

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

January 2016



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

– The Mother

Year 6

Issue 10

The Resurgent India English monthly published and printed by Smt. Suman Sharma on behalf of The Resurgent India Trust Published at C/o J.N. Socketed Cement Pipes Pvt. Ltd., Village Bhamraula Post Bagwara, Kichha Road, Rudrapur (U.S Nagar) **email:** sadlecjrn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL : www.resurgentindia.org

Printed at : Priyanka Printing Press, Hotel Krish Building, Janta Inter College Road, Udham Nagar, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand

Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma, B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur, P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Dist. Rampur (U.P)

THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

January 2016



SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

Year 6

Issue 10

CONTENTS

India-Pakistan Relations: the Inevitable Future	6
The New Shift	6
Relations on an Upswing?	7
The Future	8
The Disease of False Secularism – Part-I.....	9
The Present Context	10
False Secularism	12
Going Back to History: Why is Current Discourse of Secularism False?	14
History of India – The Vedic Age (16)	16
IX. Historical Background – How the Veda Suffered the Mutilation of Its Sense	16
The Greatness of India and Its Culture (15)	23
2. Indian Civilisation and Culture	23
IV. The Greatest Accomplishment of Indian Culture – the Web of the Sanatana Dharma	23
H. The Dynamic Formulation of Indian Religious Culture	23
(i) <i>The First Perception</i>	23
(ii) <i>The Second Perception</i>	23
(iii) <i>The Frame for the Execution of Its First Perception – The Triple Quartette</i>	24
(iv) <i>The Cultural Effort for the Execution of the Second Perception – the Endeavour to Cast the Whole Life into a Religious Mould</i>	25
(v) <i>The Third Perception – The Varying Natural Capacity of Man, Adhikṛta</i>	25
(vi) <i>The Means Used to Give Effect to the Third Perception – the Perception of the Three Types or Levels of the Evolving Human Soul and the Creation of the Varying Religious Atmosphere Suited to Each</i>	27
(vii) <i>The Provision for or the Admittance of the Possibility of a Direct Approach to the Spiritual Reality Free of the Gradations</i>	30

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)

India-Pakistan Relations: the Inevitable Future

Behind the façade of persistent hostility, relations between India and Pakistan have been undergoing deeper changes during the last year, and Pathankot marks one critical landmark in the continuum of these changes. It had become a pattern that almost every attempt at outreach and cultivation of relations beyond the minimalistic peace offering had been followed by terrorist attacks or border tensions between the two countries. And almost every time this had derailed the peace process. However, this time there is a major difference, with both the countries clearly identifying the role of a third actor and allying with each other and the international community to avoid the derailing of talks.

The New Shift

The Indian state of Punjab has become the ideal ground for cross-border terrorism in recent times. The January 2nd attack on an Indian air force base in Pathankot is yielding new facts every day. It has become clear that the attack was spearheaded by the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and its key leaders, who were also involved in hijacking a plane during the late nineties to prompt the release of terrorists arrested in India. And significantly it is now obvious that there was insider involvement, without which it would have been near impossible to breach, undetected¹, the base, which is surrounded by a fifteen mile perimeter and a ten foot wall topped by a concertina wire.

Since 2014, cross border terrorism has assumed different dimensions. The epicentre of terrorist infiltration and attacks has largely expanded from Kashmir to Punjab. Last summer's Gurdaspur attack raised the concern of the expansion in the Indian security establishment. Besides which, Punjab is increasingly becoming a domestic conflict zone. Its status as the centre of widespread drug smuggling has intensified in the recent years, and, during the last year, there have also been communal tensions in the state.

Relations on an Upswing?

Relations between the two countries have been on an upswing since the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of the Paris climate conference. This unscheduled meeting took place after Sharif expressed his willingness to resume the bilateral dialogue with India without any preconditions² – a new signal, since, for both India and Pakistan, the issues of terrorism and Kashmir, have hitherto constituted a significant precondition for progressing in the dialogue.

This was followed by the Indian foreign minister, Sushma Swaraj, agreeing to attend the ‘Heart of Asia’ conference on Afghanistan, in Islamabad, on December 9th. With India taking the initiative to hold the sixth such conference in 2016, it is clear that what is happening is an inevitable reorientation of India-Pakistan relations in the larger context of South Asia. The Istanbul Process document of the conference highlighted issues like economy and terrorism as its key agenda.

Further cementing of ties occurred with a surprise visit by Modi on December 25th to Lahore, en route to India from Russia and Afghanistan, to attend Sharif’s birthday. It was a diplomatic coup that was lauded by the international community and yielded the way for holding the stalled NSA (National Security Adviser)-level talks on January 15th. The last such visit by an Indian PM was in 2004.

Three factors can be seen as being critically responsible for the rapid changes in India-Pakistan relations:

First, there was a recent³ widespread publicity of the issue of atrocities perpetrated on the civilians in PoK and how their voices, in favour of development and against identity politics and terrorism, were brutally crushed by Pakistan.

Second, India, under Modi, has firmed up its foreign policy, to give preference to ‘neighbourhood first’. Thus, even last year after the attack in Punjab, India demanded tough action from Pakistan, but without saying that it will compromise on the peace process.

Third, the economy plays a crucial role in Modi’s agenda to ramp

up SAARC as a relevant regional organization, by raising issues like trade, connectivity and common limited financial institutions.

The Future

A resumption of dialogue will be good for both the countries. The biggest payoff will be in terms of the economy. India can offer Pakistan manufactured goods which Pakistan currently procures from distant countries, hiking its GDP by about 2%.⁴ On this side of the border, Indian industry has, therefore, the most to gain if bilateral trade with Pakistan opens up.

This time even Pakistan is committed to sustaining the dialogue. It has given its assurance to the international community, in response to US's statement on strong action. It needs to strengthen its ties with India in other areas as well. The recent attack on the Pakistani consulate in Afghanistan shows that it is as vulnerable to terrorism as India. Since 2003, the number of fatalities in terrorist violence in Pakistan stands at about 60,000, out of which more than 20,000 are civilians.⁵ It has also been on the receiving end of JeM's Maulana Masood Azhar's warning of facing destruction if it takes any action against terrorism. But Pakistan cannot remain stuck in this suspended mode forever. Time is running out for it and it has to take a stand or be engulfed by the inter-Islamic terrorist conflicts. The future is inevitably in the direction of forging closer ties with India.

References:

1. **Reuters. 2016.** January 10. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/pakistan-tells-u-india-attack-probe-bring-truth-084855961.html>.
2. **Roy, Shubhajit, and Amitabh Sinha. 2015.** *The Indian Express*. December 1. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pm-modi-meets-nawaz-sharif-at-un-climate-summit-in-paris/>.
3. **The Quint. 2015. The Quint. September 30.** <http://www.thequint.com/india/2015/09/29/living-hell-in-pakistan-pro-india-voices-in-pok-brutally-crushed>.
4. **Ramachandran, Sushma. 2016.** *ABP Live*. January 7. <http://www.abplive.in/blog/improving-trade-relations-with-pakistan-will-be-win-win-for-india>.
5. **Organiser. 2016.** *Organiser*. January. <http://organiser.org//Encyc/2016/1/18/Editorial---Better-Late-than-Never.aspx>.

The Disease of False Secularism – Part-I

The disease of false secularism has befuddled our minds and invaded our good sense as a society. The glaring truth before us is that secularism, as has been practised in the last sixty-five years since Independence, has failed as a political and social creed. Yet, the intellectual class is bent on preaching the same old false secularism more than ever now.

Ever since the Narendra Modi government assumed power at the Centre in 2014, the intellectual and ‘secular’ political class of this country has been at the risk of being wiped out, losing out in the domain of academic institutions and vote-banks, respectively. Threatened by the hold of the Modi government over the popular psyche, in both urban and rural areas, the ‘secular’ class of this country has started to politicize every small incident and action of the government, terming it as communal and right-wing.

This is unfortunate. Even with the spread of Islamic radicalism world-over, we seem to be living in a bubble of our own. The argument our secularists advance is that there are two types of Muslims (just like in any other religion) viz. good or educated or peace-loving Muslims and bad or radical Muslims. They say that the problem is not with Islam – since, like all religions, it also preaches peace – but with its outer radical deformations which are confined to a section, albeit a large section, of Muslims.

This is a flawed belief. There is now a re-questioning of Islam itself in the current scenario. Muslim public figures like Tarek Fatah and Taslima Nasreen have come out openly to say that the problem is not with the Muslims but with what Islam preaches. If we don’t expose this root cause of Muslim radicalism, we will never be able to administer the medicine which society so badly needs. Otherwise, it will be like saying, like Obama, that there’s good Taliban and there’s bad Taliban – an ill-founded assumption that has now landed Americans on their nose.

Islam’s Koranic premise is that: “Fight them until idolatry is no

more and God's religion is supreme".¹ It treats other communities and their people as *kafirs* or non-believers destined to go to hell, with whom there is a fundamental problem, precisely because they are the 'other' and not the same as itself. It ordains that the Prophet and his followers wage a holy war or jihad against these non-believers. Conversion to Islam, under duress, has been admitted from the very formative years of this religion and even in the presence of the Prophet, as documented by various Muslim authors like Husayn Haykal.²

In fact, even a minimum divergence from the injunctions of the Prophet is not tolerated. Therefore, within Islam, the differences between different sects have resulted in an enmity that now threatens to destroy its followers world-over, especially in the Middle-east. As one commentator succinctly summed it, "Sunnis consider Shias as kafirs, both of them consider Kurds, Ahamadiyas and Khojas and other minor sect peoples as kafirs. All of them in turn call each other as kafirs. Sufis are the most prominent sect with strong spiritual overtone. They too are no exception...Sufis are under threat from Salafis all over the Islamic world."³

If this is the character of the religion itself, then certainly, even a so-called moderate Muslim would be moderate in spite of Islam and, perhaps, by going against it, and not because of it.

It is this point that we seek to make in the series of articles on secularism that we will bring out. In this article, we will expose the present context and the double-speak and false foundations of secularism advocated by the 'secular' Indian politicians and intellectuals.

The Present Context

The attack on the 'secular' credentials of the present government was revived following the 'intolerance debate' in the

¹Jain, 2004.

²Pathak, 2015.

³Pathak, 2015.

country last year. The trigger for the debate was the killing of rationalist M.M Kalburgi in September last year by right-wing elements. This led to protests by intellectuals against the government-funded Sahitya Academy for not condemning the killing, and they even revived the killing of rationalist Govind Pansare in Maharashtra in February 2015. The intellectuals went on an award-returning spree, with even celebrities joining in.

This was compounded with the beef ban controversy, which led to the lynching of a Muslim man in Dadri, outside Delhi, in September 2015. Even though the perpetrators of the crime could not be ascertained and the killing was apparently attributed to the flouting of the beef ban, the 'secularists' lost no time in blaming the central government for the death.

Finally, in the winter session of the Parliament, the battle lines were drawn as the debate was revived from day one, resulting in an unproductive outcome and confrontationalist position by the opposition parties.

Through all these developments and even going back into history, it is clear that we have lost sight of what secularism means and what really are the serious issues at stake. Right from day one, the flaws in the intolerance-secularism debate were clear – that is why it divided society so sharply.

- It was clearly politically-manufactured, with many of the intellectuals having clear affiliations to the Congress party or the Left. In November 2015, key party members became a part of a widely publicised conference to capitalize on the ongoing debate, by inviting a number of well-known academicians.

- The debate was entirely divorced from any serious reflection on history and real issues. To the contrary, infamous figures like Tipu Sultan were raised on a pedestal by the Congress government in Karnataka, despite massive protests.

- Even though the secularists accused the government of stoking a climate of intolerance, they were the ones involved in baseless

allegations and double-speak. Never once did they comment on the attacks perpetrated by the Muslims on the office of Lokmat for its cartoon on ISIS around the same time. There were also numerous instances of gruesome murders of Hindu activists protesting against the flouting of the beef ban. Yet, because these murders were committed by Muslims, there was never any investigation nor were such instances of intolerance given space in the media.

False Secularism

Secularism, as understood by the Indian media and general public, is a discourse that has trickled down to us from the academic society. These academic discourses have never been able to reconcile the role of religion with state and society. They believe that secularism is related to justice, which, in turn, automatically means the protection of the minority communities and the vilification of the majority. Their brand of secularism does not permit any space for other definitions of the term.

They believe that Hindu nationalism is against the principle of secularism. The simple declaration of the RSS and Hindu organizations that they are secular has been vehemently opposed by the left-wing intellectuals. Unlike the self-styled secularists of today, the nationalist idea of secularism is not based on the vilification of the majority community or pandering to the minorities. They simply state that minorities will get full space and religious freedom in the country, but without the majority having to compromise their religion, culture or nationalism.

That is how secularism should ideally be practised – and is often practised in countries like the US – in any country, as a practical creed. It means tolerance and about necessary affirmative policy actions for the minorities. It does not mean elevating the minority religion as the centrepiece of public discourse and giving them excessive social and political power. This will completely destroy the social fabric of the country and this is what parties like Congress and the intellectuals have been trying hard to achieve.

Even though secularists advocate the separation of religion from the public domain, Indian secularists openly promote the minority religions. For instance, the whole debate on Uniform Civil Code is about this. After Independence, even though the government (and, before that the Hindu social reformers during the freedom struggle) reformed the Hindu personal laws completely, Muslim personal laws and those of other minority religions remained untouched. What's more, Nehru gave a Haj subsidy to the Muslims.

Despite the awareness that Muslim personal laws resulted in large-scale exploitation of Muslim women by the Islamic religion, feminists and social activists campaigned against bringing the Muslim religion under a Uniform Civil Code which can guarantee equality to Muslim women. And, after the Supreme Court's Shah Bano judgement of 1985 on alimony due to a divorced Muslim woman, which went against Muslim personal laws, the Congress government passed legislation diluting the judgement to appease the minority community.

Is this justice or selective bias to enhance minority vote-banks in the name of religious freedom?

Such appeasement is at odds with the crackdown on Islam the world-over, especially in Muslim countries. After the June 26th, 2015 attack, Tunisia ordered the closure of eighty mosques for spreading extremism. Prior to that, in Pakistan, the government had cracked down on forty-eight madrassas in Sind for promoting terrorism.⁴ In Europe, the liberal policy towards refugees and migrants from Muslim-majority countries has resulted in a massive backlash. News of mass Muslim attacks – attacks by skilled, educated migrants – on German women recently, has led to Europe closing its doors to migrants.

Certainly, it's a false belief that education alone can moderate the Islamic influence. Moderation is unlikely unless one breaks away from the religion entirely.

⁴Pathak, 2015.

Going Back to History: Why is Current Discourse of Secularism False?

As we have seen, the Congress-dominated and intellectually-sponsored history has placed a misplaced narrative of secularism before us. We are told that Hindu and Muslims co-existed harmoniously before the advent of the British rule, and later the British used the divide-and-rule policy to create religious strife. This is a completely false view and there are ample historical records to refute it. However, when the historical record of Muslim atrocities in India is presented, as also that of the Catholic Church of Goa, it is dismissed by weak counter-arguments.

The two main arguments given by intellectuals are:

- Attacks by Muslim rulers like Aurangzeb and Akbar on Hindu temples and on Hindu communities were not consistent. Some historians give examples saying that even though Aurangzeb attacked temples, he, at the same time, was known to give cash grants to Hindus, motivated by practical and not religious considerations. Also, they argue, that many Hindu kings also attacked Hindu temples to confiscate their wealth.

This is clearly a flawed argument. Attacks on the Hindu society and symbols, as documented by early Mughal historians, were based on religious instruction and personal inclination and orthodoxy of the rulers, especially Aurangzeb and Akbar. Giving of cash grants were rare and used as an occasional practical measure. Moreover, the rare attacks on Hindu temples by Hindu kings were not motivated by any Shastric injunction⁵ and, after the attack, the idols were worshipped and treated with respect. This is unlike the Muslim rulers whose attacks on the Hindu heritage were inspired by the Koranic injunctions, treating the Hindus as *kafirs* or non-believers who needed to be either converted or wiped out.

- Another false argument advanced by the current secularists

⁵Jain, 2015

is that Indian history cannot be studied in terms of a Hindu versus Muslim discourse, a view which was perpetuated by the British. The so-called secular historians argue that, new categories have evolved in our historiography – such as gender, caste, ecology, class etc. Again, this argument masks the fact that a history of a Hindu-Muslim divide did exist and cannot, and should not, be wished away if Indian society is to get an accurate picture of its antecedents.

To be continued...

References:

Jain, M. (2004, March 21). *Hindu Internet Defence Force*. Retrieved from Hindu Internet Defence Force: <https://hidf1.wordpress.com/2010/12/03/meenakshi-jain-on-romila-thapars-somanatha-of-history/>

Pathak, P. (2015). Dialogue - A Hindu's views on Islam and Muslims - II. *Organiser*, pp. 1-4.

History of India – The Vedic Age (16)

IX. Historical Background – How the Veda Suffered the Mutilation of Its Sense

“Veda..is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies.... The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind’s ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. **The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*draṣṭā*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge.** The language of Veda itself is *ṛuti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words themselves, *dṛi* and *ṛuti*, sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions; these and cognate words signify, in the esoteric terminology of the hymns, revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration.

In the Vedic idea of the revelation there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture. Knowledge itself was a travelling and a reaching, or a finding and a winning; the revelation came only at the end, the light was the prize of a final victory. There is continually in the Veda this image of the journey, the soul’s march on the path of Truth. On that path, as it advances, it also ascends; new vistas of power and light open to its aspiration; it wins by a heroic effort its enlarged spiritual possessions.

From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric, as well as its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice; it is the spirit’s hymn of battle and victory as it

discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man, man's praise of the divine Light, Power and Grace at work in the mortal. It is far, therefore, from being an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation, nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Only, out of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received, there arise a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated and a fixed symbolic language which, perhaps, in that early human speech, was the inevitable form of these conceptions because alone capable by its combined concreteness and power of mystic suggestion of expressing that which for the ordinary mind of the race was inexpressible. We have, at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which had become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates.

The hymns possess indeed a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique, great variations of style and poetical personality; **they are not the work of rude, barbarous and primitive craftsmen, but the living breath of a supreme and conscious Art forming its creations in the puissant but well-governed movement of a self-observing inspiration.** Still, all these high gifts have deliberately been exercised within one unvarying framework and always with the same materials. For the art of expression was to the Rishis only a means, not an aim; their principal preoccupation was strenuously practical, almost utilitarian, in the highest sense of utility. The hymn was to the Rishi who composed it a means of spiritual progress for himself and for others. It rose out of his soul, it became a power of his mind, it was the vehicle of his self-expression in some important or even critical moment of his life's inner history. It helped him to express the god in him, to destroy

the devourer, the expresser of evil; it became a weapon in the hands of the Aryan striver after perfection, it flashed forth like Indra's lightning against the Coverer on the slopes, the Wolf on the path, the Robber by the streams.

The invariable fixity of Vedic thought when taken in conjunction with its depth, richness and subtlety, gives rise to some interesting speculations. For we may reasonably argue that such a fixed form and substance would not easily be possible in the beginnings of thought and psychological experience or even during their early progress and unfolding. We may therefore surmise that our actual Sanhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages. It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or version of a more ancient^a lyric evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler (Vyasa), with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendants, to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains – secure perhaps only in appearance – of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason.

But these are only speculations and inferences. Certain it is that the old tradition of a progressive obscuration and loss of the Veda as the law of the human cycle has been fully justified by the event. The obscuration had already proceeded far before the opening of the next great age of Indian spirituality, the Vedantic, which struggled to preserve or recover what it yet could of the ancient knowledge. It

^a *The Veda itself speaks constantly of “ancient” and “modern” Rishis, (p[urva]...n[ana]), the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge.*

could hardly have been otherwise. For **the system of the Vedic mystics was founded upon experiences difficult to ordinary mankind and proceeded by the aid of faculties which in most of us are rudimentary and imperfectly developed and, when active at all, are mixed and irregular in their operation.** Once the first intensity of the search after truth had passed, periods of fatigue and relaxation were bound to intervene in which the old truths would be partially lost. Nor once lost, could they easily be recovered by scrutinising the sense of the ancient hymns; for those **hymns were couched in a language that was deliberately ambiguous.**

A tongue unintelligible to us may be correctly understood once a clue has been found; **a diction that is deliberately ambiguous, holds its secret much more obstinately and successfully, for it is full of lures and of indications that mislead.** Therefore when the Indian mind turned again to review the sense of Veda, the task was difficult and the success only partial. One source of light still existed, the traditional knowledge handed down among those who memorised and explained the Vedic text or had charge of the Vedic ritual, – two functions that had originally been one; for in the early days the priest was also the teacher and seer. But the clearness of this light was already obscured. Even Purohites of repute performed the rites with a very imperfect knowledge of the power and the sense of the sacred words which they repeated. For **the material aspects of Vedic worship had grown like a thick crust over the inner knowledge** and were stifling what they had once served to protect. The Veda was already a mass of myth and ritual. The power had begun to disappear out of the symbolic ceremony; the light had departed from the mystic parable and left only a surface of apparent grotesqueness and naivete.

The Brahmanas and the Upanishads are the record of a powerful revival which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of spiritual thought and experience. This movement had two complementary aspects, one, the conservation of the forms, another the revelation of the soul of Veda, – the first represented by the Brahmanas, the second by the Upanishads.

The Brahmanas labour to fix and preserve the minutiae of the Vedic ceremony, the conditions of their material effectuality, the symbolic sense and purpose of their different parts, movements, implements, the significance of texts important in the ritual, the drift of obscure allusions, the memory of ancient myths and traditions. Many of their legends are evidently posterior to the hymns, invented to explain passages which were no longer understood; others may have been part of the apparatus of original myth and parable employed by the ancient symbolists or memories of the actual historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the hymns. Oral tradition is always a light that obscures; a new symbolism working upon an old that is half lost, is likely to overgrow rather than reveal it; therefore **the Brahmanas, though full of interesting hints, help us very little in our research;** nor are they a safe guide to the meaning of separate texts when they attempt an exact and verbal interpretation.

The Rishis of the Upanishads followed another method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions; or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in other terms more intelligible to the age in which they lived. In a certain sense their handling of the texts was not disinterested; it was not governed by the scholar's scrupulous desire to arrive at the exact intention of the words and the precise thought of the sentences in their actual framing. They were seekers of a higher than verbal truth and used words merely as suggestions for the illumination towards which they were striving. They knew not or they neglected the etymological sense and employed often a method of symbolic interpretation of component sounds in which it is very difficult to follow them. For this reason, **while the Upanishads are invaluable for the light they shed on the principal ideas and on the psychological system of the ancient Rishis, they help us as little as the Brahmanas in determining the accurate sense of the texts**

which they quote. Their real work was to found Vedanta rather than to interpret Veda.

For this great movement resulted in a new and more permanently powerful statement of thought and spirituality, Veda culminating in Vedanta. And it held in itself two strong tendencies which worked towards the disintegration of the old Vedic thought and culture. First, it tended to subordinate more and more completely the outward ritual, the material utility of the mantra and the sacrifice to a more purely spiritual aim and intention. The balance, the synthesis preserved by the old Mystics between the external and the internal, the material and the spiritual life was displaced and disorganised. A new balance, a new synthesis was established, leaning finally towards asceticism and renunciation, and maintained itself until it was in its turn displaced and disorganised by the exaggeration of its own tendencies in Buddhism. The sacrifice, the symbolic ritual became more and more a useless survival and even an encumbrance; yet, as so often happens, by the very fact of becoming mechanical and ineffective the importance of everything that was most external in them came to be exaggerated and their minutiae irrationally enforced by that part of the national mind which still clung to them. A sharp practical division came into being, effective though never entirely recognised in theory, between Veda and Vedanta, a distinction which might be expressed in the formula, 'the Veda for the priests, the Vedanta for the sages.'

The second tendency of the Vedantic movement was to disencumber itself progressively of the symbolic language, the veil of concrete myth and poetic figure, in which the Mystics had shrouded their thought and to substitute a clearer statement and more philosophical language. The complete evolution of this tendency rendered obsolete the utility not only of the Vedic ritual but of the Vedic text. Upanishads, increasingly clear and direct in their language, became the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought and replaced the inspired verses of Vasishtha and Vishwamitra. The Vedas, becoming less and less the indispensable basis of education, were

no longer studied with the same zeal and intelligence; their symbolic language, ceasing to be used, lost the remnant of its inner sense to new generations whose whole manner of thought was different from that of the Vedic forefathers. The Ages of Intuition were passing away into the first dawn of the Age of Reason.

Buddhism completed the revolution and left of the externalities of the ancient world only some venerable pomps and some mechanical usages. It sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice and to bring into use the popular vernacular in place of the literary tongue. And although the consummation of its work was delayed for several centuries by the revival of Hinduism in the Puranic religions, the Veda itself benefited little by this respite. In order to combat the popularity of the new religion it was necessary to put forward instead of venerable but unintelligible texts Scriptures written in an easy form of a more modern Sanskrit. For the mass of the nation the Puranas pushed aside the Veda and the forms of new religious systems took the place of the ancient ceremonies. **As the Veda had passed from the sage to the priest, so now it began to pass from the hands of the priest into the hands of the scholar.** And in that keeping it suffered the last mutilation of its sense and the last diminution of its true dignity and sanctity.”¹

Reference:

1. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.15, pp.10-16, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

The Greatness of India and Its Culture (15)

2. Indian Civilisation and Culture

IV. The Greatest Accomplishment of Indian Culture – the Web of the Sanatana Dharma

H. The Dynamic Formulation of Indian Religious Culture

“The past dealings of Indian religion with life must be judged according to the stages of its progress; each age of its movement must be considered on its own basis. But throughout it consistently held to two perceptions that showed great practical wisdom and a fine spiritual tact.”¹

(i) The First Perception

“First, it saw that the approach to the spirit cannot be sudden, simple and immediate for all individuals or for the community of men; it must come ordinarily or at least at first through a gradual culture, training, progress. There must be an enlarging of the natural life accompanied by an uplifting of all its motives; a growing hold upon it of the higher rational, psychic and ethical powers must prepare and lead it towards a higher spiritual law.”²

(ii) The Second Perception

“But the Indian religious mind saw too at the same time that if its greater aim was to be fruitful and the character of its culture imperative, there must be throughout and at every moment some kind of insistence on the spiritual motive. And for the mass of men this means always some kind of religious influence. That pervasive insistence was necessary in order that from the beginning some power of the universal inner truth, some ray from the real reality of our existence might cast its light or at least its sensible if subtle influence on the natural life of man. Human life must be induced to flower, naturally in a way, but at the same time with a wise nurturing and cultivation into its own profounder spiritual significance. Indian culture has worked by two coordinated, mutually stimulating and always

interblended operations of which these perceptions are the principle. First, it has laboured to lead upward and enlarge the life of the individual in the community through a natural series of life-stages till it was ready for the spiritual levels. But also it has striven to keep that highest aim before the mind at every stage and throw its influence on each circumstance and action both of man's inner and his outer existence."³

(iii) The Frame for the Execution of Its First Perception – The Triple Quartette

In the plan of its first perception or aim it came nearer to the highest ancient culture in other regions but in its execution its system was in a type and with a motive all its own. "The frame of its system was constituted by a triple quartette. Its first circle was the synthesis and gradation of the fourfold object of life, vital desire and hedonistic enjoyment, personal and communal interest, moral right and law, and spiritual liberation. Its second circle was the fourfold order of society, carefully graded and equipped with its fixed economic functions and its deeper cultural, ethical and spiritual significances. Its third, the most original and indeed unique of its englobing life-patterns, was the fourfold scale of the successive stages of life, student, householder, forest recluse and free supersocial man. This frame, these lines of a large and noble life-training subsisted in their purity, their grand natural balance of austerity and accommodation, their fine effectiveness during the later Vedic and heroic age of the civilisation: afterwards they crumbled slowly or lost their completeness and order. But the tradition, the idea with some large effect of its force and some figure of its lines endured throughout the whole period of cultural vigour. However deflected it might have been from its true form and spirit, however mutilated and complicated for the worse, there was always left some presence of its inspiration and power. Only in the decline do we get the slow collapse, the degraded and confused mass of conventions which still labours to represent the ancient and noble Aryan system, but in spite of relics of glamour and beauty, in spite of survivals of spiritual suggestion and in spite of a residue of the old high training, is little better than a detritus or a mass of confused relics. Still even in this degradation enough of the original virtue has

remained to ensure a remarkable remnant of the ancient beauty, attractiveness and power of survival.”⁴

(iv) The Cultural Effort for the Execution of the Second Perception – the Endeavour to Cast the Whole Life into a Religious Mould

This is a more direct spiritual operation of Indian culture than the first and is of a still greater importance because it coloured permanently the Indian mind and life and has remained the same – always renewed its effectiveness and held its field – behind every change of form and throughout all the ages of the civilisation. This cultural effort “...multiplied means and devices which by their insistent suggestion and opportunity and their mass of effect would help to stamp a Godward tendency on the entire existence. Indian culture was founded on a religious conception of life and both the individual and the community drank in at every moment its influence. It was stamped on them by the training and turn of the education; the entire life atmosphere, all the social surroundings were suffused with it; it breathed its power through the whole original form and hieratic character of the culture. Always was felt the near idea of the spiritual existence and its supremacy as the ideal, highest over all others; everywhere there was the pervading pressure of the notion of the universe as a manifestation of divine Powers and a movement full of the presence of the Divine. Man himself was not a mere reasoning animal, but a soul in constant relation with God and with the divine cosmic Powers. The soul’s continued existence was a cyclic or upward progress from birth to birth; human life was the summit of an evolution which terminated in the conscious Spirit, every stage of that life a step in a pilgrimage. Every single action of man had its importance of fruit whether in future lives or in the worlds beyond the material existence.”⁵

(v) The Third Perception – The Varying Natural Capacity of Man, Adhikāra

The Indian religion was not content with merely creating the general pressure of its noble conceptions. “Its persistent effort was to impress the mind at every moment and in each particular with the

religious influence. And to do this more effectively by a living and practical adaptation, not asking from anyone what was too much for him or too little, it took as a guiding idea its perception of the varying natural capacity of man, *adhikāra*. It provided in its system means by which each man high or low, wise or ignorant, exceptional or average might feel in the way suitable to his nature and evolutionary stage the call, the pressure, the influence. Avoiding the error of the religions that impose a single dogmatic and inflexible rule on every man regardless of the possibilities of his nature, it tried rather to draw him gently upward and help him to grow steadily in religious and spiritual experience. Every part of human nature, every characteristic turn of its action was given a place in the system; each was suitably surrounded with the spiritual idea and a religious influence, each provided with steps by which it might rise towards its own spiritual possibility and significance. The highest spiritual meaning of life was set on the summits of each evolving power of the human nature. The intelligence was called to a supreme knowledge, the dynamic active and creative powers pointed to openness and unity with an infinite and universal Will, the heart and sense put in contact with a divine love and joy and beauty. But this highest meaning was also put everywhere indicatively or in symbols behind the whole system of living, even in its details, so that its impression might fall in whatever degree on the life, increase in pervasion and in the end take up the entire control. This was the aim and, if we consider the imperfections of our nature and the difficulty of the endeavour, we can say that it achieved an unusual measure of success. **It has been said with some truth that for the Indian the whole of life is a religion. True of the ideal of Indian life, it is true to a certain degree and in a certain sense in its fact and practice. No step could be taken in the Indian's inner or outer life without his being reminded of a spiritual existence. Everywhere he felt the closeness or at least saw the sign of something beyond his natural life, beyond the moment in time, beyond his individual ego, something other than the needs and interests of his vital and physical nature. That insistence gave its tone and turn to his thought and action and feeling; it produced that subtler**

sensitiveness to the spiritual appeal, that greater readiness to turn to the spiritual effort which are even now distinguishing marks of the Indian temperament. It is that readiness, that sensitiveness which justifies us when we speak of the characteristic spirituality of the Indian people.

The ancient idea of the *adhikāra* has to be taken into careful account if we would understand the peculiar character of Indian religion. In most other religious systems we find a high-pitched spiritual call and a difficult and rigid ethical standard far beyond the possibilities of man's half-evolved, defective and imperfect nature. This standard, this call are announced as if imperative on all; but it is evident that only a few can give an adequate response. There is presented to our view for all our picture of life the sharp division of two extremes; the saint and the worldling, the religious and the irreligious, the good and the bad, the pious and the impious, souls accepted and souls rejected, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the damned, the believer and the infidel, are the two categories set constantly before us. All between is a confusion, a tug of war, an uncertain balance. This crude and summary classification is the foundation of the Christian system of an eternal heaven and hell; at best, the Catholic religion humanely interposes a precarious chance hung between that happy and this dread alternative, the chance of a painful purgatory for more than nine tenths of the human race. Indian religion set up on its summits a still more high-pitched spiritual call, a standard of conduct still more perfect and absolute; but it did not go about its work with this summary and unreflecting ignorance. All beings are to the Indian mind portions of the Divine, evolving souls, and sure of an eventual salvation and release into the spirit. All must feel, as the good in them grows or, more truly, the godhead in them finds itself and becomes conscious, the ultimate touch and call of their highest self and through that call the attraction to the Eternal and Divine."⁶

(vi) The Means Used to Give Effect to the Third Perception – the Perception of the Three Types or Levels of the Evolving

Human Soul and the Creation of the Varying Religious Atmosphere Suited to Each

“...in life there are infinite differences between man and man; some are more inwardly evolved, others are less mature, many if not most are infant souls incapable of great steps and difficult efforts. Each needs to be dealt with according to his nature and his soul stature. But a general distinction can be drawn between three principal types varying in their openness to the spiritual appeal or to the religious influence or impulse. This distinction amounts to a gradation of three stages in the growing human consciousness. One crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded can be led only by devices suited to its ignorance. Another, more developed and capable of a much stronger and deeper psycho-spiritual experience, offers a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious intelligence, a larger vital or aesthetic opening, a stronger ethical power of the nature. A third, the ripest and most developed of all, is ready for the spiritual heights, fit to receive or to climb towards the loftiest ultimate truth of God and of its own being and to tread the summits of divine experience.”^{a7}

It was understood that there was the need to provide each type the religious atmosphere suited to its needs. “It was to meet the need of the first type or level that Indian religion created that mass of suggestive ceremony and effective ritual and strict outward rule and injunction and all that pageant of attracting and compelling symbol with which the cult is so richly equipped or profusely decorated. These are for the most part forming and indicative things which work upon the mind consciently and subconsciently and prepare it for an entry into the significance of the greater permanent things that lie behind

^a *The Tantric distinction is between the animal man, the hero man and the divine man, paṇḍu, vīra, deva. Or we may grade the difference according to the three gunas, – first, the tamasic or rajaso-tamasic man ignorant, inert or moved only in a little light by small motive forces, the rajasic or sattwo-rajasic man struggling with an awakened mind and will towards self-development or self-affirmation, and the sattvic man open in mind and heart and will to the Light, standing at the top of the scale and ready to transcend it.*

them. And for this type too, for its vital mind and will, is intended all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the just satisfaction of his desires and his interests, just because subject to the right and the law, the Dharma. In the Vedic times the outward ritual sacrifice and at a later period all the religious forms and notions that clustered visibly around the rites and imagery of temple worship, constant festival and ceremony and daily act of outward devotion were intended to serve this type or this soul-stage. Many of these things may seem to the developed mind to belong to an ignorant or half awakened religionism; but they have their concealed truth and their psychic value and are indispensable in this stage for the development and difficult awakening of the soul shrouded in the ignorance of material Nature.

The middle stage, the second type starts from these things, but gets behind them; it is capable of understanding more clearly and consciently the psychic truths, the conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values and all the other mediating directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its symbols. These intermediate truths vivify the outward forms of the system and those who can grasp them can go through these mental indices towards things that are beyond the mind and approach the profounder truths of the spirit. For at this stage there is already something awake that can go inward to a more deeply psycho-religious experience. Already the mind, heart and will have some strength to grapple with the difficulties of the relations between the spirit and life, some urge to satisfy more luminously or more inwardly the rational, aesthetic and ethical nature and lead them upward towards their own highest heights; one can begin to train mind and soul towards a spiritual consciousness and the opening of a spiritual existence. This ascending type of humanity claims for its use all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger and more significant portion of the wealth of Indian culture. At this stage intervene the philosophical systems, the subtle illumining debates and inquiries of the thinkers; here are the nobler or more passionate reaches of devotion, here are held up

the higher, ampler or austerer ideals of the Dharma; here break in the psychical suggestions and first definite urgings of the eternal and infinite which draw men by their appeal and promise towards the practice of Yoga.

But these things, great as they were, were not final or supreme: they were openings, steps of ascension towards the luminous grandeurs of spiritual truth and its practice was kept ready and its means of attainment provided for the third and greatest type of human being, the third loftiest stage of the spiritual evolution. The complete light of spiritual knowledge when it emerges from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances, the absolute and universal divine love, the beauty of the All-beautiful, the noblest dharma of unity with all beings, universal compassion and benevolence calm and sweet in the perfect purity of the spirit, the upsurge of the psychical being into the spiritual unity or the spiritual ecstasy, these divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion and Yoga. He reached by them the fruits of his perfect spiritual evolution, an identity with the Self and Spirit, a dwelling in or with God, the divine law of his being, a spiritual universality, communion, transcendence.”⁸

(vii) The Provision for or the Admittance of the Possibility of a Direct Approach to the Spiritual Reality Free of the Gradations

The above gradations or “...distinctions are lines that can always be overpassed in the infinite complexity of man’s nature and there was no sharp and unbridgeable division, only a gradation, since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers coexist in all men. Both the middle and the highest significances were near and present and pervaded the whole system, and the approaches to the highest status were not absolutely denied to any man, in spite of certain prohibitions: but these prohibitions broke down in practice or left a way of escape to the man who felt the call; the call itself was a sign of election. He had only to find the way and the guide. But even in the direct approach the principle of *adhikāra*, differing capacity and varying nature, *svabhāva*, was

recognised in subtle ways, which it would be beyond my present purpose to enumerate. One may note as an example the significant Indian idea of the *ishta-devatā*, the special name, form, idea of the Divinity which each man may choose for worship and communion and follow after according to the attraction in his nature and his capacity of spiritual intelligence. And each of the forms has its outer initial associations and suggestions for the worshipper, its appeal to the intelligence, psychological, aesthetic, emotional power in the nature and its highest spiritual significance which leads through some one truth of the Godhead into the essence of spirituality. One may note too that in the practice of Yoga the disciple has to be led through his nature and according to his capacity and the spiritual teacher and guide is expected to perceive and take account of the necessary gradations and the individual need and power in his giving of help and guidance. Many things may be objected to in the actual working of this large and flexible system and I shall take some note of them when I have to deal with the weak points or the pejorative side of the culture against which the hostile critic directs with a misleading exaggeration his missiles. But the principle of it and the main lines of the application embody a remarkable wisdom, knowledge and careful observation of human nature and an assured insight into the things of the spirit which none can question who has considered deeply and flexibly these difficult matters or had any close experience of the obstacles and potentialities of our nature in its approach to the concealed spiritual reality.”⁹

References:

1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, p.216, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
2. *Ibid.*, p.216
3. *Ibid.*, pp.216-17
4. *Ibid.*, p.217
5. *Ibid.*, p.218
6. *Ibid.*, pp.218-20
7. *Ibid.*, pp.220-21
8. *Ibid.*, pp.221-23
9. *Ibid.*, pp.223-24

“.. one thing we may be certain, that **Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries.** It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and in the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differences, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but **we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice.** We believe this to be the only practical way of dealing with the difficulty. As a political question the Hindu-Mahomedan problem does not interest us at all, as a national problem it is of supreme importance.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.08, p.31)