and services deteriorates even as they become more expensive. Medical care, education etc. are costing more and

more while delivering less and less. Only the leavening of the spirit of nationalism has kept Western societies from sinking completely into the mire of destructive selfishness.

There is, however, an even greater power, more enduring and free from the ultimate evil and destructive effect of nationalism, which can fuel economic development, even though being self-sufficient in itself, not expressly concerned with it. **Until a few centuries ago India was one of the richest countries of the world (in 1700 the GDP of India was greater than that of the whole of Western Europe^a) and that too after centuries of repressive Muslim rule. But political unity and based on it, the spirit of nationalism is relatively new to India. Throughout her long history she has been united culturally and spiritually but not politically.** When an individual or a collectivity can rise beyond egoism, both its own and that of a larger collectivity – a nation or even humanity – and connect to its true spiritual self and can live in it to some extent, as ancient India was able to, then the power of this greatest potential begins to act visibly in all the fields of human endeavour. Once this power is aroused in a country there are no limits to her development. Not only physical development but also a psychological growth which can be the only true basis of happiness and fulfilment – witness the widespread dissatisfaction and psychological alienation and loneliness lurking just below the glamorous surfaces in modern materially developed countries.

Indeed, the problem has become so serious that the present top heavy material development, if not balanced, is poised to destroy all civilised societies in the world. True growth and progress can only be the results of an integral spiritual growth of consciousness whether of the individual or of the society or the nation. **The conditions in which people live are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these without a change of consciousness is a vain chimera.**

In present times, India too has sunk into the morass of utilitarianism and in a worst possible way. As a nation, as a society, she seems to have forgotten her deeper well-springs of energy and

^a Angus Maddison, *The World Economy*, Paris: OECD, 2001, p. 261, Table B-18.

has become lost in the chaos of conflicting narrow self-interests spiralling her into greater depths of depravation of every kind. A nationalistic pride in the country and her achievements may be the lever to pull her out of this degradation and set her on the road to her true destiny which is also her heritage from times immemorial – the intelligent will to live for the spirit not only individually but also collectively. Nationalism, which underpins the Modi government manifesto, can act as a bridge to carry India onto the path of integral self-fulfilment and enable her to play her true role among the community of nations. But, she must not forget that **the spirit of nationalism, however necessary and useful at present, is just one stage in the greater psychology** and has to be transcended to attain that for which India's soul has always been striving – a progressive manifestation and expression of the Spirit in the terrestrial Nature.

*“There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us.....**It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there.**”*

– Sri Aurobindo

(Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo 36, Pages 503-04)

THE BJP'S BY-ELECTION DEBACLE

In the aftermath of the BJP's massive victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the party's dismal performance in the initial round of the Assembly by-elections held recently in four states came as a surprise to many. The NDA won only 8 of the 18 seats for which the elections were held in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab. More recently, with the results of the subsequent round of the by-polls in UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Assam and Bengal, the overall performance of the NDA appears to have taken a severe blow. The vote was heavily divided, with the BJP winning only 13 out of the 33 Assembly seats in these four states, SP winning 8 seats and Congress tried to catch up with its 7 seats. While UP and Rajasthan proved to be the BJP's direct downfall, Gujarat was its Achilles heel this time.

The fact that this debacle occurred just a few months after the people's sweeping democratic 'verdict' in the 2014 General Election gives room to different kinds of analyses. Many have not wasted time in predicting an early demise of the 'Modi wave' and a return to the status quo. Large sections of the media commentaries have reached the consensus that the BJP's heavily polarizing communal campaign in UP, centered around issues like 'Love Jihad' and conversions, failed to hold sway over an electorate that seeks the fulfillment of their basic socio-economic needs through greater development and welfare. This, they argue, has been coupled with the weak organizational consolidation of the party; the absence of the personality cults of Modi and Amit Shah left the weak grassroots outreach of the party exposed and led to its debacle. This was also seen to be supplemented by the party's UP unit's overconfidence that alienated many MPs, led to last-minute filing of the nominations and a failure to mobilize the party cadre. Political commentators also predict that the political unity of the so-called 'secular forces' may present a very real threat to the BJP, as was shown by the fact that a large part of BSP's (which had not contested these elections) vote-share went to SP instead of BJP, as also the working of the RJD-JD(U) alliance in Bihar.

The overarching verdict of the political commentators is a

common one: The voters have rejected the politics of communal mobilization that the BJP was engaged in, in favour of developmental and welfare concerns. The only thing that is common in all these explanations is the BJP criticism and bashing.

This is an inconsistent explanation due to various reasons:

First, if indeed the rural and semi-urban electorate in states like UP had rejected the politics of division based on community identity in favour of development, then why would they elect a party like the Samajwadi Party (SP) which was created and has survived solely through such politics? SP's recent track record in governance and development has been far worse than any of the other major regional parties in the North.

Second, how is it that a party like the BJP which claimed a massive victory in the Lok Sabha elections has seen a major reversal in its fortunes just three months later?

And if BJP did play the communal card then why did it not get majority seats in UP?

Instead of explaining these inconsistencies, the media has simply woven a number-game rhetoric around the dramatic theme of the rise and fall of the BJP. What is needed is a sounder explanation for the by-poll inconsistencies. Instead of assuming that a party's rise and demise fluctuates with the swinging 'national mood', we need to note two issues:

First, the public always has a short memory.

Second, the 'public', when it is not activated by the infrequent awakening of its collective consciousness, is itself a subject, rather than the driver, of politics. Thus, on an everyday basis, it is shaped less by the issues and more by the manner in which those issues are presented to it. Therefore, the mandate delivered by the public on issues in the ordinary course of public life is less of a consolidated democratic verdict. A democratic verdict is the one that furthers the consolidation of the spirit based on unity over substantive issues and in response to contrary impetus.

The result that we have seen in the by-elections has been a product, not of people's unified democratic backlash against what the BJP stands for, but of the party's organizational weakness and mismanagement. The fact that the BJP's campaign in UP perpetrated propaganda based on communal mobilization was, in fact, a part of this organizational weakness rather than a separate ideological issue. On the part of the party's state-level leadership, it represented a casual dismissal of the electorate, as the party failed to reach out to the people and its cadre, irrespective of whether or not the party was engaged in cultural mobilization.

The by-elections, by any stretch, do not spell the demise of the BJP or indeed, Modi. However, the issues that the BJP's defeat raises are symptomatic of a larger challenge. While the fractured by-elections results may not represent a radically democratic mandate, the Lok Sabha elections definitely did. That mandate was based on the collective expectation that the BJP would become a trigger for promoting a different kind of system and society. What is making the people restive is that there no movement towards such a system. The question is not of BJP's organization, agenda, achievements and setbacks. These are micro issues that inevitably arise in the course of any government. In fact, the current government has performed reasonably well on these various indicators. We have seen better economic growth, lower inflation, progressive legislation and strong foreign policy, since the new government came to power.

Yet there is discontent. To think that the reason for this discontent lies in the fact that other 'secular' parties have been able to unite successfully against Modi is misplaced. **Rather, the reason lies in the fact that the BJP is not seen to be moving in as radical a direction as was expected. There has been no move towards systemic overhaul and no deeper change at the cultural level. What we have had in the last three months is a moderate developmental government – passing good legislation and trying to balance electoral and growth commitments – whose actions have been largely in continuity with those of the Congress. There may be better governance and development, but the change that everyone has been waiting to see has not been felt.**

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (3)

II. THE ARYAN INVASION THEORY

A. The Captivation of the Indian Mind by the European Scholarship of the Past Few Centuries

“The successes of European science have cast the shadow of their authority and prestige over the speculations of European scholarship; for European thought is, in appearance, a serried army marching to world-conquest and we who undergo the yoke of its tyranny, we, who paralysed by that fascination and overborne by that domination, have almost lost the faculty of thinking for ourselves, receive without distinction all its camp followers or irregular volunteers as authorities to whom we must needs submit.”¹

The above was written about a hundred years ago and it is still true to a great extent because, “The triumphant & rapid march of the physical sciences in Europe has so mastered our intellects and dazzled our eyes, that we are apt to extend the unquestioned finality which we are accustomed to attach to the discoveries & theories of modern Science, to all the results of European research & intellectual activity. Even in Europe itself, we should remember, there is no such implicit acceptance. The theories of today are there continually being combated and overthrown by the theories of tomorrow. Outside the range of the physical sciences & even in some portions of that splendid domain the whole of European knowledge is felt more & more to be a mass of uncertain results ephemeral in their superstructure, shifting in their very foundations. For the Europeans have that valuable gift of intellectual restlessness which, while it often stands in the way of man’s holding on to abiding truth, helps him to emerge swiftly out of momentarily triumphant error. In India on the other hand we have fallen during the last few centuries into a fixed habit of unquestioning deference to authority. We used to hold it, & some still hold it almost an impiety to question Shankara’s interpretation of the Upanishads, or Sayana’s interpretation of the Veda, and now that we are being torn out of this bondage, we fall

into yet more absurd error by according if not an equal reverence, yet an almost equal sense of finality to the opinions of Roth & Max Muller. We are ready to accept all European theories, the theory of an 'Aryan' colonisation of a Dravidian India, the theory of the Nature-worship and henotheism of the Vedic Rishis, the theory of the Upanishads as a speculative revolt against Vedic materialism & ritualism, as if these hazardous speculations were on a par in authority & certainty with the law of gravitation and the theory of evolution. We are most of us unaware that in Europe it is disputed and very reasonably disputed whether, for instance, any such entity as an Aryan race ever existed. The travail of dispute & uncertainty in which the questions of Vedic scholarship & ethnology are enveloped is hidden from us; only the over-confident statement of doubtful discoveries and ephemeral theories reaches our knowledge.”²

“To us who are dominated today by the prestige of European thought and scholarship, the Vedas are a document of primitive barbarism, the ancient Vedanta a mass of sublime but indisciplined speculations. We may admit the existence of many deep psychological intuitions in the Upanishads; we do not easily allow to an age which we have been taught to regard as great but primitive and undeveloped the possibility of a profound and reasoned system in a subject in which Europe with all her modern scientific knowledge has been unable to develop a real science. I believe that this **current view of those Vedic forefathers is entirely erroneous and arises from our application to them of a false system of psychological and intellectual values. Europe has formed certain views about the Veda and the Vedanta, and succeeded in imposing them on the Indian intellect. The ease with which this subjugation has been effected is not surprising; for the mere mass of labour of Vedic scholarship has been imposing, its ingenuity of philological speculation is well calculated to dazzle the uncritical mind and the audacity and self-confidence with which it constructs its theories conceals the conjectural uncertainty of their foundations?** When a hundred world-famous scholars cry out, ‘This is so’, it is hard indeed for the average mind, and even minds above

the average but inexpert in these special subjects not to acquiesce. Nor has there been any corresponding labour of scholarship, diligence and sound enquiry which could confront the brilliant and hazardous generalisations of modern Sanskrit scholarship with the results of a more perfect system and a more penetrating vision. The only attempt in that direction, – the attempt of Swami Dayananda, – has not been of a kind to generate confidence in the dispassionate judgment of posterity which must be the final arbiter of these disputes; for not only was that great Pandit and vigorous disputant unequipped with the wide linguistic and philological scholarship necessary for his work, but his method was rapid, impatient, polemical, subservient to certain fixed religious ideas rather than executed in the calm, disinterested freedom of the careful and impartial thinker and scholar. Judgment has focused on the Veda and Vedanta by default in favour of the scholastic criticism of Europe which has alone been represented in the court of modern opinion.

Nevertheless a time must come when the Indian mind will shake off the darkness that has fallen upon it, cease to think or hold opinions at second and third hand and reassert its right to judge and enquire in a perfect freedom into the meaning of its own Scriptures.

When that day comes we shall, I think, discover that **the imposing fabric of Vedic theory is based upon nothing more sound or true than a foundation of loosely massed conjectures.** We shall question many established philological myths, – the legend, for instance, of an Aryan invasion of India from the north, the artificial and inimical [?] distinction of Aryan and Dravidian which an erroneous philology has driven like a wedge into the unity of the homogenous Indo-Afghan race; the strange dogma of a ‘henotheistic’ Vedic naturalism; the ingenious and brilliant extravagances of the modern sun and star myth weavers, and more ... the hasty and attractive generalisation which, after a brief period of unquestioning acceptance by the easily-persuaded intellect of mankind, **is bound to depart into the limbo of forgotten theories.**”³

“With the acceptance of.. modern opinions Hinduism ought by this time to have been as dead among educated men as the religion of the Greeks & Romans. It should at best have become a religio Pagana, a superstition of ignorant villagers. It is, on the contrary, stronger & more alive, fecund & creative than it had been for the previous three centuries. To a certain extent this unexpected result may be traced to the high opinion in which even European opinion has been compelled to hold the Vedanta philosophy, the Bhagavat Gita and some of the speculations – as the Europeans think them or, as we hold, the revealed truths of the Upanishads. But although intellectually we are accustomed in obedience to Western criticism to base ourselves on the Upanishads & Gita and put aside Purana and Veda as mere mythology & mere ritual, yet **in practice we live by the religion of the Puranas & Tantras even more profoundly & intimately than we live by & realise the truths of the Upanishads. In heart & soul we still worship Krishna and Kali and believe in the truth of their existence. Nevertheless this divorce between the heart & the intellect, this illicit compromise between faith & reason cannot be enduring.** If Purana & Veda cannot be rehabilitated, it is yet possible that our religion driven out of the soul into the intellect may wither away into the dry intellectuality of European philosophy or the dead formality & lifeless clarity of European Theism. It behoves us therefore to test our faith by a careful examination into the meaning of Purana & Veda and into the foundation of that truth which our intellect seeks to deny [but] our living spiritual experience continues to find in their conceptions. We must discover why it is that while our intellects accept only the truth of Vedanta, our spiritual experiences confirm equally or even more powerfully the truth of Purana. **A revival of Hindu intellectual faith in the totality of the spiritual aspects of our religion, whether Vedic, Vedantic, Tantric or Puranic, I believe to be an inevitable movement of the near future.**”⁴

It seems that – as was foreseen by Sri Aurobindo – we are on our way towards something like this because it seems that Indian scholars – except some whose minds have been utterly captivated

by Western secular and leftist thought currents – are increasingly showing, “...a power of detachment and disinterestedness and a willingness to give up cherished notions under pressure of evidence, which are not common in Europe. They are not, as a rule, prone to the Teutonic sin of forming a theory in accordance with their prejudices and then finding facts or manufacturing inferences to support it. When therefore they form a theory on their own account, it has usually some clear justification and sometimes an overwhelming array of facts and solid arguments behind it.”⁵

(To be continued...)

References:

1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library 27, Page 180*
2. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research, April 1985, Pages 41-42*
3. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library 27, Pages 182-83*
4. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research, December 1984, Pages 134-35*
5. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 01, Page 284*

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (2)

II. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

“Indian civilisation must be judged mainly by the culture and greatness of its millenniums, not by the ignorance and weakness of a few centuries. A culture must be judged, first by its essential spirit, then by its best accomplishment and, lastly, by its power of survival, renovation and adaptation to new phases of the permanent needs of the race.”¹

A. The Fundamental Idea and the Essential Spirit

(1) “It is essential, if we are to get a right view of Indian civilisation or of any civilisation, to keep to the central, living, governing things and not to be led away by the confusion of accidents and details. This is a precaution which the critics of our culture steadily refuse to take. A civilisation, a culture must be looked at first in its initiating, supporting, durable central motives, in its heart of abiding principle; otherwise we shall be likely to find ourselves, like these critics, in a maze without a clue and we shall stumble about among false and partial conclusions and miss entirely the true truth of the matter. The importance of avoiding this error is evident when we are seeking for the essential significance of Indian religious culture. But the same method must be held to when we proceed to observe its dynamic formulation and the effect of its spiritual ideal on life.

Indian culture recognises the spirit as the truth of our being and our life as a growth and evolution of the spirit. It sees the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the All; it sees this as the secret highest Self of all, this is what it calls God, the Permanent, the Real, and it sees man as a soul and power of this being of God in Nature. The progressive growth of the finite consciousness of man towards this Self, towards God, towards the universal, the eternal, the infinite, in a word his growth into spiritual consciousness, by the development of his ordinary ignorant natural being into an illumined divine nature, this is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human

existence. To this deeper and more spiritual idea of Nature and of existence a great deal of what is strongest and most potential of fruitful consequences in recent European thinking already turns with a growing impetus. This turn may be a relapse to 'barbarism' or it may be the high natural outcome of her own increasing and ripened culture; that is a question for Europe to decide. But always to India this ideal inspiration or rather this spiritual vision of Self, God, Spirit, this nearness to a cosmic consciousness, a cosmic sense and feeling, a cosmic idea, will, love, delight into which we can release the limited, ignorant, suffering ego, this drive towards the transcendental, eternal and infinite, and the moulding of man into a conscious soul and power of that greater Existence have been the engrossing motive of her philosophy, the sustaining force of her religion, the fundamental idea of her civilisation and culture."²

(2) "...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. It is easy to say that these ideas are fantastic, chimerical and impracticable, that there is no spirit and no eternal and nothing divine, and man would do much better not to dabble in religion and philosophy, but rather make the best he can of the ephemeral littleness of his life and body. That is a negation natural enough to the vital and physical mind, but it rests on the assumption that man can only be what he is at the moment, and there is nothing greater in him which it is his business to evolve; such a negation has

no enduring value. The whole aim of a great culture is to lift man up to something which at first he is not, to lead him to knowledge though he starts from an unfathomable ignorance, to teach him to live by his reason, though actually he lives much more by his unreason, by the law of good and unity, though he is now full of evil and discord, by a law of beauty and harmony though his actual life is a repulsive muddle of ugliness and jarring barbarisms, by some high law of his spirit, though at present he is egoistic, material, unspiritual, engrossed by the needs and desires of his physical being. If a civilisation has not any of these aims, it can hardly at all be said to have a culture and certainly in no sense a great and noble culture. But the last of these aims, as conceived by ancient India, is the highest of all because it includes and surpasses all the others. To have made this attempt is to have ennobled the life of the race; to have failed in it is better than if it had never at all been attempted; to have achieved even a partial success is a great contribution to the future possibilities of the human being.”³

References:

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 20, Page 120*
2. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 20, Pages 214-15*
3. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 20, Pages 231-32*

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“To give up one’s small individual self and find the larger self in others, in the nation, in humanity, in God, that is the law of Vedanta. That is India’s message. Only she must not be content with sending it, she must rise up and live it before all the world so that it may be proved a possible law of conduct both for men and nations.”

– **Sri Aurobindo**

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 08, Page 55)

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