

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

September 2015



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

– The Mother

Year 6

Issue 6

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

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

Year 6

Issue 6

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

- The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

BIHAR ELECTIONS: NEW AGENDA-SETTERS

The Bihar election of this year is being touted as being the most important election to be held after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Contested between at least three coalitions of major national and North Indian regional parties, involving intricate caste, religion and development factors and coming on the heels of the Monsoon session wash-out caused by the Congress party which derailed the policy agenda of the BJP, these elections are rightly reckoned as being a crucial test for the BJP.

The odds that the BJP will win these elections with its 'development' agenda for the youth – a significant point, since Bihar is one of the states with the youngest and highly aspirational population in the country – is often pitted against the 'caste' factors which can be exploited by the opposing 'secular' grand alliance.

However, with the recent developments, it appears that the odds are arrayed against the 'secular front' in the upcoming Bihar elections. Forced together by combining long-standing rivals like the Congress, Nitish Kumar's JD (U) and Lalu Yadav's RJD, the 'secular' alliance faces both internal tensions and outer challenges. Pitted against the BJP-led NDA, which has displayed fewer internal squabbles and far better chances in mobilizing people along caste and development lines, the grand alliance's contest against the BJP coalition promises to be a close contest.

It is important that the BJP wins the battle for Bihar in order to secure its electoral prospects for the upcoming assembly elections next year as well as to give a fitting reply to the obstructionist Congress on its policy agenda in the Parliament.

Some of the key factors that will shape the upcoming elections are:

- *Shiv Sena's decision to contest elections:* The recent announcement by Shiv Sena to contest between 50 to 100 seats cannot be viewed as an immediate challenge to the secular alliance,

but more as a challenge to the BJP. It will certainly lead to a division of Hindu votes. But, in the longer run, if Shiv Sena manages to establish a foothold in the politics of the state, it will be a positive development in displacing the ‘secular parties’. If the major contestants belong to nationalist parties it will herald a new political era in Bihar.

- *Challenge from Asaduddin Owaisi:* The Muslim vote that the ‘secular’ alliance hopes to mobilize through Lalu Yadav’s presence is in serious danger of being polarized due to the rise of AIMIM’S Asaduddin Owaisi. Whether or not Owaisi manages to garner a substantial chunk of Muslim votes, it is clear that Owaisi’s campaign plans to make long-term inroads into the state. This would be a significant step forward in exposing the sham that secularism has become in this country.

- *Fragmentation of the ‘secular’ alliance:* The recent decision by Samajwadi Party (SP) to walk out of the grand alliance and announce a ‘third front’¹ will deal a huge blow to the Nitish-Lalu-Sonia combine. Their plank of being a consolidated secular front will be challenged as will their diatribe against the RSS.

- *The caste equation:* While, in the first instance, it appears as if the contest is between the development agenda of the BJP coalition and the ‘caste’ mobilization of the secular alliance, this is no longer true. The secular front may have overplayed the caste card with the talks of revival of Mandal-II reservations for low-class upper-caste Hindus. This mainly counts as ‘loose talk’ and will have little impact on the election outcome.

Within upper castes – which constitute about 15% of the electorate – the BJP has strong mobilization. Election studies² show that upper castes in Bihar – mainly consisting of Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas – mainly vote for BJP. They have low support base for JD (U) and RJD and only voted for the Congress

¹ Mathew 2015.

² Mehta and Gupta 2015.

when it has contested alone rather than with the RJD.

Within other castes too, the BJP coalition is presenting a strong challenge to the secular coalition. While the Muslim-Yadav-Kurmi vote is likely to swing in favour of the grand alliance, the BJP-led coalition will especially give tough competition with its mobilization among the Dalits, Mahadalits and the Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs). The total vote-share of the Dalits and the OBCs (including the EBCs) is between 60-65%, and having put together a coalition of Manjhi's HAM-S, Kushwaha's RLSP and Paswan's LJP, it is predicted that BJP might even navigate the elections with a simple majority.³

- *The development factor:* Unlike at the national level and, perhaps, in many other states, development is not just an abstract catchword in Bihar elections. With one of the youngest working age population in the country, the development agenda is second only to the caste equations. This may swing either in favour of Nitish Kumar or the BJP, since both have a strong track-record. However, a factor that is certain to work against the grand alliance is the hot Modi-Nitish debate on 15 years of misrule or 'jungle raj' in Bihar under the leadership of RJD's Lalu Yadav. Jungle raj is not just a politically-coined term to attack the grand alliance, but was actually coined by the Patna High Court in 1997 to refer to Bihar governance, highlighting the fact that the issue affects people enough to make a dent in the vote-share.

People's aversion to Lalu comes out clearly through the fact that he mainly mobilizes Muslim and Yadav votes, and there is deep hostility between Dalits and Yadavs. Moreover, past trends show that parties which align with the RJD may stand to lose more than they gain. For instance, Congress's main support base in Bihar comes from upper castes, but whenever Congress has tied up with RJD, it has lost these votes. And, this time, because of Owaisi, even Muslim votes are likely to be fragmented.

³ TNN 2015.

Besides these factors, new developments are occurring on a daily basis which will impact the Bihar election outcome. The picture will become clearer in the coming days, but it is necessary that the corrupt nexus of criminal regional parties which promotes casteism in the name of democracy is broken and it seems to us that it will be.

THE ILLUSION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: PART II

In the previous article, we explained how, under the current economic system, economic development and welfare is an illusion. Under the present conditions, people's incomes are actually falling in real terms and they are becoming worse-off, as the costs of all goods and services go up and the quality deteriorates. By increasing deprivation, you are actually contributing to the GDP and measuring that as economic development. For instance, by succumbing to diseases, by eating out, or by buying drugs, you would be contributing to the growth of these sectors and increasing the overall national income. But this does not lead to a rise in happiness or welfare. For, GDP not only indiscriminately measures deprivation or rise in spending on harmful services, but, more importantly, due to a rise in psychological corruption and the spirit of pure selfish utilitarianism, the falling and manipulated quality of products and services ensures that you are losing more income down the drain, without any increase in welfare whatsoever.

We substantiated this issue by taking the case of the higher education sector, wherein the student is subjected from all sides to intellectual and moral corruption, the illusion of actually doing work or research and the heavy amount of money he/she has to spend on education, even as graduate unemployment is on the rise world-over. Instead of welfare, we actually have cases of students falling prey to suicides and depression by being a part of the higher education sector, irrespective of how elite and glorified the university looks from the outside.

Education is just one of the many services in which we can see the solid proof of how the real welfare and incomes are falling, even as expenditures rise and quality is on the decline. Besides education, there are many other sectors in which this is becoming evident.

THE CORRUPTION IN HEALTHCARE

Healthcare is one of the key services with high government

expenditure and private investment, around the world. It is also not simply one of those services that simply affects our income when we spend on it, but also determines questions of life and death, immediate psychology and overall well-being of a person. And yet, today, healthcare has become such a complex business industry that it caters to everything to promote its own selfish ends but to the service of its patients.

While, till about a few years back, the information on corrupt practices in the health sector used to be gleaned from the word of the mouth and experiences of people close to us, today, it has become the obvious subject of headlines and investigative research. Indian private hospitals recently made headlines due to their refusal to treat poor dengue-afflicted children who succumbed to death and led their parents to commit suicide. However, these are the most obvious cases of greed in the medical sector. The starker reality is that corruption pervades at every level right from getting referred to a doctor to the aftermath of the treatment.

A recent study in India by the British Medical Journal found that, “The private healthcare system largely treats patients as revenue generators, without rationality or medical logic.”¹ Due to lack of accountability of private healthcare and inefficiency of public healthcare, there are several features of this corruption at every level, besides inequality and lack of access:

- *Kickbacks and referrals*: Doctors indiscriminately make money through referrals and kickbacks. The practice is so common that it has become an open system. They earn wads of cash as commission that should be due to the patients as part of referrals.²

- *Prescriptions*: The nexus between the pharmaceutical industry and the doctors is also an open secret, wherein doctors are bribed by pharmaceutical companies to prescribe expensive medicines to their patients. Doctors also frequently prescribe surgeries and tests

¹ Gadre 2015.

² Berger 2014.

that are not needed and may worsen the patients' condition.³

- *Excessive testing*: There is often a nexus between testing labs and hospitals, or the doctors have their own testing labs. It one of the foremost ways to earn money, since the worse the disease, the more expensive the tests, like the dengue test in India.

- *Meeting targets*: Much like in the United States, in India as well, the medical 'industry' has become just like the financial sector. The doctors, like salesmen, have to meet certain 'targets' set by the hospital, and for the same purposes, 'agents' are deployed to lure medical tourists from abroad with lucrative packages.⁴ While this leads to severe competition and may sometimes reduce prices, it also leads to severe compromise of the quality. The result is that you end up paying more for the health service that is badly rendered and deleterious to your health.

Besides these, various people have documented their own traumatic experiences in public⁵, describing how massive consultation charges are charged by the same doctor and the number of visits deliberately increased even for minor consultations. There are also descriptions of how the medical bills are inflated even when all that the doctors do is to poke their head in the patient's room and smile, and even the doctors accept this, so lot of bills in top hospital chains are inflated by design.⁶

Given these layers, it is no surprise that the healthcare system in India was ranked as the second most corrupt sector after the police, by the Transparency International, in 2005.⁷ It is estimated that about 39 million additional people fall into poverty every year as a result of healthcare expenditure.⁸

³ Halan 2015.

⁴ Bhargava 2015.

⁵ Bhargava 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Krishnan 2015.

⁸ Balarajan, Selvaraj and Subramanian 2011.

A GLOBAL STORY

Beyond India, the healthcare systems of most other major countries – with high GDP growth – reflect the deep discontent of the people. According to a study, the total global spending on healthcare is more than \$7 trillion every year, out of which between 10% and 25% of global spending on public procurement of health is lost through corruption.⁹

In United States, in 2011, between \$82 billion and \$272 billion was lost to medical embezzlement due to flaws in the health insurance system.¹⁰ In US, the healthcare is mainly private insurance-based, with most providers owned locally by private companies.¹¹ The level of private hold is such that, in 2013, it was revealed that medical bills are the biggest cause of bankruptcy in the US.¹² In 2014, the Veterans Health Administration programme was hit by a scandal with the revelations that at least 40 US military veterans had died while waiting for medical care.¹³

In China, the healthcare system is much worse than in India. It is not just ‘privatised’ – a flaw which is pointed out as the malady of Indian healthcare – but is also corrupt, hierarchical and under-invested. Violence has become a common feature, with ‘patient-on-doctor’ attacks rising 23% a year on average since 2002, with a typical hospital suffering one such incident every two weeks.¹⁴ This is one of the world’s fastest growing economies.

To take the example of another fast growing economy, let us consider South Africa. According to a report, “The government spent more than 8.5% of GDP* on healthcare in 2012, higher than the 5% recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for a country

⁹ Jain 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The Guardian 2014.

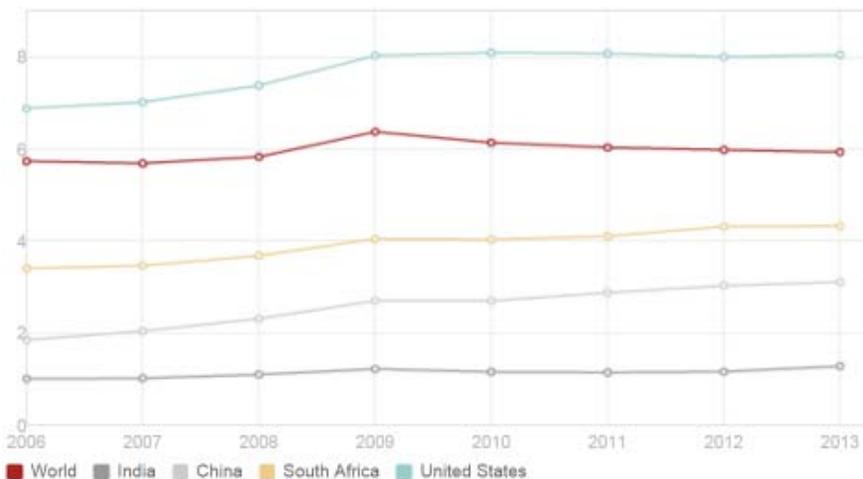
¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The Guardian 2014.

* From WHO data

of its socioeconomic status, yet performed worse than comparable nations.”¹⁵ Despite such huge spending on healthcare, welfare remains an elusive dream, as inherent corruption in the system breeds other ills like inequality, lack of access and inefficiency.



Public health expenditure in various countries (For details on the exact numbers see Table 1 in the Appendix) Source: The World Bank¹⁶

We have seen that the malaise in the health sector pervades all countries. However, if we derive some lessons from the comparison, one thing that becomes clear is that India, despite having the world’s lowest spending on healthcare at just 1.3% of the GDP, fares better than most other countries whose spending is very high. The main problems identified in Indian healthcare mainly relate to privatization and corruption arising out of it – something that is near universal elsewhere. It does not have the massive suffering that is prevalent in other high-spending countries.

This just goes on to show that advocating more spending to cure corruption will not achieve anything. The disaster of Obamacare is just one example of the futility of such an approach.

¹⁵ The Guardian 2014.

¹⁶ The World Bank n.d.

IS REFORM POSSIBLE?

Despite the rampant corruption in the health sector, the prescriptions for reform that are currently doing the rounds have also failed to catch the real malaise. They think that the problem is with lack of proper governance¹⁷ which does not ensure accountability and leaves the vast resources of the health system in the hands of the private sector.

On the accountability side, data is quoted to show that, in India, the private sector in healthcare currently has 80% of all doctors, 26% of nurses, 49% of beds and 78% of ambulatory services and 60% of in-patient care.¹⁸ It is argued that such corporatization of healthcare should be curbed and government should become more pro-active in order to reduce the rampant greed and corruption.

On the governance side, it is argued that the weak reach of the medical insurance system, in India, should be addressed. According to a study, “only 243 million of India’s 1.2 billion citizens are covered under Govt health insurance schemes and a total of 300 million (25% of total population) don’t have health insurance at all.”¹⁹

Another suggested reform measure to improve health governance involves using technology. Technology has become a powerful instrument across service and goods sectors in order to ensure that the seller of the service does not charge too high. In the health sector too, something similar to US has been emerging in India, with online rating forums like Surgerica, Medypal and Lybrate, enabling patients to compare and rate doctors on all counts, as increasing number of people with internet access go online for health services and become aware of their rights in this sector.²⁰ But does this mean that we can rely entirely on such technologies to re-build people’s trust?

¹⁷ Pandey 2014.

¹⁸ Dutta 2012.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Francis 2014.

This is a completely flawed argument. It is implausible that privatization of healthcare is the root cause of the corruption in the sector, and that government intervention, expanding the reach of insurance cover or leveraging technology can cure this. In the American healthcare system, the nexus between the insurance industry and healthcare is well-known. In China, despite the insurance coverage of the rural population being about 99%, the patients are paying as much for their medical services as they used to before being insured, due to the higher cost of medical services.²¹ Both healthcare and insurance try to suck the patients dry, both psychologically and in terms of money. Even government intervention and regulation has acted as a weak check at best, for, even the political sector is not free of corruption.

There is also no guarantee that the patients can get a better deal by using technology. Such technology has been common in the US for a long time, but the massive fraud at the heart of healthcare continues unabated. For, technology can cut both ways. It can be manipulated or limited by fallible human thinking and fail to do any good.

Thus, none of these institutional reform measures can truly bring about any lasting welfare or value-for-money in health services. For, the psychological incentive structure of our society is designed in such a way that people have no option but to engage in corrupt practices in order to survive a system whose rules and institutions are completely out of sync with the psychological reality of people.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

We have looked at a variety of countries and cross-cutting reform measures that have been put forward to reform the service of health. While it is clear that better technology, first-class infrastructure and ‘sophisticated doctors’ have created an illusion of luxurious healthcare facilities in top hospital chains, the reality of the massive global fraud is that rising costs and eroding quality is

The Guardian 2014.

sending millions of people into bankruptcy, depression, disease and death every year. The issue of rising income and welfare is completely out of the question. Medical bills alone suck half the income of most people and don't provide any welfare either.

Yet, the surprising part is that our social experts really believe that they are still capable of solving this problem through 'good governance'. Is it too difficult to see that the heart of this system is driven only by sheer greed and corruption and unless that is rooted out, all 'governance' measures will always be manipulated?

All the measures suggested for reforms in this or any other field touch only the surface of things. The root of all our problems lies in our psychology. We contemplate changing everything except ourselves. Unless we recognise this and direct our efforts in this direction – however difficult that may be or long it may take – nothing substantial is likely to be achieved. A beginning has to be made sometime, somewhere. And why not now?

To be continued....

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APPENDIX

Table 1

<i>Public Health Expenditure in Various Countries (% of GDP)</i>								
Country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
World	5.7	5.7	5.8	6.4	6.1	6	6	5.9
India	1	1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3
China	1.8	2	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.9	3	3.1
South Africa	3.4	3.5	3.7	4	4	4.1	4.3	4.3
United States	6.9	7	7.4	8	8.1	8.1	8	8.1

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (12)

VI. THE VEDA AND THE HISTORY OF THE VEDIC AGE

According to Sri Aurobindo, “We have no more right to assume that the Vedic Rishis were a race of simple & frank barbarians than to assume that they were a class of deep and acute philosophers. What they were is the thing we have to discover and we may arrive at either conclusion or neither, but we must not start from our goal or begin our argument on the basis of our conclusion. We know nothing of the history & thought of the times, we know nothing of the state of their intellectual & social culture except what we can gather from the Vedic hymns themselves. Indications from other sources may be useful as clues but the hymns are our sole authority.”¹

The text of the Veda is our sole and almost the only source for knowing anything about the history of the Vedic age. Therefore, **it is indispensable that we have the right understanding of the truth of the Veda** as expressed in the hymns of the Rig Veda – the oldest extant scripture of the human race – **before approaching the history of the Vedic age**. We have seen the motivation and the crudeness with which the Western Vedic scholarship had misinterpreted the Veda and presented it before the readily consenting oriental scholarship as a document of primitive barbarism good only for learning about the ancient history of India after the barbaric Aryan hordes from Europe invaded it sometime in the second millennium B.C. We have also seen in the earlier chapter on the Aryan Invasion Theory how a growing number of modern Vedic scholars – both Indian and Occidental – have been taking a stand against this theory which is purely imaginary and has been inimical to the unity and integrity of India. However, most even of these scholars – even those of Indian origin who are understandably sympathetic to India and its culture in their heart – still remain steeped in the Western materialistic view of human life and existence and continue to look at the Veda and Indian spiritual tradition from that point of view only. Here it is very instructive to quote from a letter of Sri Aurobindo where, we feel, his remarks on the efforts of Jung and the psychologists of that time

apply equally well to the efforts of the modern Vedic scholarship – even of the sympathetic kind. “But I find it difficult to take Jung and the psychologists very seriously [when they try to scrutinise spiritual experience by the flicker of their torch-lights],^a though perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. No doubt, they are very remarkable men in their own field, but this new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t = cat, t-r-e-e = tree) is the foundation of all knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of things is above and not below, *uparibudhna esam* [their foundation is above]. **The superconscient, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms for ever in the Light above.** The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor and dark and limited; **you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest.** That is the province of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing.”²

In the torch-light of their almost entirely preconceived notions about the life of the ancient people, the modern Vedic scholarship has tried to read and trace the geography, polity, economy and other aspects of the physical life and history of the Vedic people in the hymns of the Veda. Undoubtedly, there are names of plants, animals, rivers, kings and Rishis in the Veda which must have corresponded to things physical as they were known to the Vedic people and one may look upon these things as useful for providing some handle on

^aThe phrase within brackets was added later by Sri Aurobindo.

the physical conditions of the life of those people. Here too, based on their notions about what the life and thought and interests of the ancient barbarians must have been, the scholars have built an imposing edifice of the psychology, institutions, social structure and conduct of the Vedic people. For example, the Vedic scholar V. M. Apte writing on the social and economic conditions of the Vedic age interprets the 35th Sukta of the tenth Mandala of the Veda as follows: “The wedding hymn (X. 35) indicates that the newly-married wife rules over (or wins by her love?) her brothers-in-law and even over her husband’s parents although she herself entertains a feeling of respect for them. This is clear evidence of joint family life.”^a In R.L. Kashyap’s literal translation aimed at bringing out the deeper meaning of the Veda, the first three verses (Riks) or mantras of this hymn (X. 35) are translated^b as follows:

X.35.1: Agni’s connected with Indra are awake, bringing light at the onset of dawn. Let the Heaven and Earth be cognizant of the work. Today we accept the protection of gods.

X.35.2: We accept the protection of Heaven and Earth. We accept the faultless (sinless) *Sūrya* and *Uṣhas*, the motherly rivers, the tiered (hill of) existence and the inner heart. May the blissful Soma bestow happy-good on us.

X.35.3: Today, may the Heaven and Earth, the vast mothers protect us with happiness and make us be free of sin. May the rising Dawn drive away the sin. We seek the kindling of Agni in us for our welfare.

The remaining nine verses (4 to 12) of this hymn have the same refrain as the 3rd verse translated above. Now, where is there, even remotely, any suggestion of human marriage – the only pairs mentioned being Indra and Agni, Heaven and Earth, Surya and Usha – not to speak of all the vivid description of the conduct and character

^aR.C. Majumdar: The Vedic Age, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 1996, p.387

^bR.L. Kashyap: Rig Veda Samhita: Tenth Mandala, SAKSI, Bangalore, 2007, pp.109-10

of the newly-married wife!

Please refer to the chapter XV entitled “The Veda in the Eyes of the European and Indian Historians” for many more examples of this kind. So all-pervasive has been this tendency that when one reads important modern historical works on the Vedic age, one cannot fail to be astounded by the extent to which these esteemed writers have allowed their fertile imaginations based on conjecture and lawless inferences to get better of even an elementary common sense in these matters.

Even if an approach was free from these defects but which proceeded on the basis of names of things and persons mentioned in the Vedic mantras, it cannot be expected to carry us very far. Because even here, **if the Veda is – as repeatedly pointed out by Sri Aurobindo – shot through and through with mystic symbolism due to the habit of the ancient Rishis to symbolise everything, and if not only the names of the gods, but even the names of physical things are used as symbols of deeper things, then one cannot reasonably build any reliable structure merely on the basis of physical symbols** without the knowledge, or at least an insight, into their deeper meaning and the mystic suggestions that lay behind the surface physical descriptions in the Veda.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “In the Veda it is possible that another tendency has been at work, – the persistent and all-pervading habit of symbolism dominant in the minds of these ancient Mystics. **Everything, their own names, the names of Kings and sacrificers, the ordinary circumstances of their lives were turned into symbols and covers for their secret meaning.** Just as they used the ambiguity of the word *go*, which means both ray and cow, so as to make the concrete figure of the cow, the chief form of their pastoral wealth, a cover for its hidden sense of the inner light which was the chief element in the spiritual wealth they coveted from the gods, so also they would use their own names, Gotama ‘most full of light’, Gavisthira ‘the steadfast in light’ to hide a broad and general sense for their thought beneath what

seemed a personal claim or desire. Thus too they used the experiences external and internal whether of themselves or of other Rishis. **If there is any truth in the old legend of Shunahshepa bound as a victim on the altar of sacrifice**, it is yet quite certain, as we shall see, that **in the Rig Veda the occurrence or the legend is used as a symbol of the human soul bound by the triple cord of sin and released from it by the divine power of Agni, Surya, Varuna**. So also Rishis like Kutsa, Kanwa, Ushanas Kavya have become types and symbols of certain spiritual experiences and victories and placed in that capacity side by side with the gods. It is not surprising, then, that in this mystic symbolism the seven Angiras Rishis should have become divine powers and living forces of the spiritual life without losing altogether their traditional or historic human character.”³

Here are some excerpts from the Talk of January, 1940 reported by Purani in his *‘Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo’*:

“Sri Aurobindo : The Orientalists also wanted to prove the existence of Linga worship in the Rigveda by citing a Rik in which the word ‘Shishnadevah’ occurs.

Disciple : K. M. Munshi in tracing the origin of Bhakti long ago wrote that devotion is nothing else but sublimation of the sex-impulse, and he tried to trace the origin in the Rigveda. I contradicted his view even then and showed that ‘Shishna-deva’ only means sensualists.

Sri Aurobindo : Quite so. And what have they to say about the Dravidian tribe in Baluchistan? Is it black and flat-nosed? **How on earth do they find out these things from the Rigveda – nomadic existence, gambling, and crossings of the rivers, which to me is mystical. I also find that the fight between Tristsu and Sudansah in the eighth Mandala is not merely a battle, it is something symbolic.**”⁴

Tristsu is the son of Trasadasyu who is the son of Purukutsa and grandson of Durgaha – one who destroys forts. In the Rik IV.42.8

of the Rigveda, Trasadasyu is born out of sacrifice to Indra and Varuna and, like Indra, is a slayer of Vritra-foes and a half-god. In IV.42.9 he is called the slayer of Vritra. His own name (Trasa + Dasyu) means 'one who is a terror to the Dasyus.' "Those who read mainly the historical element in the Veda are apt to overemphasize these details and neglect the open hints in the names themselves and even in the words of the Riks. ...A study of proper names amply demonstrates that most of them were used in their root sense, adjectival sense or sense of the psychological function before they became hardened into names of individuals.

'Indra' – the name is used in an adjectival sense in इन्द्रतमाः (*Indratamāḥ*) and अनिन्द्राः (*anindrāḥ*). Also the derivative words (like) इन्द्रिय – Indriya, ultimately fixed in the sense of 'Sense', has an adjectival force 'that which belongs to Indra' 'that which is of Indra.'

Indra, therefore must be a power connected with the Mind, co-ordinating the workings of the senses."⁵

Thus, in the light of the above discussion, it should be abundantly clear that **an edifice of Vedic history, even if carefully constructed on the basis of taking the names of physical things at their face value** and without indulging into the modern vedic scholars' habit of extravagant scholastic fancies and lawless inferences, **can be of little interest even for an authentic surface rendering of the physical life and actions of the Vedic people** which, by itself, is of a limited value from the point of view of a deeper approach to the history of the Vedic age with which alone we are primarily concerned here.

On the surface, one may expect to find the life of a Vedic Rishi or sage to be very simple in terms of housing, vessels, utensils and other accompaniments of a, so called, civilised living. Here one must not forget the Indian spiritual tradition according to which, the value of the life of a Rishi depends not on these trifles but on the extent to which the vast light, power and love that emanates through his being affects and uplifts all life and even the physical atmosphere around

him/her. Although the spiritual action tends to be most powerful when there is physical nearness and/or psychological openness, it is by no means limited by these and the deeper workings of a Rishi's consciousness tend to transcend time and space. Commenting on the Theosophists' writings on such workings, Sri Aurobindo wrote, "The Theosophists are wrong in their circumstances but right in the essential. **If the French Revolution took place, it was because a soul on the Indian snows dreamed of God as freedom, brotherhood and equality.**"⁶

The earliest mystic writings of India are a record of the highest light received by the Rishis by means of the supreme spiritual processes of inspiration and revelation. This light has found its supreme expression in the sacred mantras of the Veda and the spiritual poems of the great Upanishads in a language so deeply charged with mystic symbolism that it is impenetrable for anyone without a background of very deep and vast spiritual experience. When the modern learned scholars – without any mystic experience and lacking even in sympathy for things spiritual and mystic – approached the Veda, they tried to project their own alien mentality based on the narrow ambit of their experience on the entirely mystic mentality of the Vedic seers. **The acuteness of the problem of Vedic interpretation is, in good measure, an outcome of the labours of the modern Vedic scholarship which has systematised a gross misunderstanding of the truth of the Veda and, based on it, the life and times of the Vedic people.**

At present things have come to such a state in intellectual circles that anyone who dares to talk about a deeper and mystic view of things in the Veda in which the whole idea of Aryan wars and kings and nations begins to take upon itself the aspect of a spiritual symbol and apologue, should be prepared to face the indifference, scorn and even outright hostility of the Vedic Pundits and scholars who – branding all such approaches as subjective, imaginary and lacking in any objectivity – consider it beneath their dignity to give any serious consideration to any such talk. If these people just stopped to calmly reflect for a moment on the overall picture in this

field, they cannot fail to see that all the labours of their kind are, essentially, nothing but more or less elaborate efforts – often clumsy – at myth making and that their results have been even less objective than the results arrived at by any sincere mystic. **Depending on one's predilection in the matter, the same data can be used – as we have already seen profusely done in the case of the Aryan Invasion Theory – to arrive at entirely different conclusions.** For example, most European scholars and their proteges in India have concluded on the basis of the evidence available to them or, more appropriately, chosen or even cooked up by them, that the movement of the Vedic Aryans was from west to the east and from north to the south. Proceeding on the basis of similar evidence, Talageri^a, who has taken great pains to prove the falsity of the Aryan Invasion Theory and, to a greater or lesser extent, the findings of all other Vedic scholars, arrives at a seemingly inescapable conclusion that the movement of the Vedic people must have been from east to the west and northwest. David Frawley and N.S. Rajaram^b who are very sympathetic to India and its culture but still approach the Vedic history^c from an entirely external and materialistic standpoint, use extensive evidence to arrive at a startling – but apparently no less plausible on the face of it – conclusion that, historically, the movement of the Vedic people was from south to the north and northwest.

Whatever truth of the physical and external there may be in the Veda, – and the intellectual scholars are far from being unanimous on this – it has been clearly established by Sri Aurobindo that hidden behind the thick veil of outer symbols, there is a deep psychological and supreme spiritual truth enshrined in the Vedic hymns which has been the perennial source of inspiration and power behind all the

^aTalageri, S.G.: **The Rigveda, A Historical Analysis**, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 2000, p.232

^bFrawley, David and Rajaram, N.S.: **Hidden Horizons**, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Ahmedabad, 2006

^cFrawley, David: **The Rigveda and the History of India**, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, 2001

rich and manifold development of Indian spiritual culture through all the millenniums since the Vedic hymns were first received or composed by the Rishis. **The validity of an approach to the history of the Vedic age depends crucially on the correctness or authenticity of its findings on the nature of the psychological structure which lay behind all the outer life and actions of the Vedic people.** And all this depends, critically, on the right interpretation of the Veda. Thus, **it is only on the firm and assured ground of the right interpretation that any fruitful attempt at constructing the history of the Vedic age can be made.** Therefore, before approaching the history of the Vedic age, in the following eight chapters we provide a detailed discussion of Sri Aurobindo's psychological interpretation of the Veda based on his own very deep, vast and high spiritual experience and knowledge and solidly supported by the philological and the traditional historical considerations.

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Note: The above matter has been taken from *The Vedic Age*, Chandra Prakash Khetan, The Resurgent India Trust (2015), Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India. (pp.110-119)

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (11)

2. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

III. The Life-Value of Indian Culture – the Supreme Achievements of Indian Culture in Its Dealings with Life

D. The Soundness of the Further Developments in Indian Culture on the Above Firm and Noble Basis

“On this first firm and noble basis Indian civilisation grew to its maturity and became a thing rich, splendid and unique. While it filled the view with the last mountain prospect of a supreme spiritual elevation, it did not neglect the life of the levels. It lived between the busy life of the city and village, the freedom and seclusion of the forest and the last overarching illimitable ether. Moving firmly between life and death it saw beyond both and cut out a hundred high-roads to immortality. It developed the external nature and drew it into the inner self; it enriched life to raise it into the spirit. Thus founded, thus trained, the ancient Indian race grew to astonishing heights of culture and civilisation; it lived with a noble, well-based, ample and vigorous order and freedom; it developed a great literature, sciences, arts, crafts, industries; it rose to the highest possible ideals and no mean practice of knowledge and culture, of arduous greatness and heroism, of kindness, philanthropy and human sympathy and oneness; it laid the inspired basis of wonderful spiritual philosophies; it examined the secrets of external nature and discovered and lived the boundless and miraculous truths of the inner being; it fathomed self and understood and possessed the world. As the civilisation grew in richness and complexity, it lost indeed the first grand simplicity of its early order. The intellect towered and widened, but intuition waned or retreated into the hearts of the saints and adepts and mystics. A greater stress came to be laid on scientific system, accuracy and order, not only in all the things of the life and mind, but even in the things of the spirit; the free flood of intuitive knowledge was forced to run in hewn channels. Society became more artificial and complex, less free and noble; more of a bond on the individual,

it was less a field for the growth of his spiritual faculties. The old fine integral harmony gave place to an exaggerated stress on one or other of its elemental factors. *Artha* and *kāma*, interest and desire were in some directions developed at the expense of the *dharma*. The lines of the *dharma* were filled and stamped in with so rigid a distinctness as to stand in the way of the freedom of the spirit. Spiritual liberation was pursued in hostility to life and not as its full-orbed result and high crowning. But still some strong basis of the old knowledge remained to inspire, to harmonise, to keep alive the soul of India. Even when deterioration came and a slow collapse, even when the life of the community degenerated into an uneasily petrified ignorance and confusion, the old spiritual aim and tradition remained to sweeten and humanise and save in its worst days the Indian peoples. For we see that it continually swept back on the race in new waves and high outbursts of life-giving energy or leaped up in intense kindlings of the spiritualised mind or heart, even as it now rises once more in all its strength to give the impulse of a great renaissance.”¹

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

The above was the description of the framework of Indian culture from the outlook of an intellectual criticism because that is the standpoint of the critics who try to disparage its value. It has been shown above that, “...Indian culture must be adjudged even from this alien outlook to have been the creation of a wide and noble spirit. Inspired in the heart of its being by a lofty principle, illumined with a striking and uplifting idea of individual manhood and its powers and its possible perfection, aligned to a spacious plan of social architecture, it was enriched not only by a strong philosophic, intellectual and artistic creativeness but by a great and vivifying and fruitful life-power. But this by itself does not give an adequate account of its spirit or its greatness. One might describe Greek or Roman civilisation from this outlook and miss little that was of importance; but **Indian civilisation was not only a great cultural**

system, but an immense religious effort of the human spirit.”²

A. The Whole Root of Difference Between Indian and European Culture

“The whole root of difference between Indian and European culture springs from the spiritual aim of Indian civilisation. It is the turn which this aim imposes on all the rich and luxuriant variety of its forms and rhythms that gives to it its unique character. For even what it has in common with other cultures gets from that turn a stamp of striking originality and solitary greatness. **A spiritual aspiration was the governing force of this culture, its core of thought, its ruling passion. Not only did it make spirituality the highest aim of life, but it even tried, as far as that could be done in the past conditions of the human race, to turn the whole of life towards spirituality.** But since religion is in the human mind the first native, if imperfect form of the spiritual impulse, the predominance of the spiritual idea, its endeavour to take hold of life, necessitated a casting of thought and action into the religious mould and a persistent filling of every circumstance of life with the religious sense; it demanded a pervadingly religiophilosophic culture. The highest spirituality indeed moves in a free and wide air far above that lower stage of seeking which is governed by religious form and dogma; it does not easily bear their limitations and, even when it admits, it transcends them; it lives in an experience which to the formal religious mind is unintelligible. But man does not arrive immediately at that highest inner elevation and, if it were demanded from him at once, he would never arrive there. At first he needs lower supports and stages of ascent; he asks for some scaffolding of dogma, worship, image, sign, form, symbol, some indulgence and permission of mixed half-natural motive on which he can stand while he builds up in him the temple of the spirit. Only when the temple is completed, can the supports be removed, the scaffolding disappear. **The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism not only fulfilled this purpose, but, unlike certain credal religions, it knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no**

sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided manystaged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *santna dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.

Now just here is the first baffling difficulty over which the European mind stumbles; for it finds itself unable to make out what Hindu religion is. Where, it asks, is its soul? where is its mind and fixed thought? where is the form of its body? How can there be a religion which has no rigid dogmas demanding belief on pain of eternal damnation, no theological postulates, even no fixed theology, no credo distinguishing it from antagonistic or rival religions? How can there be a religion which has no papal head, no governing ecclesiastic body, no church, chapel or congregational system, no binding religious form of any kind obligatory on all its adherents, no one administration and discipline? For the Hindu priests are mere ceremonial officiants without any ecclesiastical authority or disciplinary powers and the Pundits are mere interpreters of the Shastra, not the lawgivers of the religion or its rulers. How again can Hinduism be called a religion when it admits all beliefs, allowing even a kind of high-reaching atheism and agnosticism and permits all possible spiritual experiences, all kinds of religious adventures? The only thing fixed, rigid, positive, clear is the social law, and even that varies in different castes, regions, communities. The caste rules and not the Church; but even the caste cannot punish a man for his beliefs, ban heterodoxy or prevent his following a new revolutionary doctrine or a new spiritual leader. If it excommunicates Christian or Muslim, it is not for religious belief or practice, but because they break with the social rule and order. It has been asserted in consequence that there is no such thing as a Hindu religion, but only

a Hindu social system with a bundle of the most disparate religious beliefs and institutions. The precious dictum that Hinduism is a mass of folk-lore with an ineffective coat of metaphysical daubing is perhaps the final judgment of the superficial occidental mind on this matter.

This misunderstanding springs from the total difference of outlook on religion that divides the Indian mind and the normal Western intelligence. The difference is so great that it could only be bridged by a supple philosophical training or a wide spiritual culture; but the established forms of religion and the rigid methods of philosophical thought practised in the West make no provision and even allow no opportunity for either. To the Indian mind the least important part of religion is its dogma; the religious spirit matters, not the theological credo. On the contrary to the Western mind a fixed intellectual belief is the most important part of a cult; it is its core of meaning, it is the thing that distinguishes it from others. For it is its formulated beliefs that make it either a true or a false religion, according as it agrees or does not agree with the credo of its critic. This notion, however foolish and shallow, is a necessary consequence of the Western idea which falsely supposes that intellectual truth is the highest verity and, even, that there is no other. The Indian religious thinker knows that all the highest eternal verities are truths of the spirit. The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the affirmations of credal statement, but fruits of the soul's inner experience. Intellectual truth is only one of the doors to the outer precincts of the temple. And since intellectual truth turned towards the Infinite must be in its very nature many-sided and not narrowly one, the most varying intellectual beliefs can be equally true because they mirror different facets of the Infinite. However separated by intellectual distance, they still form so many side-entrances which admit the mind to some faint ray from a supreme Light. There are no true and false religions, but rather all religions are true in their own way and degree. Each is one of the thousand paths to the One Eternal."³

B. The Four Necessities of Human Life

“Indian religion placed four necessities before human life. First, it imposed upon the mind a belief in a highest consciousness or state of existence universal and transcendent of the universe, from which all comes, in which all lives and moves without knowing it and of which all must one day grow aware, returning towards that which is perfect, eternal and infinite. Next, it laid upon the individual life the need of self-preparation by development and experience till man is ready for an effort to grow consciously into the truth of this greater existence. Thirdly, it provided it with a well-founded, well-explored, many-branching and always enlarging way of knowledge and of spiritual or religious discipline. Lastly, for those not yet ready for these higher steps it provided an organisation of the individual and collective life, a framework of personal and social discipline and conduct, of mental and moral and vital development by which they could move each in his own limits and according to his own nature in such a way as to become eventually ready for the greater existence. The first three of these elements are the most essential to any religion, but Hinduism has always attached to the last also a great importance; it has left out no part of life as a thing secular and foreign to the religious and spiritual life. Still the Indian religious tradition is not merely the form of a religiosocial system, as the ignorant critic vainly imagines. However greatly that may count at the moment of a social departure, however stubbornly the conservative religious mind may oppose all pronounced or drastic change, still the core of Hinduism is a spiritual, not a social discipline. Actually we find religions like Sikhism counted in the Vedic family although they broke down the old social tradition and invented a novel form, while the Jains and Buddhists were traditionally considered to be outside the religious fold although they observed Hindu social custom and intermarried with Hindus, because their spiritual system and teaching figured in its origin as a denial of the truth of Veda and a departure from the continuity of the Vedic line. In all these four elements that constitute Hinduism there are major and minor differences between Hindus of various sects, schools,

communities and races; but nevertheless there is also a general unity of spirit, of fundamental type and form and of spiritual temperament which creates in this vast fluidity an immense force of cohesion and a strong principle of oneness.”⁴

C. The Fundamental Idea and the Core of Indian Religion

“The fundamental idea of all Indian religion is one common to the highest human thinking everywhere. The supreme truth of all that is is a Being or an existence beyond the mental and physical appearances we contact here. Beyond mind, life and body there is a Spirit and Self containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal. A one transcendent, universal, original and sempiternal Divinity or divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss is the fount and continent and inhabitant of things. Soul, nature, life are only a manifestation or partial phenomenon of this self-aware Eternity and this conscious Eternal. But this Truth of being was not seized by the Indian mind only as a philosophical speculation, a theological dogma, an abstraction contemplated by the intelligence. It was not an idea to be indulged by the thinker in his study, but otherwise void of practical bearing on life. It was not a mystic sublimation which could be ignored in the dealings of man with the world and Nature. It was a living spiritual Truth, an Entity, a Power, a Presence that could be sought by all according to their degree of capacity and seized in a thousand ways through life and beyond life. This Truth was to be lived and even to be made the governing idea of thought and life and action. This recognition and pursuit of something or someone Supreme is behind all forms the one universal credo of Indian religion, and if it has taken a hundred shapes, it was precisely because it was so much alive. The Infinite alone justifies the existence of the finite and the finite by itself has no entirely separate value or independent existence. Life, if it is not an illusion, is a divine Play, a manifestation of the glory of the Infinite. Or it is a means by which the soul growing in Nature through countless forms and many lives can approach, touch, feel and unite itself through

love and knowledge and faith and adoration and a Godward will in works with this transcendent Being and this infinite Existence. This Self or this self-existent Being is the one supreme reality, and all things else are either only appearances or only true by dependence upon it. It follows that self-realisation and God-realisation are the great business of the living and thinking human being. All life and thought are in the end a means of progress towards self-realisation and God-realisation.

Indian religion never considered intellectual or theological conceptions about the supreme Truth to be the one thing of central importance. To pursue that Truth under whatever conception or whatever form, to attain to it by inner experience, to live in it in consciousness, this it held to be the sole thing needful. One school or sect might consider the real self of man to be indivisibly one with the universal Self or the supreme Spirit. Another might regard man as one with the Divine in essence but different from him in Nature. A third might hold God, Nature and the individual soul in man to be three eternally different powers of being. But for all the truth of Self held with equal force; for even to the Indian dualist God is the supreme self and reality in whom and by whom Nature and man live, move and have their being and, if you eliminate God from his view of things, Nature and man would lose for him all their meaning and importance.... **Differences of credal belief are to the Indian mind nothing more than various ways of seeing the one Self and Godhead in all. Self-realisation is the one thing needful;** to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God, that is the common idea and aim of religion, that is the sense of spiritual salvation, that is the living Truth that fulfils and releases. This dynamic following after the highest spiritual truth and the highest spiritual aim are the uniting bond of Indian religion and, behind all its thousand forms, its one common essence.

If there were nothing else to be said in favour of the spiritual genius of the Indian people or the claim of Indian civilisation to stand in the front rank as a spiritual culture, it would be sufficiently

substantiated by this single fact that not only was this greatest and widest spiritual truth seen in India with the boldest largeness, felt and expressed with a unique intensity, and approached from all possible sides, but it was made consciously the grand uplifting idea of life, the core of all thinking, the foundation of all religion, the secret sense and declared ultimate aim of human existence. The truth announced is not peculiar to Indian thinking; it has been seen and followed by the highest minds and souls everywhere. But elsewhere it has been the living guide only of a few thinkers, or of some rare mystics or exceptionally gifted spiritual natures. The mass of men have had no understanding, no distant perception, not even a reflected glimpse of this something Beyond; they have lived only in the lower sectarian side of religion, in inferior ideas of the Deity or in the outward mundane aspects of life. But Indian culture did succeed by the strenuousness of its vision, the universality of its approach, the intensity of its seeking in doing what has been done by no other culture. It succeeded in stamping religion with the essential ideal of a real spirituality; it brought some living reflection of the very highest spiritual truth and some breath of its influence into every part of the religious field. Nothing can be more untrue than to pretend that the general religious mind of India has not at all grasped the higher spiritual or metaphysical truths of Indian religion. It is a sheer falsehood or a wilful misunderstanding to say that it has lived always in the externals only of rite and creed and shibboleth. On the contrary, the main metaphysical truths of Indian religious philosophy in their broad idea-aspects or in an intensely poetic and dynamic representation have been stamped on the general mind of the people. The ideas of Maya, Lila, divine Immanence are as familiar to the man in the street and the worshipper in the temple as to the philosopher in his seclusion, the monk in his monastery and the saint in his hermitage. The spiritual reality which they reflect, the profound experience to which they point, has permeated the religion, the literature, the art, even the popular religious songs of a whole people. It is true that these things are realised by the mass of men more readily through the fervour of devotion than by a strenuous effort of

thinking; but that is as it must and should be since the heart of man is nearer to the Truth than his intelligence.

It is true, too, that the tendency to put too much stress on externals has always been there and worked to overcloud the deeper spiritual motive; but that is not peculiar to India, it is a common failing of human nature, not less but rather more evident in Europe than in Asia. It has needed a constant stream of saints and religious thinkers and the teaching of illuminated Sannyasins to keep the reality vivid and resist the deadening weight of form and ceremony and ritual. But the fact remains that these messengers of the spirit have never been wanting. And the still more significant fact remains that there has never been wanting either a happy readiness in the common mind to listen to the message. The ordinary materialised souls, the external minds are the majority in India as everywhere. How easy it is for the superior European critic to forget this common fact of our humanity and treat this turn as a peculiar sin of the Indian mentality! But at least the people of India, even the 'ignorant masses' have this distinction that they are by centuries of training nearer to the inner realities, are divided from them by a less thick veil of the universal ignorance and are more easily led back to a vital glimpse of God and Spirit, self and eternity than the mass of men or even the cultured elite anywhere else. Where else could the lofty, austere and difficult teaching of a Buddha have seized so rapidly on the popular mind? Where else could the songs of a Tukaram, a Ramprasad, a Kabir, the Sikh gurus and the chants of the Tamil saints with their fervid devotion but also their profound spiritual thinking have found so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature? This strong permeation or close nearness of the spiritual turn, this readiness of the mind of a whole nation to turn to the highest realities is the sign and fruit of an age-long, a real and a still living and supremely spiritual culture."⁵

D. The Liberty of Religious Practice and Complete Freedom of Thought in Indian Religion

"The endless variety of Indian philosophy and religion seems

to the European mind interminable, bewildering, wearisome, useless; it is unable to see the forest because of the richness and luxuriance of its vegetation; it misses the common spiritual life in the multitude of its forms. But this infinite variety is itself, as Vivekananda pertinently pointed out, a sign of a superior religious culture. The Indian mind has always realised that the Supreme is the Infinite; it has perceived, right from its Vedic beginnings, that to the soul in Nature the Infinite must always present itself in an endless variety of aspects. The mentality of the West has long cherished the aggressive and quite illogical idea of a single religion for all mankind, a religion universal by the very force of its narrowness, one set of dogmas, one cult, one system of ceremonies, one array of prohibitions and injunctions, one ecclesiastical ordinance. That narrow absurdity prances about as the one true religion which all must accept on peril of persecution by men here and spiritual rejection or fierce eternal punishment by God in other worlds. This grotesque creation of human unreason, the parent of so much intolerance, cruelty, obscurantism and aggressive fanaticism, has never been able to take firm hold of the free and supple mind of India. Men everywhere have common human failings, and intolerance and narrowness especially in the matter of observances there has been and is in India. There has been much violence of theological disputation, there have been querulous bickerings of sects with their pretensions to spiritual superiority and greater knowledge, and sometimes, at one time especially in southern India in a period of acute religious differences, there have been brief local outbreaks of active mutual tyranny and persecution even unto death. But these things have never taken the proportions which they assumed in Europe. Intolerance has been confined for the most part to the minor forms of polemical attack or to social obstruction or ostracism; very seldom have they transgressed across the line to the major forms of barbaric persecution which draw a long, red and hideous stain across the religious history of Europe. There has played ever in India the saving perception of a higher and purer spiritual intelligence, which has had its effect on the mass mentality. Indian religion has always felt

that since the minds, the temperaments, the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite.

India recognised authority of spiritual experience and knowledge, but she recognised still more the need of variety of spiritual experience and knowledge. Even in the days of decline when the claim of authority became in too many directions rigorous and excessive, she still kept the saving perception that there could not be one but must be many authorities. An alert readiness to acknowledge new light capable of enlarging the old tradition has always been characteristic of the religious mind in India. Indian civilisation did not develop to a last logical conclusion its earlier political and social liberties, – that greatness of freedom or boldness of experiment belongs to the West; but liberty of religious practice and a complete freedom of thought in religion as in every other matter have always counted among its constant traditions. The atheist and the agnostic were free from persecution in India. Buddhism and Jainism might be disparaged as unorthodox religions, but they were allowed to live freely side by side with the orthodox creeds and philosophies; in her eager thirst for truth she gave them their full chance, tested all their values, and as much of their truth as was assimilable was taken into the stock of the common and always enlarging continuity of her spiritual experience. That ageless continuity was carefully conserved, but it admitted light from all quarters. In latter times the saints who reached some fusion of the Hindu and the Islamic teaching were freely and immediately recognised as leaders of Hindu religion, – even, in some cases, when they started with a Mussulman birth and from the Mussulman standpoint. The Yogin who developed a new path of Yoga, the religious teacher who founded a new order, the thinker who built up a novel statement of the manysided truth of spiritual existence, found no serious obstacle to their practice or their propaganda. At most they had to meet the opposition of the priest and pundit instinctively adverse to any change; but this had only to be lived down for the

new element to be received into the free and pliant body of the national religion and its ever plastic order.”⁶

References:

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.176-77, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
2. *Ibid, p.178*
3. *Ibid, pp.178-81*
4. *Ibid, pp.181-82*
5. *Ibid, pp.182-86*
6. *Ibid, pp.186-88*

Note: The above matter has been taken from **The Greatness of India and Its Culture** in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, by Chandra Prakash Khetan, The Resurgent India Trust (2015), Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India. (pp.59-73)

The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge, – that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This *sanatana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga.

– **Sri Aurobindo**

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.08, Page.26)