

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

August 2016



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

- The Mother

Year 7

Issue 5

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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 7

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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 13, p. 124-25)

NAMAMI GANGE: PART II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GANGA AND WHAT IT MEANS TO SAVE HER

In the previous issue, we discussed the political and policy problems of the government's Ganga Rejuvenation Mission, and came to the conclusion that we have not been able to capture either the immense implications of the problem or the solutions to deal with it. The problem facing Ganga cannot be simplistically placed within the context of the general environmental problems facing the country.

For, Ganga does not only sustain us materially, but, at a much deeper level, is also the spiritual lifeline of the Indian civilisation. The existence of Ganga for the Indian nation is akin to the air we breathe and is often taken for granted. Ask the people living in the mountains or on the banks of Ganga, and they can never imagine the demise of Ganga, no matter how polluted or overburdened it becomes. And, there is a very powerful, valid reason behind this thinking – Mother Ganga is a form of the all-powerful and eternal Mother whom we worship. She is not just a river – the water is only one expression of her. **She is the one who has ensnared the senses of her devotees away from this world, the one whose waters soothe our turbulent consciousness through the balm of their peace and calm, no matter who goes to her, and the one who gives refuge to all. She is the one whose waters have filled devotees with tears of devotion and joy and on whose banks great hymns have been composed. Every other recourse may fail us, but how can our Mother fail? No Indian can fathom or accept such a thing – and rightly so. How can she ever die? If Mother Ganga dies, then India also dies.**

Are we – mere children living our selfish lives today and dying tomorrow – in any position to save the mighty Mother, who has sustained this powerful nation since the dawn of the

Indian civilisation from the Vedic times? But this is exactly what we tend to think, trapped as we are in our egoistic bubble.

The issue at stake is something else. Sri Aurobindo had said that it is the spirit that matters and that the body may change, but the spirit lives on, and that is what preserves a system or a culture. But if the spirit dies, then the body will also die, and that is how systems and institutions are destroyed. **We are in no position to save Mother Ganga. She is the eternal Mother and we have been fortunate to have taken birth in the land she has lovingly nurtured. Ganga will never die. But we are in the danger of losing our Mother, and that will be our loss, which will leave us dead. So we are not saving Ganga – as the issue has been egoistically portrayed so far – but are trying to save ourselves. We will be orphaned children engulfed by the poison of this world if our Mother deserts us. Mother Ganga represents the heart of our spiritual civilisation. And spiritual is all that we have been and are. Swami Vivekananda had said that if India loses her spiritual civilisation to follow the materialism of the West, she will have lost everything.**

This is at the heart of the question we face today when we talk about saving Ganga and the meaning behind it, irrespective of what angle we approach it from.

Successive governments and technocrats have approached it from a scientific and policy angle. Social movements like the Save Ganga Movement have tried to go deeper and combine people's value for the Gange (which nobody has been able to express) with local work and solutions. Some groups have gone into the historical and cultural significance of Ganga, as well. Increasingly, as a part of rising awareness, many people are expressing the view that over the centuries and ages, Mother Ganga has been absorbing our sins and releasing us from the slithering bondages of this world, and now it is our turn to reduce her burden.

Thanks to the dams and hydroelectric projects being constructed and others being deliberated in her upper basin, her waters are in

the danger of drying up completely, with her current flow being just about 5 percent – far below the minimum flow of 32 percent. It is predicted to be soon reduced to a seasonal river during the monsoon. **And, in time, if we continue exploiting her waters, she will have shielded herself from our view, leaving us to die. The Gange is already safe – she is eternal – but we would have killed ourselves, in time.**

Therefore, the challenge of not losing our Mother is no less than the struggle that was waged to save Mother India during the freedom struggle. The only difference is that now the struggle is not against a physical enemy – as were the colonial rulers – but against the utilitarian, selfish mentality and vital ego through which we are spelling our own demise.

GANGA IN HISTORY

Historically, there is very little by the way of Ganga that has been captured in history. The only major historical records revolve around the 1916 agreement between the British and the Indians, led by Madan Mohan Malaviya, on building dams on Ganga. In post-Independence India, the significance of Ganga has been captured by various movements like the ‘Save Ganga’ movement, and, the various social groups that work for the cause of Ganga.

Ganga Mahasabha was set-up by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1905 on grounds of the apprehension that the British may dam the flow of Ganga completely.¹ In 1914, a people’s movement was launched to oppose the construction of a dam at Haridwar upstream to HarkiPauri.² The construction of the dam was mainly opposed by religious leaders who said that they cannot perform religious rituals in captive waters, and approached Pandit Malaviya to mobilize support. Their main demand was that the natural current of the river be maintained – crucial to its religious sanctity – as it descends from the Himalayas. This led to the British withdrawing their decision to construct a dam, and, instead, a ‘kutcha band’ was built.

As a result of this revolt by the Hindu community on the violation of Ganga, a 1916 agreement was signed between the British and the Hindus, led by Pt. Malaviya, which stated that:

1. In future, the unchecked flow of Ganga will never be stopped. (Reference: 1916 Agreement, clause 32, para-1).
2. No decision on Ganga will be taken without the consent of the Hindu community. (Reference: 1916 Agreement, clause 32, para-2).³

The key point is that this agreement is preserved even today under Article 363 of the Indian Constitution.

Subsequently, there have been many movements to ‘Save Ganga’ and to oppose the construction of dams. There have also been many draft proposals – in the form of various Acts – to conserve Ganga and penalize those who degrade it, with many of them even being conceived in the form of human rights. But, in reality, all of them have led to piecemeal regulatory measures that could be easily bypassed and have worsened the condition of the river (as highlighted in the first article).

UPDATE ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

A lot of work is going on in the National Clean Ganga Mission. Unlike the previous governments, this government has made Ganga Rejuvenation its main focus, with Minister, Uma Bharti, even declaring that a people’s movement was needed to revive Ganga, even locking horns with Ministries of Environment and Power, to oppose development projects that harm Ganga flow and purity.

To this effect, the government, recently, formed two separate committees on Ganga – one would prepare a draft Act for ensuring cleanliness and uninterrupted flow of the river and the other will come up with proposals for de-silting the river and establishing the difference between sand mining and de-silting.

However, the war lines have been drawn within the government, with Uma Bharti set to file an affidavit in Supreme Court to oppose the hydel projects cleared by the Ministries of

Environment and Power. The latter is using the 1916 agreement to argue that the projects will allow 1000 cusecs of water to flow unfettered, but only through three of its tributaries (Alaknanda, Mandakini and Bhagirathi) and through the main stem, completely disregarding the fact that such a flow may no longer be sufficient – since dams have already been constructed – and that other tributaries too should be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

Our future – dependent on Ganga – is increasingly getting entangled in wrong solutions. Let us consider what will happen if there are certain favourable outcomes – if the Supreme Court upholds that dams can no longer be built, if the government toes that line and if we manage to establish thousands of Sewage Treatment Plants (for which nearly 70% of government's Clean Ganga budget is allocated).

Even then nothing much will come of it. We may become a strong regulatory and rule-bound nation like America or Europe, but we would have left gaping holes through which we may, at any time, destroy the house of cards we would have built. And our rules and norms and institutions will remain just a delicate house of cards that can be toppled anytime the pervasive spirit of utilitarianism and selfishness overpowers us – as is happening currently.

Objectively also, there is no dearth of evidence to show that rules can be easily subverted, and always are easily subverted, and the Ganga mission, over the years, has faced a lot of corruption. Even if you impose penalties – which may go some way in instilling fear among the people – in the longer run, it will not be difficult to take the local authorities on board to bypass the rules altogether, as is the common practice.

And, this ineffectivity of laws is just the tip of the iceberg. As we had stated above, let's get the picture right – we are not saving the Ganga, but we are trying to save ourselves because she is necessary to our survival. And if that is really the case then we are

faring very poorly. Speaking materially, on a planet 70% of whose surface is covered with water and out of which only 3% of the water is actually fit for consumption, we are doing very poorly in preserving scarce resources. **Even if Europe has managed to methodically revamp the river Rhine, it does not become a role model, because we cannot ignore the negative consequences of its scientific-materialistic advances that have poised the planet on the brink of a disastrous demise.**

Similarly, even if we do manage to save something for ourselves by rejuvenating the Ganga, it is yet uncertain where our vital greed and ego, intellectual bonds and dependence on the cult of materialism and commercialism will take us. The Ganga will eternally BE, but by following the present curve of 'progress' and 'development' we are in the danger of blotting out our own existence.

References:

1. **Ganga Mahasabha.** <http://www.gangamahasabha.org/> (accessed August 18, 2016).
2. **Shukla, A.C, and Vandana A.** *Ganga: A Water Marvel.* New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1995.
3. **Ganga Mahasabha.** <http://www.gangamahasabha.org/> (accessed August 18, 2016).

THE NEW COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN KERALA: CHARTING ITS OWN DECLINE

Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, has appointed Gita Gopinath as his government's financial advisor. Ms. Gopinath is a celebrated neo-liberal, pro-market economist who is also on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and a professor at Harvard University, known for her views in favour of liberalization, privatization and free trade.

Thus, that the Kerala's CPM government should appoint her in an honorary role as an economic advisor is surprising. But, if we look at the track record of the present government, it becomes clear that the current Left government in Kerala is anything but Leftist. With this appointment, it appears that with every passing day, the Left is getting more and more caught up in its own contradictions. The party is already dead in West Bengal. It was widely criticized for having entered a marriage of convenience with the Congress in West Bengal's recent by-polls and then failing miserably.

In Kerala, the party's victory in the by-polls has heralded a beginning change, yes – but a change in the opposite direction to the one that is expected. The communist government in the state is, paradoxically, more capital-oriented in its actions than the previous UPA government. Its main focus is on efficient industrial growth whose effects can then trickle down as developmental outcomes.

When it comes to transacting work and policies, the current CM, Mr. Vijayan, has a frictionless relationship with the Centre. Amid protests, the government is carrying forward the controversial Rs. 7500-crore Vizhinjam port project of the former Congress-led UDF government sponsored by Adani enterprise, which will impair the distribution of monsoon rains between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, affect the livelihood of fishermen in coastal areas, and being just 30 km from Tamil Nadu's Colachel port project, will have its commercial viability affected. The CM also received the Centre's assurance on

other industrial commitments. The CM has also been coordinating with other central ministers in the Modi government for various project proposals.

While this is the macro reality of Kerala's new Leftist state struggling to jump onto the developmental bandwagon to remain relevant, this is not likely to have much impact in a state whose social fabric is utterly primitive, and getting torn apart day-by-day. When the controversy over Love Jihad or sly religious conversions by Muslim groups – opposed by Hindus and Christians alike – was raised 7-8 years back, it was viciously quashed in the name of upholding secularism. And now, it seems that time is taking its own revenge. The current prospects of the state are bleak.

Socially, politically and culturally, the state has been rife with the cult of violence, brutal murders, rapes, and high crime rates. The social and civil violence – including organized killings in the name of religion – both perpetrates and is influenced by political anarchy at the level of government. Recently, one of the top CPI (M) bosses, Mr. Kodyeri, didn't realize the backlash his statement about killing off opponents would provoke – not surprising, given the reality of the state. Kannur – which is also the constituency of the Kerala CM – has seen an increase in brutal political murders in broad daylight, with the CPI (M) workers attacking the RSS workers, and the latter retaliating wherever they can. It is like being in a Communist-Islamist theocracy, which is completely divorced from the rule of law and the rest of the country.

The very 'intolerance' accusation that the Left and the Congress hurled at the Modi government about a year back is, ironically, visible the most within the Leftist ranks. It has become a minoritarian party that, socially, upholds the *goonda raj*. Because of the high number of Malayalis in the Gulf, the returns received by the state include both remittances and funding for terrorism and radical preachers, for a long time, leading to a rise in the number of youth being radicalized by Islam – especially educated youth – leaving Hinduism and Christianity and migrating to the Gulf after converting to Islam.

The rise in such cases has been to such extents that now even the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau of Kerala – acknowledging the trend of Kerala recruits in the ISIS and the intelligence reports of 5700 conversions to Islam between 2011-2015 – is thinking of bringing under the ambit of corruption investigations those cases which involve religious conversions through the incentive of offer of money.

Another closely related dimension of the Left and Congress's secular politics in the state is now bearing results in the increased disruption of social stability due to rising influx of immigrants – with more than total 3 million migrants in the state – from Bengal and Bangladesh. They do all the unskilled and manual jobs, since the Malayalis are only interested in white-collar jobs or have migrated to the Gulf. As a result, there has been a rise in the crime rates in Kerala, and, in turn, a rise in the violence against the migrants themselves. The brutal rape and murder of a Dalit law student – which became an election issue in the latest bypolls – who stayed near a migrant village, by a Muslim migrant, is a case in point.

And yet, the state continues to be soft on migrants. If a suspect might be a Bangladeshi, then his arrest needs to be validated under the Foreigners' Act by first proving that he migrated without valid documents. With such a state of affairs, it is no wonder that the Kerala anti-migrant crowds are taking law in their own hands, with the upshot that the police refrains from recording such cases. Although, in the past few months, the condition of migrant crime has been so bad that the state government is having to sit up and take notice.

It will not be long before this cult of violence takes its toll on the Kerala government. It recognizes – as is clear from Mr. Vijayan's actions – that it can no longer take recourse to Leftist policies in a changing political-economy, but while it is left ideologically rudderless, its encouragement of political violence and the deteriorating social and religious condition in the state is threatening to engulf the government in its flames.

This was always the predestined future of the Left – in India, as

world-over. Even in West Bengal, the Left was responsible for spoiling the social fabric and precipitating a politics and society of violence and *goonda raj*, which is prevalent even today. But the difference, increasingly, is that now even the secular space that the Left occupied is being taken away, leaving it with no face to even talk about intolerance and freedom.

Appendix:

Rising crimes by migrant workers in Kerala:

Sl.No	Crime Heads	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (Provisional)	2016 (up to March)
1	Murder	362	343	363	365	374	372	367	318	73
2	Attempt to commit murder	434	408	361	521	497	603	676	586	149
3	CH not amounting to murder	95	100	86	105	107	104	84	76	34
4	Rape	568	568	634	1132	1019	1221	1347	1263	375
5	Kidnapping & abduction	253	256	261	299	281	252	222	262	49
	of women & girls	166	173	184	221	214	185	89	177	29
	of others	87	83	77	78	67	67	133	85	20
6	Dacoity	91	112	74	71	72	67	71	94	23
7	Robbery	816	830	636	741	725	784	869	766	245
8	Burglary	3882	3554	2682	3001	2710	2929	3452	2872	657
9	Theft	5818	5564	4380	4704	4078	4079	4700	4428	993

Source: *Manorama*. <http://english.manoramaonline.com/news/just-in/migrant-crisis-kerala-workers-labourers-accused-criminal-cases.html>

THE CHRONOLOGY OF ANCIENT INDIA AND THE DATE OF THE MAHABHARATA WAR

Before the advent of the European scholarship in the field of Indian historical research beginning sometime around the last quarter of the eighteenth century, there was practically no controversy about the date of the Mahabharata war which was generally believed to have occurred at the end of Dwapar Yuga and about 36-37 years before the beginning of the Kaliyuga in 3102 B.C. which coincided with Lord Sri Krishna's withdrawal from this earth. For this date of Kaliyuga there is an overwhelming amount of evidence in Indian literature and in numerous inscriptions dated according to various prevalent Indian Eras.

Beginning with its victories in the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), the British East India Company progressively took possession of the subcontinent. With the tacit backing and support of Warren Hastings – infamous as the Butcher of Bengal – the “Asiatic Society of Bengal” was founded by Sir William Jones in 1784 with thirty Europeans present on the occasion. One of the main activities of this Society was to collect the old manuscripts, inscriptions in stone and metal, icons, coins etc. to serve as a base for the spread of the European view of Indian religion, culture and history. The European scholars doing research in these fields to serve these ends enjoyed the patronage, the prestige and other advantages that naturally flow to the ruling race. They could, therefore, easily brush aside all established Indian views and positions in these areas and progressively impose their own outlook and views and theories constructed to support them without any possibility of effective resistance from Indians who under the British were reduced to the condition of extreme penury* – destructive of all

*Even after more than six hundred years of foreign rule, India was one of the most developed countries till 1750 when India had 25 percent of the world's manufacturing output while Europe and America combined had less than 18 percent. By 1900, India's share collapsed to about 2 percent while that of Europe and America jumped to 84 percent. More than 30 million Indians died of starvation during the British rule in addition to the massive butchery of innocents which took place after the freedom struggle of 1857.

scholarly effort – with millions and millions simply starving to death.

Another very important factor that contributed to this movement aiming at the imposition of European views was the triumphant march of European science which armed and equipped the race to subdue the age old cultures of Asia and Africa and to almost completely annihilate the native cultures of North and South America. All opposition to European invasion was easily crushed or set aside even in fields such as religion, culture and history. This was because, as Sri Aurobindo writing in the beginning of the last century observed, “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.”¹ But in India, “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.”² Most Indian scholars willingly did so to secure the patronage of the rulers. Some even undertook considerable labour to look up ancient Indian literary sources for evidence to somehow support the views of their European masters which, as an article of faith, were considered unquestionable.

The work of Fleet (11-13), a retired I.C.S officer who considered the date of Kaliyuga as a date invented by Indian Pundits as a reference point and without any historical value and the work of Pargiter (25, 26) – again a retired I.C.S and judge of the Calcutta High Court – are considered pioneering works by all the scholars in the field of ancient Indian history. These two and most other

European historians and their Indian protégés put the date of the Mahabharata somewhere around 1000 to 1200 B.C. by completely ignoring the traditionally established Kaliyuga Era of 3102 B.C. Max Muller was the third person whose name gained even greater prominence than the above two due to his enormous labours in bringing out his most famous works on the Vedas, Upanishads and other important oriental religious scriptures. Max Muller dated the Vedas to about 1200 B.C. and his is the most famous name-support behind the pernicious and baseless Aryan Invasion Theory.

The slavery to the opinion of European historians which began in 19th century not only continues unabated even at present but has, if anything, assumed a most pernicious character after independence in 1947 under the dominance of the pseudo-secularism of the Congress and the efforts of the leftist historians with their partisan* and deep-rooted hostility and blind intolerance of all that India and its religious culture has stood for. The result – as succinctly pointed out by Rajaram and Frawley (29: 9-11) – has been that “When we open a history book used in our schools today, we find that it invariably begins with a description of the Indus Valley Civilization. It usually starts off with an account of the discovery of the two major sites Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, followed by a brief description of what was found there. We will also be told how this civilization went into decline and finally disappeared by 1500 BCE. The main cause of this disappearance, the reader is then informed, was the invasion of India by nomadic tribes from Central Asia called the Aryans. According to this account, these invading Aryans, who are said to have entered India through the passes in the northwest, fought and overcame the inhabitants of the Indus Valley and established themselves over much of North India. They are then said to have composed their literature, the most important of which is the *Rigveda*. The history of India begins in earnest with the records of the Aryans following their invasion.

*Their attitude towards Christianity and Islam is markedly different. This is inexplicable, except as a political expediency, given the fundamental opposition of Marxism to all religions regardless of their shades and colours.

...this scenario is somehow supported by linguistic evidence, namely, the fact that people of North India and South India speak languages from different families; North Indians speak Aryan languages while South Indians speak languages of the Dravidian family. Such a person may also be familiar with the usual account that the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization, which in the popular mind is synonymous with the sites of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, were Dravidians whose civilization the invading Aryans destroyed. The invading Aryans were said to be blond and blue eyed while the Dravidians were said to be dark skinned. The evidence for this we are told is found in the *Rigveda*. All this one is also told has been reconstructed by great European scholars, notably Max Muller, believed by most educated Indians to be the greatest of them all. This invasion is said to have taken place around 1500 BCE, though one is not told the basis for this determination. The composition of the Vedas, according to this scenario, began about 1200 BCE or 1000 BCE, though once again, we are not told the basis for this.

From all of this it would be natural for one to conclude the Aryan invasion theory to be a careful reconstruction based on archaeology and historical linguistics. This however is not the case at all. The origins of the theory go back to eighteenth century Europe – and to the political, racial, religious and nationalistic forces that were then part of the scene. This was long before there was any Indus archaeology, and even before it was clearly recognized that Indian and European languages were related. We need to seek elsewhere for the origins of this theory.

The two most influential forces that went into creating this theory were European racism – especially anti-Semitism – and German nationalism. It was written into Indian history books by British educational authorities, but it was essentially a European and not a British creation. Comparative linguistics, let alone archaeology did not even exist at the time. In fact, comparative linguistics is largely the *result* of the European discovery of the Sanskrit tongue – without a doubt one of the most momentous discoveries in the history of

linguistics. It is standing history on its head to now claim the theory to be the result of archaeology and comparative study of languages. If anything, Indus archaeology dramatically contradicts the invasion theory.

This theory had its origins in eighteenth century Europe but received its full embellishment only in the nineteenth century. It seemed to strike no one as odd – at least at the time – that this invasion by light skinned people of a land inhabited by dark skinned people, happened to be an exact replay of the contemporary European experience in colonizing Asia and Africa. Substituting European for Aryan, and Asian or African for Dravidian will give us a description of any of the numerous European colonial campaigns in Asia or Africa of the time. So according to this theory, the Aryans were carbon copies of European colonizers.”³

All this was done to serve the Christian missionary and the colonial interests and the European scholars instinctively – and one would like to believe not consciously or deliberately – put together and gave expression to theories which served these interests by driving a wedge between the Indian people on the basis of differences in language, color and caste. According to Devan Nair, the former president of Singapore, as a result of the falsely constructed Aryan Invasion Theory, “The damage inflicted on the political perceptions of the population poses a threat to the very integrity of India as a unique political and cultural entity. **Witness the two most dominant political parties of Tamil Nadu, the DMK and the ANNA DMK (the ‘D’ standing for ‘Dravida’). They swallowed hook, line and sinker the shallow, ill-researched ‘findings’ of 19th Century European indologists.**”*

Rajaram and Frawley have written extensively on the various forces behind the Aryan Invasion Theory and Max Muller’s

*A passage from a message entitled “Neo-Colonial Captive Minds” by Devan Nair, the former President of Singapore, posted to the egroup of the Educational Council on Indic Traditions (ECIT), <http://www.infinityfoundation.com/ECITneocolonialframe.htm>

contribution to it. According to them, “Frederick Max Müller (1823-1901) is now generally regarded as probably the greatest Indologist of his generation and a peerless Vedic and Sanskrit scholar. He was neither, but circumstances favored him and he proved himself highly adaptable. He is also widely regarded as a great lover of India and Indian culture. His contribution to the study of Indian literature and religion was certainly significant – at least from a Western point of view. His approach to interpretation of the *Rigveda* however does not command today the same authority that it did a hundred years ago, at least among those who are prepared to go to the original. He was completely wrong as regards both history and chronology, and his ignorance of science led him to formulate interpretations that can only be called folklore. Yet the immense prestige that his name still commands, combined with near total ignorance of Sanskrit language and of the Vedas on the part of many modern Indologists and historians, has given his readings an authenticity bordering on infallibility. They continue to misguide scholars even today.

It was Max Müller more than anyone who is responsible for the fiction of the Aryan invasion theory and the absurdly late Vedic chronology – dating of the *Rigveda* to 1200 BCE. Under pressure from critics he later disowned his chronology admitting: “*Whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000, 1500 or 2000 or 3000 B.C., no power on earth will ever determine!*” But advocates of the Aryan invasion theory have chosen to ignore his later retraction, just as they have chosen to disregard his earlier racist formulations. ...It is worth noting however that in his Vedic chronology, he was strongly influenced by the then current Biblical belief that the creation of the world took place at 9:00 AM on October 23, 4004 BCE!

...Assuming the date 4004 BCE for the creation of the world (as Max Müller did), leads to 2448 BCE as the date for the Biblical flood. Granting another thousand years for the waters to subside and for the soil to get dry enough for the Aryans to begin their invasion of India, we obtain c.1400 BCE for the event. Adding another 200 years before they could begin composing the *Rigveda* brings us right to

Max Müller's date of 1200 BCE. ...he used a ghost story from Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* to claim support to this date."⁴

Though he was not a missionary in the literal sense, Max Muller's work was infused with the Christian missionary spirit. In 1868, he wrote to the Duke of Argyle, the then Secretary of State for India, "The missionaries have done far more than they themselves seem to be aware of, nay, much of the work which is theirs they would probably disclaim. The Christianity of our nineteenth century will hardly be the Christianity of India. But the ancient religion of India is doomed – and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?"⁵

Max Müller's translation of the Veda was adversely motivated which he was careful never to express except in intimate private letters such as the one written to his wife in December 1866, "I hope I shall finish that work, and I feel convinced, though I shall not live to see it, that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India, and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion, and to show them what that root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung up from it during the last three thousand years"⁶

Swami Vivekananda could clearly see the European design behind this theory. Speaking more than hundred years ago and addressing Indian Pundits he said, "And this I say to you – to our Pundits – also, 'You are learned men, hunt up your old books and scriptures, please, and draw your own conclusions.'

Whenever the Europeans find an opportunity, they exterminate the aborigines and settle down in ease and comfort on their lands; and therefore they think the Aryans must have done the same! The Westerners would be considered wretched vagabonds if they lived in their native homes depending wholly on their own internal resources, and so they have to run wildly about the world seeking how they can feed upon the fat of the land of others by spoliation and slaughter; and therefore they conclude the

Aryans must have done the same! But where is your proof? Guess-work? Then keep your fanciful guesses to yourselves!

In what Veda, in what Sukta, do you find that the Aryans came into India from a foreign country? Where do you get the idea that they slaughtered the wild aborigines? What do you gain by talking such nonsense?"7

Even though more than hundred years have passed since Swami Vivekananda wrote this, the nonsense still continues in India. It has not been possible for our Pundits and learned men to hunt up our old books and scriptures and draw their independent conclusions. The reason is that we have lost, nationally, the capacity to go behind the outer symbols and phrases to the real purport of the Vedic and Vedantic seers. Even those Indian Pundits – and they are still a minority – who have been able – as result of their own and other sympathetic occidental investigations and research in this field – to see the truth of all that constituted and was behind the Aryan invasion theory and free themselves from the hold of this pernicious doctrine are still not able at all to penetrate into the deeper meaning of the Veda and remain stuck into the grooves created by the European Vedic scholarship. This **spiritual opacity of the Indian Intelligence is a great national loss as it has practically shut us off from the perennial source of the great vitality and creativity of our spiritual culture.** According to Sri Aurobindo, "...the increasing intellectualisation of the Indian mind has been responsible for this great national loss. Our forefathers who discovered or received Vedic truth, did not arrive at it either by intellectual speculation or by logical reasoning. They attained it by actual & tangible experience in the spirit, – by spiritual & psychological observation, as we may say, & what they thus experienced, they understood by the instrumentality of the intuitive reason. But a time came when men felt an imperative need to give an account to themselves & to others of this supreme & immemorial Vedic truth in the terms of logic, in the language of intellectual ratiocination. For the maintenance of the intuitive reason as the ordinary instrument of

knowledge demands as its basis an iron moral & intellectual discipline, a colossal disinterestedness of thinking, – otherwise the imagination and the wishes pollute the purity of its action, replace, dethrone it and wear flamboyantly its name & mask; Vedic knowledge begins to be lost & the practice of life & symbol based upon it are soon replaced by formalised action & unintelligent rite & ceremony. Without tapasya there can be no Veda. This was the course that the stream of thought followed among us, according to the sense of our Indian tradition. The capacity for tapasya belongs to the Golden Age of man's fresh virility; it fades as humanity ages & the cycle takes its way towards the years that are of Iron, and with tapasya, the basis, divine knowledge, the superstructure, also collapses or dwindles. The place of truth is then taken by superstition, irrational error that takes its stand upon the place where truth lies buried builds its tawdry & fantastic palace of pleasure upon those concealed & consecrated foundations, & even uses the ruins of old truth as stones for its irregular building. But such an usurpation can never endure.”⁸

And yet – although, hopefully it is in its last phase before passing into oblivion – it still endures and all the discussion on the meaning of the Veda and the derivation of fantastic historical and other conclusions with flimsy support in certain passages in the Rigveda – which have nothing much to do with the history of even the outer forms of society and have been shown by Sri Aurobindo to have a much deeper spiritual import – is still common to most ancient Indian history books and even the classical and most prestigious eleven volume series edited by R.C. Majumdar entitled “*The History and Culture of the Indian People*”, which is considered to be the first history of India written exclusively by her own people, is not free from this taint.

Fortunately, however, it is no longer a smooth sailing for the above mentioned traditional historical approaches at present, for, an opposition to such injurious handling of our past is increasing among the learned Indologists working in various branches of

knowledge. For example, Sri K.Ramsubramanian of the IIT, Mumbai speaking on “The origin and Development of Mathematics in India”, at the Physics Colloquium of the BARC, Mumbai, on June 7, 2013, after describing in detail the sound Indian mathematical tradition starting from the period of *Śulbasūtras* (800 B.C.), had the following to say in his concluding remarks, “...I would like to conclude with the words of Claude Alvares,*

All Histories are elaborate efforts at myth-making... If we must continue to live with myths, however, it is far better we choose to live by those of our own making rather than by those invented by others for their own purposes...

Making the students aware of the major achievements of their own civilization – particularly in their impressionable age – is likely to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem which are important ingredients in building nation.

That much at least we owe as an independent Society and Nation !!”

We cannot expect any good to come out of the myths about our past invented by those who show a lack of sympathy for Indian spiritual culture because they have no capacity for understanding it.

A. THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM: THE EUROPEAN MISUNDERSTANDING OF INDIAN LITERATURE AND, BASED ON IT, OF ITS SOCIETY, HISTORY, POLITY, RELIGION AND CULTURE

“The main difference between our country and Europe is this, our life is turned inward, Europe’s outward. We judge of good and evil, etc., from the point of motive, Europe judges it on the basis of action done. Knowing God as one who dwells within and who knows all that passes in our minds we seek Him in the soul, Europe looks upon Him as the King of the world and seeks and worships Him in

* *In his introduction to The Indian Science and Technology in the 18th Century by Dharmapal, Other India Press, Goa, 2000.*

the world outside. The heaven of Europe is in the material world; worldly riches, beauty, luxury are welcome and to be sought after; if they imagine any other heaven, that too is a reflection of these riches, beauty and luxury. Their God is akin to our Indra, who rules his world empire, sitting like an earthly monarch on a bejewelled throne, swollen by the hymns and prayers of a thousand flatterers. Our Shiva is the supreme among gods, yet he is but a beggar, out of his senses, uncaring and forgetful; our Krishna is a youth, fond of laughter, fun and love, it is in his nature to be playful. The God of Europe never laughs or plays, since His majesty is hurt by these activities, His godhead suffers. The extrovert attitude is at the back of it – signs of wealth are, for them, the support of splendour, they cannot see a thing unless they see the sign, they have no divine, no subtle vision, everything is material. Our Shiva is a beggar, but to the spiritual seeker he easily gives away all the wealth and wisdom of the three worlds; he is generous to a fault, but the wisdom beyond the reach of the wise is his inborn possession. Our loving, gay Krishna is the hero of the Kurukshetra, father of the worlds, friend and companion of the universe. India's immense knowledge and subtle vision, unfettered divine vision pierces through the material veils and brings out the inner attitude, the true truth, the inner and subtle principles.

* * *

The same order is observed about good and evil. We look at the inner attitude. There may lurk holy feeling behind an activity that we condemn, just as behind the outwardly good or sanctimonious conduct may lie hidden the self-seeking of a scoundrel; good and evil, joy and sorrow are subjective factors, the outer activity is but a veil. We know this; though for the sake of the social order we respect outward good and evil as evidence of the activity, but the inner attitude is what we really cherish. The renunciant, *sannyāsin*, who behaves like inert-mad-fiend, *jaṅṅmattapīlacabat*, as beyond rules and conventions, duty or otherwise, beyond good and evil, such a one, who has risen above laws, we call the supreme person. The western intellect is unable to accept such a principle; he who behaves as inert it treats him as inert, he who behaves as if he is mad it treats him as

off his head, he who behaves like a fiend, it treats him as a disgusting, lawless devil; for it has no subtle vision, and is unable to look at the inner attitude or truth.

* * *

Bound to this outward view of things European scholars say that at no time was there democracy in India. In the Sanskrit language words to describe democracy are not found, those days there were no legislative bodies like the modern parliament, the absence of the outer signs of democracy denotes the absence of democracy. We too on our part have been content to accept as valid this western view. In our ancient Aryan rule there was no lack of democracy; its external instruments were no doubt insufficient, but the democratic attitude permeated the core of society and the government, and stood guard over the people's welfare and progress. First, every village was run entirely on democratic lines, the villagers would come together and, on the basis of the general will and guided by the elderly and leading personalities provided for the administration of the village, and of society; this rural democracy was kept intact during Mughal rule, it vanished only the other day, under the oppression of the British government. Secondly, even in the small principalities, where there existed conditions favourable to a convention of the masses, this custom was in force. In Buddhist literature, in Greek records, in the *Mahabharata* there is abundant evidence in support of this. Thirdly, in the larger kingdoms, where it was impossible for these ingredients or external conditions to be available, the democratic attitude guided the monarchy. The subjects may not have a legislative body, but neither did the king have the least right to pass laws or modify the existing laws. The king was but the keeper of the codes, conventions and laws which the subjects were in the habit of observing. The Brahmins, like the lawyers and judges of today, would explain to the king these regulations admitted and observed by the subjects and they would record in writing the gradual changes which they had observed. The responsibility of governing was indeed the king's, but that power was also severely limited by laws; other than these the king had to act in accordance with the

wishes of his subjects, he would never do anything that might displease his subjects, this political practice was observed by all. If the king violated this rule, the subjects were no longer obliged to respect and follow him.”⁹

Because of their materialistic and extrovert nature, the Western scholars have thoroughly misunderstood and failed to assign its true and legitimate value to the genius of India that has found expression in its rich and vast literary creations which give expression to the profound truths of existence both in their fundamentals and in their varied richness on all the three lower planes – the planes of action, feeling and thought.

Writing on the greatness of Indian literature Sri Aurobindo observed, “The ancient and classical creations of the Sanskrit tongue both in quality and in body and abundance of excellence, in their potent originality and force and beauty, in their substance and art and structure, in grandeur and justice and charm of speech and in the height and width of the reach of their spirit stand very evidently in the front rank among the world’s great literatures. The language itself, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgment, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by the human mind, at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly-formed and full and vibrant and subtle, and its quality and character would be of itself a sufficient evidence of the character and quality of the race whose mind it expressed and the culture of which it was the reflecting medium. The great and noble use made of it by poet and thinker did not fall below the splendour of its capacities. Nor is it in the Sanskrit tongue alone that the Indian mind has done high and beautiful and perfect things, though it couched in that language the larger part of its most prominent and formative and grandest creations. It would be necessary for a complete estimate to take into account as well the Buddhistic literature in Pali and the poetic literatures, here opulent, there more scanty in production, of about a dozen Sanskritic and Dravidian tongues. The whole has almost a

continental effect and does not fall so far short in the quantity of its really lasting things and equals in its things of best excellence the work of ancient and mediaeval and modern Europe. The people and the civilisation that count among their great works and their great names the Veda and the Upanishads, the mighty structures of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and Bhartrihari and Jayadeva and the other rich creations of classical Indian drama and poetry and romance, the Dhammapada and the Jatakas, the Panchatantra, Tulsidas, Vidyapati and Chandidas and Ramprasad, Ramdas and Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar and Kamban and the songs of Nanak and Kabir and Mirabai and the southern Shaiva saints and the Alwars, – to name only the best-known writers and most characteristic productions, though there is a very large body of other work in the different tongues of both the first and the second excellence, – must surely be counted among the greatest civilisations and the world’s most developed and creative peoples. A mental activity so great and of so fine a quality commencing more than three thousand years ago and still not exhausted is unique and the best and most undeniable witness to something extraordinarily sound and vital in the culture.”¹⁰

A criticism – like that of Archer* – which belittles and ignores such a record stands convicted at once of blind malignity and incredible prejudice and does not really merit refutation. The fitting parallel to such an attitude and judgement would be “... if an Indian critic who had read European literature only in bad or ineffective Indian translations, were to pass it under a hostile and disparaging review, dismiss the Iliad as a crude and empty semi-savage and primitive epos, Dante’s great work as the nightmare of a cruel and superstitious religious fantasy, Shakespeare as a drunken barbarian of considerable genius with an epileptic imagination, the whole drama of Greece and Spain and England as a mass of bad ethics and violent horrors, French poetry as a succession of bald or tawdry rhetorical exercises and French fiction as a tainted and immoral

* William Archer, “*India and the Future*”, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1917

thing, a long sacrifice on the altar of the goddess Lubricity, admit here and there a minor merit, but make no attempt at all to understand the central spirit or aesthetic quality or principle of structure and conclude on the strength of his own absurd method that the ideals of both Pagan and Christian Europe were altogether false and bad and its imagination afflicted with a “habitual and ancestral” earthiness, morbidity, poverty and disorder. No criticism would be worth making on such a mass of absurdities ...”¹¹

Now, leaving aside the narrowness and bigotry of the European religious spirit and the associated mental outlook which have found expression – to a greater or lesser extent – in most occidental writings on India and its society, polity and culture, the main reason behind the Western attitude towards India even among the secular minds of the West genuinely sympathetic to it is that, “... there is a rift between the two mentalities and what is delightful and packed with meaning and power to the one has no substance, but only a form, of aesthetic or intellectual pleasure for the other. This difficulty is partly due to an inability to enter into the living spirit and feel the vital touch of the language, but partly to a spiritual difference ... At bottom it is an insufficient comprehension of the quite different spirit behind, the different heart of this culture that produces the mingled attraction and dissatisfaction. The subject is too large to be dealt with adequately in small limits ...”¹² It may be well to look a little more deeply into it.

To be continued...

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HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (21)

XIII. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THE HISTORICAL BASES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA

A. AN INTELLECTUAL STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTICS IN THE VEDA

What is the secret meaning, the esoteric sense which emerges out of the mystic approach to the Veda? “It is what we would expect from the nature of the seeking of the mystics everywhere. It is also, as we should expect from the actual course of the development of Indian culture, an early form of the spiritual truth which found its culmination in the Upanishads; the secret knowledge of the Veda is the seed which is evolved later on into the Vedanta. The thought around which all is centred is the seeking after Truth, Light, Immortality.”¹

The following is a five-fold statement of the doctrine of the mystics which may be useful in providing a wide perspective to the detailed discussion of the truth of the Veda based on Sri Aurobindo’s deep spiritual experience in the next two sections.

(i) There is a truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence and man has to find his way to that;

(ii) There are many worlds between this world and the Great Heaven of the Truth, the Right and the Vast. We have to find our way to this great heaven.

(iii) Human life is a battle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals, and the powers of Darkness.

(iv) Vedic Yajna symbolises an inner sacrifice involving man’s interchange with Gods to move on the path leading to the higher Truth. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human which is symbolised in the Vedic conception of sacrifice.

(v) The Gods are various names and personalities of the one

Reality, one Truth and one Bliss to which we must rise.

B. THE BASIC APPROACH AND THE BEGINNINGS

According to Sri Aurobindo, **“The Rig Veda is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language.** They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or there are risings and fallings in the same hymn; it proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. In the deep and mystic style of Dirghatamas Auchathya as in the melodious lucidity of Medhatithi Kanwa, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Vishwamitra as in Vasishtha’s even harmonies we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates.”²

Because of this peculiarity of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo suggested that his psychological method of interpretation can be “equally well illustrated from a number of scattered Suktas selected from the ten Mandalas or from any small block of hymns by a single Rishi.”³

When Sri Aurobindo pursued his method of interpretation in much greater details, he discovered that **once the deeper sense of the symbols was known, the spiritual intention of the Vedic legends became apparent and inevitable.** He found that, **“Every element of the Veda is inextricably bound up with every other**

and the very nature of these compositions compels us, once we have adopted a principle of interpretation, to carry it to its farthest rational limits. Their materials have been skilfully welded together by firm hands and any inconsistency in our handling of them shatters the whole fabric of their sense and their coherent thinking.”⁴ Thus emerged in Sri Aurobindo’s mind, “...revealing itself as it were out of the ancient verses, a Veda which was throughout the Scripture of a great and antique religion already equipped with a profound psychological discipline, – a Scripture not confused in thought or primitive in its substance, not a medley of heterogeneous or barbarous elements, but one, complete and self-conscious in its purpose and in its purport, veiled indeed by the cover, sometimes thick, sometimes transparent, of another and material sense, but never losing sight even for a single moment of its high spiritual aim and tendency.”⁵

In spite of the extensive work that was done by Sri Aurobindo on the Veda – he altogether translated over 4,500 verses out of a total of 10,580 verses in the Rig Veda – he felt that if the object were to establish his interpretation on a scholastic basis beyond all possibility of reasonable objection, then a much more detailed and considerable work would be necessary – more than what he then planned for *The Secret of the Veda* or was eventually, altogether, able to do. However, based on his spiritual experience, **Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the Veda**, reported in *The Secret of the Veda, Hymns to the Mystic Fire, Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research* and other writings, rests on as solid a ground as any other, and **has for those who have enough experience of their own to enable them to have an unshakeable faith in Sri Aurobindo and his findings based on his deep and vast spiritual experience and knowledge, a finality impervious to any assault of scholastic doubts and questionings. It is only with a view to satisfy the cultured intelligence of today that Sri Aurobindo supports his psychological interpretation of the Veda by both philological and historical considerations throughout *The Secret of the Veda* – his major work on the Vedic interpretation.**

Sri Aurobindo begins his analysis with the very first Rik (verse) of the Veda which is addressed to Agni by Madhuchchhandas and which according to him admirably strikes the first essential note of the Vedic harmony. To illustrate his method of approach to the Veda, Sri Aurobindo initially takes the first eleven Suktas (hymns) of the first Mandala – the first ten by Vishwamitri Madhuchchhandas and the eleventh by his son Jetri. “The first hymn, addressed to Agni, suggests the central conception of the Truth which is confirmed in the second and third Suktas invoking Indra in company with other gods. In the remaining eight hymns with Indra as the sole deity, except for one which he shares with the Maruts, we find the symbols of the Soma and the Cow, the obstructor Vritra and the great role played by Indra in leading man to the Light and overthrowing the barriers to his progress. These hymns are therefore of crucial importance to the psychological interpretation of the Veda.”⁶

In Sri Aurobindo’s view, in the first Sukta of the opening Mandala (I.1) of the Rig Veda, there are four verses, the fifth to the eighth (I.1.5-8), in which the psychological sense of the Veda comes out with a great force and clearness breaking through the veil of the symbol. These are:

*“Agnir hot kavikratu, satya citra ravastama;
 devo devebhir gamat.
 Yad a ga d u e tvam, agne bhadra kari yasi;
 tavet tat satyam a gira.
 Upa tv gne dive dive, do vastar dhiy vayam;
 namo bharanta emasi.
 R jantam adhvar, gop m tasya d divim;
 vardham na sve dame.”*⁷

Sri Aurobindo rendered these in English as follows:

“May Agni, priest of the offering whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in varied inspiration, come, a god with the gods.

‘The good that thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth

of thee, O Angiras.

‘To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light we by the thought come bearing our submission, –

‘To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination, increasing in thy own home.”⁸

“Who, then, is this god Agni to whom language of so mystic a fervour is addressed, to whom functions so vast and profound are ascribed? Who is this guardian of the Truth, who is in his act its illumination, whose will in the act is the will of a seer possessed of a divine wisdom governing his richly varied inspiration? What is the Truth that he guards? And what is this good that he creates for the giver who comes always to him in thought day and night bearing as his sacrifice submission and self-surrender? Is it gold and horses and cattle that he brings or is it some diviner riches?

It is not the sacrificial Fire that is capable of these functions, nor can it be any material flame or principle of physical heat and light. Yet throughout the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. **It is evident that we are in the presence of a mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching and yet figures which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front.”**⁹

Behind the outward figures of the sacrifice, the psychological conception is that of “a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being; it is in its action *ītam*, right, – truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *bṛhat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *bṛhat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation.”¹⁰ The sense mentality which is at the root of the apparent facts of sensation and appearance which are full of

falsehoods, has for its instruments the senses, the sense mind (manas) and the intellect working on their evidence. The truth-consciousness on the other hand, has for its instruments the faculties of *dṛṣṭi* – the direct vision of the truth, *śruti* – the direct hearing of its word and *viveka* – the direct discrimination of the right. Whoever is in possession of the truth-consciousness or open to those faculties is called a Rishi or Kavi, sage or seer. It is in the light of these conceptions of truth, *satyam* and *ṛtam* that Sri Aurobindo interprets the opening Sukta of the Veda.

“Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge, for it is *ṛtavedas*, knower of all births, *viśvāni vayunāni vidvān*, – it knows all manifestations or phenomena or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.

Psychologically, then, **we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it**, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavikratuḥ*, he whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer, – works, that is to say, with the knowledge which comes by the truth-consciousness and in which there is no misapplication or error. The epithets that follow confirm this interpretation. Agni is *satya*, true in his being; perfect possession of his own truth and the essential truth of things gives him the power to apply it perfectly in all act and movement of force. He has both the *satyam* and the *ṛtam*. ...Therefore it is the power of Agni to apply the Truth in the work (*karma* or *apas*) symbolised by the sacrifice, that makes him the object of human invocation. **The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange**

between the mortal and the Immortal. Agni is elsewhere frequently described as the envoy, *āta*, the medium of that communication and interchange.

We see, then, in what capacity Agni is called to the sacrifice. 'Let him come, a god with the gods.' The emphasis given to the idea of divinity by this repetition, *devo devebhir*, becomes intelligible when we recall the standing description of Agni as the god in human beings, the immortal in mortals, the divine guest. We may give the full psychological sense by translating, 'Let him come, a divine power with the divine powers.' For in the external sense of the Veda the Gods are universal powers of physical Nature personified; in any inner sense they must be universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities, Will, Mind, etc. **But in the Veda there is always a distinction between the ordinary human or mental action of these puissances, *manuṣyat*, and the divine. It is supposed that man by the right use of their mental action in the inner sacrifice to the gods can convert them into their true or divine nature, the mortal can become immortal.** Thus the Ribhus, who were at first human beings or represented human faculties, became divine and immortal powers by perfection in the work, *sukṛtyay*, *svapasyay*. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human which seems to be symbolised in the sacrifice.

The state of immortality thus attained is conceived as a state of felicity or bliss founded on a perfect Truth and Right, *satyam ṛtam*. We must, I think, understand in this sense the verse that follows. 'The good (happiness) which thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Agni.' In other words, the essence of this truth, which is the nature of Agni, is the freedom from evil, the state of perfect good and happiness which the *Ritam* carries in itself and which is sure to be created in the mortal when he offers the sacrifice by the action of Agni as the divine priest. *Bhadram* means anything good, auspicious, happy and by itself need not carry any deep significance. But we find it in the Veda used, like *ṛtam*, in a special

sense. It is described in one of the hymns (V.82) as the opposite of the evil dream (*duṣvapnyam*), the false consciousness of that which is not the Ritam, and of *duritam*, false going, which means all evil and suffering. *Bhadram* is therefore equivalent to *suvitam*, right going, which means all good and felicity belonging to the state of the Truth, the Ritam. It is Mayas, the felicity, and the gods who represent the Truth-consciousness are described as *mayobhuva*, those who bring or carry in their being the felicity. Thus every part of the Veda, if properly understood, throws light upon every other part. It is only when we are misled by its veils that we find in it an incoherence.

In the next verse there seems to be stated the condition of the effective sacrifice. It is the continual resort day by day, in the night and in the light, of the thought in the human being with submission, adoration, self-surrender, to the divine Will and Wisdom represented by Agni. Night and Day, *Naktoṣs*, are also symbolical, like all the other gods in the Veda, and the sense seems to be that in all states of consciousness, whether illumined or obscure, there must be a constant submission and reference of all activities to the divine control.

For whether by day or night Agni shines out in the sacrifices; he is the guardian of the Truth, of the Ritam in man and defends it from the powers of darkness; he is its constant illumination burning up even in obscure and besieged states of the mind. The ideas thus briefly indicated in the eighth verse are constantly found throughout the hymns to Agni in the Rig Veda.

Agni is finally described as increasing in his own home. We can no longer be satisfied with the explanation of the own home of Agni as the 'fire-room' of the Vedic householder. We must seek in the Veda itself for another interpretation and we find it in the 75th hymn of the first Mandala.

*Yaj no mitrvaruṣ, yaj devān tā bhat;
agne yakṣi svaḥ damam.*

'Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods, to

the Truth, the Vast; O Agni, sacrifice to thy own home.’

Here *ta* *bhat* and *sva* *damam* seem to express the goal of the sacrifice and this is perfectly in consonance with the imagery of the Veda which frequently describes the sacrifice as travelling towards the gods and man himself as a traveller moving towards the truth, the light or the felicity. It is evident, therefore, that the Truth, the Vast and Agni’s own home are identical. Agni and other gods are frequently spoken of as being born in the truth, dwelling in the wide or vast. The sense, then, will be in our passage that Agni the divine will and power in man increases in the truth-consciousness, its proper sphere, where false limitations are broken down, *ur* *v* *anib* *dhe*, in the wide and the limitless.”¹¹

Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, in the four verses of the opening Sukta (I.1.5-8) of the Veda **we get the first indications of the principal ideas of the Vedic Rishis, “– the conception of a Truth-consciousness supramental and divine, the invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind, the attainment in and by this Truth of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity and the inner sacrifice and offering of what one has and is by the mortal to the Immortal as the means of the divine consummation.** All the rest of Vedic thought in its spiritual aspects is grouped around these central conceptions.”¹²

References:

The following is the list of references with their page numbers in the parantheses from various volumes of the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo:

CWSA 15 - 2(58), 3(58), 4(46-47), 5(47), 6(60-61), 7(61), 8(63-64), 9(64), 10(65), 11(65-68), 12(68-69)

CWSA 16 - 1(19)

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (21)

4. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN ART

V. THE NATIONAL VALUE OF ART

“THERE is a tendency in modern times to depreciate the value of the beautiful and overstress the value of the useful, a tendency curbed in Europe by the imperious insistence of an agelong tradition of culture and generous training of the aesthetic perceptions; but in India, where we have been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition, it is corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed, in the temperament of the people. **The value attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry has become almost unintelligible to an age bent on depriving life of its meaning by turning earth into a sort of glorified anthep or beehive and confusing the lowest, though most primary in necessity, of the means of human progress with the aim of this great evolutionary process.**”¹

“Whatever benefits the laudable and well-meaning efforts of English educationists may have bestowed on this country, it is certain that, aided by the inrush of the vulgar, the mechanical and the commonplace from the commercial West, they had succeeded in entirely vulgarising the aesthetic mind and soul of the Indian people. Its innate and instinctive artistic taste has disappeared; the eye and the aesthetic sense have not been so much corrupted as killed. What more flagrant sign of this debacle could there be than the fact that all educated India hailed the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, an incompetent imitation of the worst European styles, as the glory of a new dawn and that hideous and glaring reproductions of them still adorning its dwellings?”²

A. *The Aesthetic Value of Art*

“The first and lowest use of Art is the purely aesthetic, the

second is the intellectual or educative, the third and highest the spiritual. By speaking of the aesthetic use as the lowest, we do not wish to imply that it is not of immense value to humanity, but simply to assign to it its comparative value in relation to the higher uses. The aesthetic is of immense importance and until it has done its work, mankind is not really fitted to make full use of Art on the higher planes of human development. Aristotle assigns a high value to tragedy because of its purifying force. He describes its effect as *katharsis*, a sacramental word of the Greek mysteries, which, in the secret discipline of the ancient Greek Tantrics, answered precisely to our *cittauddhi*, the purification of the *citta* or mass of established ideas, feelings and actional habits in a man either by *sañyama*, rejection, or by *bhoga*, satisfaction, or by both. Aristotle was speaking of the purification of feelings, passions and emotions in the heart through imaginative treatment in poetry but the truth the idea contains is of much wider application and constitutes the justification of the aesthetic side of art. It purifies by beauty. The beautiful and the good are held by many thinkers to be the same and, though the idea may be wrongly stated, it is, when put from the right standpoint, not only a truth but the fundamental truth of existence. According to our own philosophy the whole world came out of *ñnanda* and returns into *ñnanda*, and the triple term in which *ñnanda* may be stated is Joy, Love, Beauty. To see divine beauty in the whole world, man, life, nature, to love that which we have seen and to have pure unalloyed bliss in that love and that beauty is the appointed road by which mankind as a race must climb to God. That is the reaching to *vidyā* through *avidyā*, to the One Pure and Divine through the manifold manifestation of Him, of which the Upanishad repeatedly speaks. But the bliss must be pure and unalloyed, unalloyed by self-regarding emotions, unalloyed by pain and evil. The sense of good and bad, beautiful and unbeautiful, which afflicts our understanding and our senses, must be replaced by *akhañña rasa*, undifferentiated and unabridged delight in the delightfulness of things, before the highest can be reached. On the way to this goal full use must be

made of the lower and abridged sense of beauty which seeks to replace the less beautiful by the more, the lower by the higher, the mean by the noble.

At a certain stage of human development the aesthetic sense is of infinite value in this direction. It raises and purifies conduct by instilling a distaste for the coarse desires and passions of the savage, for the rough, uncouth and excessive in action and manner, and restraining both feeling and action by a striving after the decent, the beautiful, the fit and seemly which received its highest expression in the manners of cultivated European society, the elaborate ceremonious life of the Confucian, the careful *ṛiti* and etiquette of Hinduism.”³

B. The Spiritual Value of Art

“European critics have dwelt on the close connection of the highest developments of art with religion, and it is undoubtedly true that in Greece, in Italy, in India, the greatest efflorescence of a national Art has been associated with the employment of the artistic genius to illustrate or adorn the thoughts and fancies or the temples and instruments of the national religion. This was not because Art is necessarily associated with the outward forms of religion, but because it was in the religion that men’s spiritual aspirations centred themselves. Spirituality is a wider thing than formal religion and it is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression. Spirituality is a single word expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength, and that will be the highest and most perfect Art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation. This is what Indian Art alone attempted thoroughly and in the effort

it often dispensed, either deliberately or from impatience, with the lower, yet not negligible perfections which the more material European demanded. Therefore Art has flowed in two separate streams in Europe and Asia, so diverse that it is only now that the European aesthetic sense has so far trained itself as to begin to appreciate the artistic conventions, aims and traditions of Asia. Asia's future development will unite these two streams in one deep and grandiose flood of artistic self-expression perfecting the aesthetic evolution of humanity.

But if Art is to reach towards the highest, the Indian tendency must dominate. The spirit is that in which all the rest of the human being reposes, towards which it returns and the final self-revelation of which is the goal of humanity. Man becomes God, and all human activity reaches its highest and noblest when it succeeds in bringing body, heart and mind into touch with spirit. Art can express eternal truth, it is not limited to the expression of form and appearance. **So wonderfully has God made the world that a man using a simple combination of lines, an unpretentious harmony of colours, can raise this apparently insignificant medium to suggest absolute and profound truths with a perfection which language labours with difficulty to reach. What Nature is, what God is, what man is can be triumphantly revealed in stone or on canvas.**"⁴

C. Art in the Life of a Nation

The enormous value of Art to human evolution is apparent from the above. "It is obvious that no nation can afford to neglect an element of such high importance to the culture of its people or the training of some of the higher intellectual, moral and aesthetic faculties in the young. The system of education which, instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists, frankly introduces it as a part of culture no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education and the general diffusion of a broad-based human culture. **It is not necessary that every man should**

be an artist. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty and insight into form and colour and that which is expressed in form and colour, made habitually active, correct and sensitive. It is necessary that those who create, whether in great things or small, whether in the unusual masterpieces of art and genius or in the small common things of use that surround a man's daily life, should be habituated to produce and the nation habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realises the fullness of the expanding Spirit in itself."⁵

VI. INDIAN ART

"THE GREATNESS of Indian art is the greatness of all Indian thought and achievement. It lies in the recognition of the persistent within the transient, of the domination of matter by spirit, the subordination of the insistent appearances of Prakriti to the inner reality which, in a thousand ways, the Mighty Mother veils even while she suggests. The European artist, cabined within the narrow confines of the external, is dominated in imagination by the body of things and the claims of the phenomenon. Western painting starts from the eye or the imagination; its master word is either beauty or reality, and, according as he is the slave of his eye or the playfellow of his imagination, the painter produces a photograph or a poem. But, in painting, the European imagination seldom travels beyond an imaginative interpretation or variation of what the physical eye has seen. Imitation is the key-word of creation, according to Aristotle; Shakespeare advises the artist to hold up the mirror to Nature; and the Greek scientist and the English poet reflect accurately the mind of Europe.

But the Indian artist has been taught by his philosophy and the spiritual discipline of his forefathers that the imagination is only a

channel and an instrument of some source of knowledge and inspiration that is greater and higher; by meditation or by Yoga he seeks within himself that ultimate centre of knowledge where there is direct and utter vision of the thing that lies hidden in the forms of man, animal, tree, river, mountain. It is this *samyag jñāna*, this *sākṣīdarśana*, the utter, revealing and apocalyptic vision, that he seeks, and when he has found it, whether by patient receptivity or sudden inspiration, his whole aim is to express it utterly and revealingly in line and colour. Form is only a means of expressing the spirit, and the one thought of the artist should be how best to render the spiritual vision. He is not bound by the forms that compose the world of gross matter, though he takes them as a starting-point for his formal expression of the vision within him; if by modifying them or departing from them he can reveal that vision more completely, his freedom and his duty as an artist emancipate him from the obligation of the mere recorder and copyist. The ancient Asiatic artists were not incapable of reproducing outward Nature with as perfect and vigorous an accuracy as the Europeans; but it was their ordinary method deliberately to suppress all that might hamper the expression of their spiritual vision.

Reality for its own sake, one of the most dominant notes of Art in Europe, Indian artistic theory would not have recognised; for we have always regarded the reality of the Europeans as an appearance; to us the true reality is that which is hidden; otherwise, there would be no need of the prophet, the philosopher, the poet and the artist. It is they who see with the *sākṣī mā dṛṣṭi*, the inner vision, and not like the ordinary man with the eye only. Beauty for beauty's sake, the other great note of European Art is recognised by us, but not in the higher work of the artist. Just as in the first ideal, the tyranny of the eye is acknowledged, so in the second the tyranny of the aesthetic imagination. The Indian seeks freedom, and the condition of freedom is the search for ultimate Truth....

We of today have been overpowered by the European tradition as interpreted by the English, the least artistic of civilised nations. We have therefore come to make on a picture the same demand as

on a photograph, – the reproduction of the thing as the eye sees it, not even as the retrospective mind or the imagination sees it, exact resemblance to the beings or objects we know, or, if anything more, then a refinement on Nature in the direction of greater picturesqueness and prettiness and the satisfaction of the lower and more external sense of beauty. The conception that Art exists not to copy, but for the sake of a deeper truth and vision, and we must seek in it not the object but God in the object, not things but the soul of things, seems to have vanished for a while from the Indian consciousness.

Another obstacle to the appreciation of great art, to which even those Indians who are not dominated by European ideas are liable, is the exaggerated respect for the symbols and traditions which our art or literature has used at a certain stage of development. I am accustomed for instance to a particular way of representing Shiva or Kali and I refuse to have any other. But the artist has nothing to do with my prejudices. He has to represent the essential truth of Shiva or Kali, that which makes their Shivahood or Kalihood, and he is under no obligation to copy the vision of others. If he has seen another vision of Shiva or Kali, it is that vision to which he must be faithful. The curious discussion which arose recently as to the propriety or otherwise of representing the gods without beard or moustache, is an instance of this literalism which is a survival of the enslavement to form and rule characteristic of the eighteenth century. The literalist cannot see that it is not the moustache or beard or the symbol which makes the godhead, but the divine greatness, immortal strength, beauty, youth, purity or peace within. It is that godhead which the artist must draw and paint, and in the forms he chooses he is bound only by the vision in *dhyāna*. Whether his interpretation will gain an abiding place in the thought and imagination of the race, depends on its power to awake the deeper vision in the race. All that we can demand is that it shall be a real God, a real Shiva, a real Kali, and not a freak of his imagination or an outcome of some passing *saṅkīra* of his education or artistic upbringing. He must go to the fountainhead of knowledge within himself or his claim to

freedom does not stand. It has already been said that the condition of freedom is the search for truth, and the artist must not allow his imagination to take the place of the higher quality.

Indian Art demands of the artist the power of communion with the soul of things, the sense of spiritual taking precedence of the sense of material beauty, and fidelity to the deeper vision within; of the lover of art it demands the power to see the spirit in things, the openness of mind to follow a developing tradition, and the sattwic passivity, discharged of prejudgments, which opens luminously to the secret intention of the picture and is patient to wait until it attains a perfect and profound divination.”⁶

A. The Right Way of Approaching Indian Art

“ARCHITECTURE, sculpture and painting, because they are the three great arts which appeal to the spirit through the eye, are those too in which the sensible and the invisible meet with the strongest emphasis on themselves and yet the greatest necessity of each other. The form with its insistent masses, proportions, lines, colours, can here only justify them by their service for the something intangible it has to express; the spirit needs all the possible help of the material body to interpret itself to itself through the eye, yet asks of it that it shall be as transparent a veil as possible of its own greater significance. The art of the East and the art of the West – each in its characteristic or mean, for there are always exceptions, – deal with the problem of these two interlocking powers in a quite different way. The Western mind is arrested and attracted by the form, lingers on it and cannot get away from its charm, loves it for its own beauty, rests on the emotional, intellectual, aesthetic suggestions that arise directly from its most visible language, confines the soul in the body; it might almost be said that for this mind form creates the spirit, the spirit depends for its existence and for everything it has to say on the form. The Indian attitude to the matter is at the opposite pole to this view. For the Indian mind form does not exist except as a creation of the spirit and draws all its meaning and value from the spirit.

Every line, arrangement of mass, colour, shape, posture, every physical suggestion, however many, crowded, opulent they may be, is first and last a suggestion, a hint, very often a symbol which is in its main function a support for a spiritual emotion, idea, image that again goes beyond itself to the less definable, but more powerfully sensible reality of the spirit which has excited these movements in the aesthetic mind and passed through them into significant shapes.

This characteristic attitude of the Indian reflective and creative mind necessitates in our view of its creations an effort to get beyond at once to the inner spirit of the reality it expresses and see from it and not from outside. And in fact to start from the physical details and their synthesis appears to me quite the wrong way to look at an Indian work of art. The orthodox style of Western criticism seems to be to dwell scrutinisingly on the technique, on form, on the obvious story of the form, and then pass to some appreciation of beautiful or impressive emotion and idea. It is only in some deeper and more sensitive minds that we get beyond that depth into profounder things. A criticism of that kind applied to Indian art leaves it barren or poor of significance. Here the only right way is to get at once through a total intuitive or revelatory impression or by some meditative dwelling on the whole, *dhyāna* in the technical Indian term, to the spiritual meaning and atmosphere, make ourselves one with that as completely as possible, and then only the helpful meaning and value of all the rest comes out with a complete and revealing force. For here it is the spirit that carries the form, while in most Western art it is the form that carries whatever there may be of spirit. The striking phrase of Epictetus recurs to the mind in which he describes man as a little soul carrying a corpse, *psucharion ei bastazon nekron*. The more ordinary Western outlook is upon animate matter carrying in its life a modicum of soul. But the seeing of the Indian mind and of Indian art is that of a great, a limitless self and spirit, *mahān ātmā*, which carries to us in the sea of its presence a living shape of itself, small in comparison to its own infinity, but yet sufficient by the power that informs this symbol to support some aspect of that infinite's self-expression. It is therefore essential that we should look here

not solely with the physical eye informed by the reason and the aesthetic imagination, but make the physical seeing a passage to the opening of the inner spiritual eye and a moved communion in the soul. A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. That is why the Japanese with their fine sense in these things, – a sense which modern Europe with her assault of crowded art galleries and over-pictured walls seems to have quite lost, though perhaps I am wrong, and those are the right conditions for display of European art, – have put their temples and their Buddhas as often as possible away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life, but keep them by preference in such a way that their undisputed suggestion can sink into the mind in its finer moments or apart where they can go and look at them in a treasured secrecy when the soul is at leisure from life. That is an indication of the utmost value pointing to the nature of the appeal made by Eastern art and the right way and mood for looking at its creations.”⁷

References:

1. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.1, p.433, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
2. **Ibid**, pp.578-79
3. **Ibid**, pp.439-40
4. **Ibid**, pp.450-51
5. **Ibid**, p.453
6. **Ibid**, pp.464-67
7. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.20, pp.270-72, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

“The Mahabharata is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation; it is the poem of itself written by a whole people....

The whole is a poetic expression unique in its power and fullness of the entire soul and thought and life of a people.”

- Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 20, pp. 347-49)