

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

November 2015



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

– The Mother

Year 6

Issue 8

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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

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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)

THE NEED OF THE HOUR: A REORIENTATION OF THE COLLECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENERGIES OF THE HUMAN RACE

“This erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being.”¹

A. THE PROBLEM: AN EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS BEFORE MANKIND

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for **a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way.** A structure of the external life has been raised up by man’s ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. **Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites.** For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good

and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being: but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time **Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements,** no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. **All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal.** The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing

potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.

A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. **The evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organisation of the activity of mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change.**"²

An inner change can be brought about only by the development of that "... which society has most neglected, the spiritual element, the soul in man which is his true being. Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field for their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance; afterwards he flags and tires for want of a real self-finding, a satisfying aim for his action and progress. These three things do not make the sum of a complete manhood; they are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an aim in themselves. Add a rich emotional life governed by a well-ordered ethical standard, and still there is the savour of something left out, some supreme good which these things mean, but do not in themselves arrive at, do not discover till they go beyond themselves. Add a religious system and a widespread spirit of belief and piety, and still you have not found the means of social salvation. All these things human society has developed, but none of them has saved it

from disillusionment, weariness and decay. The ancient intellectual cultures of Europe ended in disruptive doubt and sceptical impotence, the pieties of Asia in stagnation and decline.”³

B. THE PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND THE UTILITARIAN SPIRIT

The whole modern socio-economic system is geared towards meeting only the vital and physical needs of man, for the material perfection and well-being has become the sole recognised Dharma of modern societies – all else being considered either a pretentious falsity or a thing of minor and dependent consequence. The overriding concern that the modern societies show for the fulfilment of the vital and the physical desires of man, and the prominent part that money plays in the fulfilment of such desires, has brought the economic science to the forefront. **The economic science and its calculations confine themselves to only those parts of individual and social activities which are squared (or squarable) against the measuring rod of money. Thus, Economics addresses itself to only a fraction of what would be considered relevant to a person’s welfare even by a materialist. Still, important policy decisions having profound implications for all aspects of life are continuously being taken, almost wholly, on the basis of narrow economic calculations alone. This is the spirit of “utilitarianism”. As if the materialistic view of man was not narrow enough for a speedy disaster; this made matters go from bad to worse.**

“For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax in our times; it is what we may call ‘utilitarianism’. People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful. Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful – useful to whom, to what, for what? For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilized describe

as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.”⁴

The gospel of utilitarianism seems to permeate modern societies; debasing by its touch all that has opened to it consciously or unconsciously. Virtually nothing seems to have escaped completely its distorting influence. Politics, education, medicine, art, music, religion, friendships, relations, love, etc., all seem to have come under its sway. The spirit of duty, commitment, service seems to be fast losing ground to it even in areas such as education, medicine, social service, etc., which have traditionally been its strongholds. In short, the spirit of what Sri Aurobindo termed “economic barbarism” at the beginning of the last century still seems to seriously afflict modern society.

“This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life. The characteristic of Life is desire and the instinct of possession. Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism. To the natural unredeemed economic man beauty is a thing otiose or a nuisance, art and poetry a frivolity or an ostentation and a means of advertisement. His idea of civilisation is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of

industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialised industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organisation, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.

The essential barbarism of all this is its pursuit of vital success, satisfaction, productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake. The vital part of the being is an element in the integral human existence as much as the physical part; it has its place but must not exceed its place. A full and well-appointed life is desirable for man living in society, but on condition that it is also a true and beautiful life. Neither the life nor the body exist for their own sake, but as vehicle and instrument of a good higher than their own. They must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection. Therefore in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, of success, vitalistic satisfaction, productiveness and possession the soul of man may linger a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest. If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass, *mole ruet sua*.”⁵

C. THE UTILITARIAN SPIRIT IN INDIA

An almost exclusive preoccupation of public policy with “bread and butter” issues coupled with the repeated doses of ill-conceived governmental interventions and adventures in the economic system has been instrumental in inculcating the spirit of a very short-sighted “utilitarianism” in the functioning of

individuals and groups. The present situation is such that wherever one looks one finds individuals and groups infested with the “utilitarian” spirit and busy exploring and innovating new ways and means of somehow, anyhow, making some extra money. Men everywhere seem to be aiming for quick, cheap and easy ways and means for material success and solution to their problems, forsaking all higher values and nobler aspirations of their being. Education, medicine, business, administration, law and justice, everywhere it is the same story. The result is that our educational institutions continue to supply degrees and diplomas but no longer provide any education worthy of the name; our doctors and hospitals are more likely to deprive a person of his money and body’s natural health than his disease; one must be a real genius in the art of shopping if one is to avoid paying too much and buying an adulterated, fake or a poor quality product in our markets. In our courts, justice may not be denied, but it can almost always be delayed indefinitely, for a fee. Our politics, government and the administrative machinery are increasingly taking on the appearance of a real nemesis for the country.

We have forgotten that when everyone is trying to get somewhere by stepping on everyone else, no one really gets anywhere. The narrow and short-sighted utilitarian spirit not only results into spiritual deprivation but must also prove in the end catastrophic for the material well-being of the society.

The quality of food, air and water has deteriorated – thanks to “development” – to such an extent that it has become a serious threat to the health and survival of people, particularly those living in heavily populated mega cities where the levels of air pollution often reach levels that are a hundred or more times higher than those considered safe. The new Modi government is viewed as a beacon of hope by many and its program to clean the Ganga and achieve cleanliness in the whole country, to check the environmental pollution and build an efficient infrastructure are admirable and steps in the right direction but **it does not seems to have realized the**

grave dangers underlying the Western model of economic development. It is possible that it is using the development slogans as an expedient measure to get the country out of the worse morass of divisions based on caste, sect, sex and language etc. More likely it is that it does not yet really see the dangers involved in the pursuit of the “development ideal” of the modern man.

D. THE SOLUTION – THE ONLY WAY OUT

“If mankind could but see though in a glimpse of fleeting experience what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all & never rest till they had gained these treasures. But the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, distrust & scepticism are there, sentinels of Nature, to forbid the turning away of our feet from her ordinary pastures.”⁶

The human civilization in its chequered evolution through the ages has never really been conscious of its true destiny – an ascension to a divine life in a divine body. The mind of the race has wavered fundamentally between the two extreme views of existence; what Sri Aurobindo has termed as the two negations: (i) the materialist’s denial of the spirit and, (ii) the ascetic’s refusal of life in matter. **The salvation of the human race lies not in any exclusiveness but in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind both in the individual and in the collectivity.**

At present the whole of the human race has come more or less completely under the sway of the materialistic ideal. To start with, the safety of the present civilization has to be sought not only in the explicit recognition of the spiritual aim of existence but in its application to all the problems faced by it. Today all the countries, the world over, are enamoured of and altogether enslaved by the “development ideal” which concentrates on achieving an ever greater and greater volume of goods and services as measured by the gross

domestic product (GDP)^a. The menacing giant of religious fundamentalism and intolerance has been raising its head since the beginning of this century and still seems to be unabated and even growing. However, even this giant – even in areas and cultures most under its sway – has to play “second fiddle” to the mightier and seemingly invincible titan named “development” which is put forward by the “wise thinkers”, the world over, as the one thing that really matters and as the very condition of survival.

However, this titan – in spite of its very impressive performance in developing material infrastructure and changing the physical appearance of things – has not really been able to deliver in terms of the real well-being. As we have seen earlier, the deeper reason for this is that, basically, it is impossible to bring about a real improvement on this front without a corresponding improvement in the consciousness in which people live. For example, the quality of a service depends critically on the consciousness of people, especially in the case of the areas such as health, education and administration. As consciousness rises, we open more and more to a feeling of fraternity leading eventually to the consciousness of unity and oneness with all when spiritual levels of consciousness are approached. **To the extent we fail to identify with other people**

^a The GDP is – more and more – becoming rather a measure of “human deprivation” than anything else. For example, when one walks to work at an office nearby, one does not, through this simple and enjoyable act, contribute anything to the GDP. However, if one has to take a high-speed bullet train – spending hours getting to and back from work – one (indirectly) contributes enormously to the GDP; initially by way of expenses incurred in building and then in operating and maintaining such an expensive means of transportation. As the number of people who get subjected to such deprivations goes up, the GDP also goes up. The GDP also increases as conflicts (or their future likelihood), crimes, corruption, epidemics and diseases increase, because to maintain peace, safety and health, the public expenditure on these things – which enters directly into the GDP accounting – has also to be increased proportionately with the proportion ever growing higher due to ever declining real value of the services (per unit of money) in these fields due to the relentless working of the utilitarian spirit.

and their sufferings and joys (as our own), we fail to truly serve them^a. Since everyone, without exception, must be on the receiving end in the case of (at least) some services, therefore, as the quality of services begins to continually deteriorate, everyone must become progressively worse off in real terms. In an economy consisting only of services (and no goods), one person's spending on a service is another one's income from performing it. Even if we were to multiply the nominal amounts involved in the above process by a factor of hundred and thus nominally increase everyone's income a hundredfold – as to a large extent we have been unconsciously doing during the process of economic development – nothing would have really changed unless during this process the quality of service also changes. Even if enormous improvements in the technology of performing services were to take place during the above process – as have actually taken place during the past few decades due to rapid advancements achieved in science and technology – it need not have affected the real value of services because all advancements in technology are a double edged sword and can equally help or hurt depending on the motivation of the performers (of services). For example, the quality of educational and health services seems to have remained unaffected by the tremendous technological improvements that have been registered in these fields during past few decades. Actually, according to the experience of a good many, it has been – in spite of the appearances to the contrary – really getting progressively worse during this period, especially

^a The source of all sympathy and concern for others in our surface being – the real basis of all true service – springs from the deepest truth of our being where we are all one and enjoy and entire identity with the One without a second of Veda and Vedanta. No selfish materialistic tendency, however acute, can really shut us completely from this truth – which in spite of our myopia – keeps things going and saves us from a complete collapse. Oblivious of all this, humanity has often tried in certain ages – as it seems to be doing at present with its slogans of happiness and enjoyment for all through growth and development directed entirely to the service of the animal self – to shut itself from this deeper truth and had come to grief by behaving like the proverbial fool who hacks at the very branch of the tree he is sitting on.

during the period of the free and undeterred reign of the materialistic utilitarian spirit after the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union.

If we look at the development statistics, the aggregate volume of services in nominal terms has been growing faster than that of the goods. As a result, services which accounted for only about one third of the GDP in the 1950s now account for almost four-fifths of the GDP in the case of materially advanced countries like the US and about two-thirds in the case of the growing economies like India and China. If the quality of “services” declines – as it seems to have been for some time now – then the real GDP must also decline unless compensated by more than proportionate (almost double or triple compared to the fall in the real value of the “services”) increase in the real value of the volume of goods produced. We have seen earlier how the utilitarian spirit has been progressively eating at the core of quality in both goods and services. Now, certainly, technology has brought about a very significant increase in the volume of goods produced but the quality in the case of a good number of things – even of such essentials as food, water and air – has been deteriorating all along with disastrous consequences for human health and well-being.

Because of a cut-throat competition in a market economy the producers tend to concentrate on the improvements in the appearance of products while (to cut costs) taking out all that can be taken out – without the risk of the consumers easily finding out – from the products in terms of quality and durability. The movement is increasingly tending towards a scenario where more and more producers are busy developing and practicing (without compunction) ever novel ways and means for bewitching and cheating the consumers. The result is that the markets are flooded with lots of worthless goods of bewitching appearance.

The upshot of all the above is that the well-being of people – even when narrowed to the satisfaction of the external being – has been declining in real terms. We must realise once for all,

that, “The conditions in which men live on earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change these conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. Those who have been able to perceive what could and ought to be done to improve the situation in the various domains of human life – economic, political, social, financial, educational and sanitary – are individuals who have, to a greater or lesser extent, developed their consciousness in an exceptional way and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas have remained more or less theoretical or, if an attempt has been made to realise them practically, it has always failed lamentably after a certain period of time; for no **human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another; religions, spiritual or social, have been created; their beginnings have sometimes been promising, but as humanity has not been fundamentally transformed, the old errors arising from human nature itself have gradually reappeared and after some time we find ourselves almost back at the point we had started from with so much hope and enthusiasm.”**⁷

Essentially, there are hardly any world problems that cannot be traced to human agency and which could not be overcome, to a great extent, by appropriate changes in human behaviour brought about from within. The root cause of all our problems – even of the most external – are the severe inner constraints on our vision and values which are, to a great extent, the byproducts of our acute selfish concentration on our surface selves. As things stand at present, we contemplate changing almost everything on this earth – the whole media is full of the deafening noise of intellectuals and political and social leaders about such changes – but ourselves wherein lies the only key to the solution of all our problems. There is not a single country – out of an aggregate of more than 200 on the globe – which at all concerns itself with real “man-making”. The present day education, whether “secular” or otherwise, hardly addresses this problem and is geared only to

provide students with diplomas and skills which may be used to pursue their narrow selfish ends for which they had been amply groomed by the psychological atmosphere prevailing at these institutions and in the society at large.

What all this is leading to – and already has to a good extent – is obvious **if one impassively looks at the present scenario where one finds oneself surrounded by, to use Yogi Sri Krishna Prem’s eloquent words, “...an aggregate of meaningless individuals determinedly pursuing their contemptible aims.”**⁸

The one way out of this problem is that an increasing number of people becomes conscious of this deeper aspect of our problems and makes a determined move in its own way to address them. **As the evolutionary crisis deepens – especially in relation to ethical and moral infrastructure – it may lead to a real awakening to this need intense and critical enough to enable it to become at least one of the most important goals to be pursued by the governments across the world.**

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1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA)*, Vol.12, p.468, Sri Aurobindo Ashram
2. *CWSA*, Vol.22: pp.1090-92
3. *CWSA*, Vol.25: p.224
4. *Collected Works of the Mother (CWM)*, Vol.12, p.353
5. *CWSA*, Vol.25: pp.79-81
6. *CWSA*, Vol.12: p.423
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8. *Dilip Kumar Roy, Yogi Sri Krishna Prem, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1992, p.134*
9. *CWSA*, Vol.12: p.465

“Governments, societies, kings, police, judges, institutions, churches, laws, customs, armies are temporary necessities imposed on us for a few groups of centuries because God has concealed His face from us. When it appears to us again in its truth & beauty, then in that light they will vanish.”⁹

BIHAR ELECTIONS: NEW CHALLENGES IN THE MAKING?

The Bihar assembly elections have seen a resounding defeat handed to the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). The electoral contest was bitterly fought between the BJP-led coalition consisting of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), the Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAMS) and the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) on the one hand, and the Grand Alliance consisting of the Nitish Kumar-led JD (U), the Lalu Prasad-led RJD and the Congress on the other hand. Out of the 243 member assembly which requires 122 seats to form the government, the BJP-led coalition managed to win only 58 seats with 34.1% vote share, while the Grand Alliance won a landslide tally of 178 seats with a 41.9% vote share.

Political Party	Seats contested	Seats won	Vote share (%)	Total votes
BJP	157	53	24.4	92,85,574
RJD	101	80	18.4	69,77,094
JD (U)	101	71	16.8	63,96,164
Congress	41	27	6.7	25,39,638
<i>BJP's allies:</i>				
LJP	42	2	4.8	
HAM-Secular	21	1	2.2	8,64,856
RLSP	23	2	2.6	9,76,787

In what comes as a major shock to the other major regional parties who contested elections in Bihar this time, the NOTA (None Of The Above) option was widely exercised by the electorate and managed to garner about 2.5% of the vote share¹ – more than the vote share of well-known political parties like HAMS, Communist Party of India (CPI), Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM).

WHAT WENT WRONG?

The BJP's defeat in the Bihar elections was not expected, yet the reasons for the failure became clear even as the poll campaign was going on.

First, the BJP failed to mobilize the rural voters. Bihar is the second least urbanized state in India. Only 11.3% population of Bihar is located in urban centres, while 88.7% of the population is rural. Out of the 53 seats that the BJP won, 27 seats or 51% of the seats were from urban areas, indicating that half of its seat-share came from just 11% of the state's population.² Afflicted by agricultural crisis and caste divisions, even the development agenda of PM Modi failed to mobilize the rural working age population of the state.

Second, PM Modi's development agenda seemed to compete with the development policies of the incumbent Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar. The latter is widely considered to have held a good development record in the state, with positive interventions in areas like education, infrastructure etc. PM Modi was not bringing in anything new with his development rhetoric. Moreover, the hefty fiscal packages promised by the PM in his rallies received negative publicity for trying to 'buy' the electorate through money.

Third, there was no local face in the BJP campaign, with the PM Modi conducting most of the rallies in Bihar. This negatively impacted the electoral prospects, since, beyond the glamour of personalities, many voter sections, like women, seek to base their choice on more practical local leaders' promises.

Fourth, all the odds were arraigned against the BJP. Its weak coalition partners, with very little say in constituencies, were pitted against the alliance of strong parties like JD (U) and RJD. These parties have their set vote-banks who vote by default, such as the Yadavs, Muslims, Dalits and OBCs. In states like Bihar, with strong community loyalties, people still vote on the basis of group preferences. Due to a weak individualistic social fabric, even the so-called development agenda is structured on the basis of sectarian choices.

Fifth, there was lot of incoherence within the BJP. The negative comments against reservation made by the RSS chief, the silence of the party on Dadri lynching and the 'motor mouth' comments on the

Dalit killings, were all heavily politicized against the BJP in the Bihar election.

FRAGMENTED POLITICS: A WEAK CONFRONTATION

Even though the Grand Alliance managed to secure a landslide victory, the immediate future of Indian as well as Bihar politics appears more fragmented than before.

The opposition unity in the aftermath of the Bihar debacle will obstruct the legislative process even more in the upcoming winter session of the Parliament. Since early this year, opposition parties, led by the Congress, had already begun to exploit the vote-bank of discontented farmers, caste and religious minorities and vested interests in social sectors like education and environment, resulting in a wash-out of the monsoon session of the Parliament. Now, this confrontation will become worse as the Bihar election has supplied more ammunition to the opposition parties. The Congress has already declared its intention to obstruct major bills like Goods and Services Tax (GST) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposals in media and defence.³

This has given rise to speculations of an impending struggle against the present government. Already, the so-called public intelligentsia, including writers and artists, have started a movement by returning their national awards to protest against religious 'intolerance' in the country. The media is only too happy to contribute to this movement. And, with the opposition political parties propagating the same discourse of pseudo-secularism, there will certainly be a broad struggle against the government in the next few months.

Not only will this hostility present challenges to the government in the Parliament and infiltrate the mind of the working age urban voter, but will also, if not mitigated, hinder the chances of the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections in several states in 2016 and 2017.

However, the importance of the struggle must not be over-emphasized. The coalitions that are protesting against the ruling

dispensation are internally divided and united only by short-term objectives to maximize their narrow interests.

It seems quite certain that the Nitish Kumar-led government will not be able to sustain itself for long in Bihar. Since the RJD supremo, Lalu Prasad Yadav, has won the larger number of seats in the coalition, his grand come-back in politics will make him an obstruction to Nitish Kumar's autonomous working. The grand alliance is a patchwork coalition which is divided in terms of interests and functioning, marking it as dysfunctional in the long run.

There is also no scope for uniting on the basis of secularism for any long term gains. The secular alliance has been convened numerous times in the past against the BJP. It is just a temporary formation incapable of translating any plank into policy. What secularism and caste justice can the grand alliance talk about? In Bihar, the Dalits are mainly oppressed by the OBCs, especially the Yadavs, rather than by the upper castes. So, who are these secular forces fighting against when the enemy sits within?

Thus, while the verdict against the BJP is strong and will ensure political struggle in the days to come, the lack of a viable political alternative will take the edge off the opposition's attack.

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HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (14)

VIII. THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

A. The Problem

“Is there at all or is there still a secret of the Veda?”

According to current conceptions the heart of that ancient mystery has been plucked out and revealed to the gaze of all, or rather no real secret ever existed. The hymns of the Veda are the sacrificial compositions of a primitive and still barbarous race written around a system of ceremonial and propitiatory rites, addressed to personified Powers of Nature and replete with a confused mass of half-formed myth and crude astronomical allegories yet in the making. Only in the later hymns do we perceive the first appearance of deeper psychological and moral ideas – borrowed, some think, from the hostile Dravidians, the ‘robbers’ and ‘Veda-haters’ freely cursed in the hymns themselves, – and, however acquired, the first seed of the later Vedantic speculations. This modern theory is in accord with the received idea of a rapid human evolution from the quite recent savage; it is supported by an imposing apparatus of critical research and upheld by a number of Sciences, unhappily still young and still largely conjectural in their methods and shifting in their results, – Comparative Philology, Comparative Mythology and the Science of Comparative Religion.

It is my object in these chapters to suggest a new view of the ancient problem. **I do not propose to use a negative and destructive method directed against the received solutions, but simply to present, positively and constructively, a larger and, in some sort, a complementary hypothesis built upon broader foundations,** – a hypothesis which, in addition, may shed light on one or two important problems in the history of ancient thought and cult left very insufficiently solved by the ordinary theories.

We have in the Rig Veda, – the true and only Veda in the estimation of European scholars, – a body of sacrificial hymns

couched in a very ancient language which presents a number of almost insoluble difficulties. It is full of ancient forms and words^a which do not appear in later speech and have often to be fixed in some doubtful sense by intelligent conjecture; a mass even of the words^b that it has in common with classical Sanskrit seem to bear or at least to admit another significance than in the later literary tongue; and a multitude of its vocables^c, especially the most common, those which are most vital to the sense, are capable of a surprising number of unconnected significances which may give, according to our preference in selection, quite different complexions to whole passages, whole hymns and even to the whole thought of the Veda. In the course of several thousands of years there have been at least three considerable attempts, entirely differing from each other in their methods and results, to fix the sense of these ancient litanies. One of these is prehistoric in time and exists only by fragments in the Brahmanas and Upanishads; but we possess in its entirety the traditional interpretation of the Indian scholar Sayana and we have in our own day the interpretation constructed after an immense labour of comparison and conjecture by modern European scholarship. Both of them present one characteristic in common, the extraordinary incoherence and poverty of sense which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns. The separate lines can be given, whether naturally or by force of conjecture, a good sense or a sense that hangs together; the diction that results, if garish in style, if loaded with otiose and decorative epithets, if developing extraordinarily little of meaning in an amazing mass of gaudy figure and verbiage, can be made to run into intelligible sentences; but when we come to read the hymns as a whole we seem to be in the presence of men who, unlike the early writers of other races, were incapable of coherent and natural expression or of connected thought. Except in the briefer and simpler hymns, the language tends to be either obscure or artificial; the thoughts are either unconnected or have to be forced and beaten by

^a For example, words like *uti*, *avas*, *vayas*, *ṛtam*, *śravas*, etc.

^b Words like, *yajna*, *aśva*, *go*, *dhi*, *āpah*, *adri*, etc.

^c Words like, *Saraswati*, *Ila*, *Sarama*, *Vritra*, *Angira*, *Atris*, etc.

the interpreter into a whole. The scholar in dealing with his text is obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication. We feel that he is not so much revealing the sense as hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistency.

Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies. In the fixed tradition of thousands of years they have been revered as **the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in Brahmana and Upanishad, in Tantra and Purana, in the doctrines of great philosophical schools and in the teachings of famous saints and sages.** The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge, – the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. But if we accept the current interpretations, whether Sayana's or the modern theory, the whole of this sublime and sacred reputation is a colossal fiction. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naive superstitious fancies of untaught and materialistic barbarians concerned only with the most external gains and enjoyments and ignorant of all but the most elementary moral notions or religious aspirations. Nor do occasional passages, quite out of harmony with their general spirit, destroy this total impression. The true foundation or starting-point of the later religions and philosophies is the Upanishads, which have then to be conceived as a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas.

But this conception, supported by misleading European parallels, really explains nothing. **Such profound and ultimate thoughts, such systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as are found in the substance of the Upanishads, do not spring out of a previous void.** The human mind in its progress marches from knowledge to knowledge, or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been obscured and overlaid, or it seizes on old imperfect clues and is led by them to

new discoveries. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins anterior to itself, and these in the ordinary theories are lacking. The hypothesis, invented to fill the gap, that these ideas were borrowed by barbarous Aryan invaders from the civilised Dravidians, is a conjecture supported only by other conjectures. It is indeed coming to be doubted whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a myth of the philologists.

Now, in ancient Europe the schools of intellectual philosophy were preceded by the secret doctrines of the mystics; Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries prepared the rich soil of mentality out of which sprang Pythagoras and Plato. A similar starting-point is at least probable for the later march of thought in India. Much indeed of the forms and symbols of thought which we find in the Upanishads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas supposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teachings such as those of the Greek mysteries.

Another hiatus left by the received theories is the gulf that divides the material worship of external Nature-Powers in the Veda from the developed religion of the Greeks and from the psychological and spiritual ideas we find attached to the functions of the Gods in the Upanishads and Puranas. We may accept for the present the theory that the earliest fully intelligent form of human religion is necessarily, – since man on earth begins from the external and proceeds to the internal, – a worship of outward Nature-Powers invested with the consciousness and the personality that he finds in his own being.

Agni in the Veda is avowedly Fire; Surya is the Sun, Parjanya the Raincloud, Usha the Dawn; and if the material origin or function of some other Gods is less trenchantly clear, it is easy to render the obscure precise by philological inferences or ingenious speculation. But when we come to the worship of the Greeks not much later in date than the Veda, according to modern ideas of chronology, we find a significant change. The material attributes of the Gods are effaced or have become subordinate to psychological conceptions. The impetuous God of Fire has been converted into a lame God of

Labour; Apollo, the Sun, presides over poetical and prophetic inspiration; Athene, who may plausibly be identified as in origin a Dawn-Goddess, has lost all memory of her material functions and is the wise, strong and pure Goddess of Knowledge; and there are other deities also, Gods of War, Love, Beauty, whose material functions have disappeared if they ever existed. It is not enough to say that this change was inevitable with the progress of human civilisation: the process also of the change demands inquiry and elucidation. We see the same revolution effected in the Puranas partly by the substitution of other divine names and figures, but also in part by the same obscure process that we observe in the evolution of Greek mythology. The river Saraswati has become the Muse and Goddess of Learning; Vishnu and Rudra of the Vedas are now the supreme Godhead, members of a divine Triad and expressive separately of conservative and destructive process in the cosmos. In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig Veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra. In the same Upanishad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss, and he seems to be identified with the power of the will and responsible for human actions. **In other Upanishads the Gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man.** Soma, the plant which yielded the mystic wine for the Vedic sacrifice, has become not only the God of the moon, but manifests himself as mind in the human being. These evolutions suppose some period, posterior to the early material worship or superior Pantheistic Animism attributed to the Vedas and prior to the developed Puranic mythology, in which the gods became invested with deeper psychological functions, a period which may well have been the Age of the Mysteries. As things stand, a gap is left or else has been created by our exclusive preoccupation with the naturalistic element in the religion of the Vedic Rishis.

I suggest that the gulf is of our own creation and does not really exist in the ancient sacred writings.”¹

B. Sri Aurobindo’s Hypothesis

“The hypothesis I propose is that the Rig Veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the Gods. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit, perhaps even dangerous to the ordinary human mind or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence **they favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle.** Their formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race. The ritual system recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them **there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, – the secret words, *niilyā vacāsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge.** To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols and the psychological

functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task, for which these chapters and the translations that accompany them are only a preparation.

The hypothesis, if it proves to be valid, will have three advantages. **It will elucidate simply and effectively the parts of the Upanishads that remain yet unintelligible** or ill-understood as well as much of the origins of the Puranas. **It will explain and justify rationally the whole ancient tradition of India;** for it will be found that, in sober truth, the Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, the philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back in their source to Vedic origins. We can see there in their original seed or in their early or even primitive forms the fundamental conceptions of later Indian thought. ... Finally, **the incoherencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained and disappear.** They exist in appearance only, because the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. That thread found, the hymns appear as logical and organic wholes and the expression, though alien in type to our modern ways of thinking and speaking, becomes, in its own style, just and precise and sins rather by economy of phrase than by excess, by over-pregnancy rather than by poverty of sense. The Veda ceases to be merely an interesting remnant of barbarism and takes rank among the most important of the world's early Scriptures."²

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THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (13)

2. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

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

G. The Spirit and Forms of Indian Religion and Spiritual Culture

(i) The Vedic and Vedantic Form

“Now the spirit of Indian religion and spiritual culture has been persistently and immovably the same throughout the long time of its vigour, but its form has undergone remarkable changes. Yet if we look into them from the right centre it will be apparent that these changes are the results of a logical and inevitable evolution inherent in the very process of man’s growth towards the heights. In its earliest form, its first Vedic system, it took its outward foundation on the mind of the physical man whose natural faith is in things physical, in the sensible and visible objects, presences, representations and the external pursuits and aims of this material world. The means, symbols, rites, figures, by which it sought to mediate between the spirit and the normal human mentality were drawn from these most external physical things. Man’s first and primitive idea of the Divine can only come through his vision of external Nature and the sense of a superior Power or Powers concealed behind her phenomena, veiled in the heaven and earth, father and mother of our being, in the sun and moon and stars, its lights and regulators, in dawn and day and night and rain and wind and storm, the oceans and the rivers and the forests, all the circumstances and forces of her scene of action, all that vast and mysterious surrounding life of which we are a part and in which the natural heart and mind of the human creature feel instinctively through whatever bright or dark or confused figures that there is here some divine Multitude or else mighty Infinite, one, manifold and mysterious, which takes these forms and manifests itself in these

motions. The Vedic religion took this natural sense and feeling of the physical man; it used the conceptions to which they gave birth, and it sought to lead him through them to the psychic and spiritual truths of his own being and the being of the cosmos. It recognised that he was right when he saw behind the manifestations of Nature great living powers and godheads, even though he knew not their inner truth, and right too in offering to them worship and propitiation and atonement. For that inevitably must be the initial way in which his active physical, vital and mental nature is allowed to approach the Godhead. He approaches it through its visible outward manifestations as something greater than his own natural self, something single or multiple that guides, sustains and directs his life, and he calls to it for help and support in the desires and difficulties and distresses and struggles of his human existence.^a The Vedic religion accepted also the form in which early man everywhere expressed his sense of the relation between himself and the godheads of Nature; it adopted as its central symbol the act and ritual of a physical sacrifice. However crude the notions attached to it, this idea of the necessity of sacrifice did express obscurely a first law of being. For it was founded on that secret of constant interchange between the individual and the universal powers of the cosmos which covertly supports all the process of life and develops the action of Nature.

But even in its external or exoteric side the Vedic religion did not limit itself to this acceptance and regulation of the first religious notions of the natural physical mind of man. The Vedic Rishis gave a psychic function to the godheads worshipped by the people; they spoke to them of a higher Truth, Right, Law of

^aThe Gita recognises four kinds or degrees of worshippers and God-seekers. There are first the *arthārthi* and *ārta*, those who seek him for the fulfilment of desire and those who turn for divine help in the sorrow and suffering of existence; there is next the *jjīṣu*, the seeker of knowledge, the questioner who is moved to seek the Divine in his truth and in that to meet him; last and highest, there is the *jñāni* who has already contact with the truth and is able to live in unity with the Spirit.

which the gods were the guardians, of the necessity of a truer knowledge and a larger inner living according to this Truth and Right and of a home of Immortality to which the soul of man could ascend by the power of Truth and of right doing. The people no doubt took these ideas in their most external sense; but they were trained by them to develop their ethical nature, to turn towards some initial development of their psychic being, to conceive the idea of a knowledge and truth other than that of the physical life and to admit even a first conception of some greater spiritual Reality which was the ultimate object of human worship or aspiration. This religious and moral force was the highest reach of the external cult and the most that could be understood or followed by the mass of the people.

The deeper truth of these things was reserved for the initiates, for those who were ready to understand and practise the inner sense, the esoteric meaning hidden in the Vedic scripture. For the Veda is full of words which, as the Rishis themselves express it, are secret words that give their inner meaning only to the seer, *kavaye nivacanā niṣyā vacāsi*. This is a feature of the ancient sacred hymns which grew obscure to later ages; it became a dead tradition and has been entirely ignored by modern scholarship in its laborious attempt to read the hieroglyph of the Vedic symbols. Yet its recognition is essential to a right understanding of almost all the ancient religions; for mostly they started on their upward curve through an esoteric element of which the key was not given to all. In all or most there was a surface cult for the common physical man who was held yet unfit for the psychic and spiritual life and an inner secret of the Mysteries carefully disguised by symbols whose sense was opened only to the initiates. This was the origin of the later distinction between the Shudra, the undeveloped physical-minded man, and the twice-born, those who were capable of entering into the second birth by initiation and to whom alone the Vedic education could be given without danger. This too actuated the later prohibition of any reading or teaching of the Veda by the

Shudra.^a It was this inner meaning, it was the higher psychic and spiritual truths concealed by the outer sense, that gave to these hymns the name by which they are still known, the Veda, the Book of Knowledge. Only by penetrating into the esoteric sense of this worship can we understand the full flowering of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads and in the long later evolution of Indian spiritual seeking and experience. For it is all there in its luminous seed, preshadowed or even prefigured in the verses of the early seers. The persistent notion which through every change ascribed the foundation of all our culture to the Rishis, whatever its fabulous forms and mythical ascriptions, contains a real truth and veils a sound historic tradition. It reflects the fact of a true initiation and an unbroken continuity between this great primitive past and the riper but hardly greater spiritual development of our historic culture.

This inner Vedic religion started with an extension of the psychic significance of the godheads in the Cosmos. Its primary notion was that of a hierarchy of worlds, an ascending stair of planes of being in the universe. It saw a mounting scale of the worlds corresponding to a similar mounting scale of planes or degrees or levels of consciousness in the nature of man. A Truth, Right and Law sustains and governs all these levels of Nature; one in essence, it takes in them different but cognate forms. There is for instance the series of the outer physical light, another higher

^a“The ancients held that all men are born in their lower nature as Shudras and only regenerated by ethical and spiritual culture, but in their highest inner self are Brahmanas capable of the full spirit and godhead, a theory which is not far perhaps from the psychological truth of our nature.”¹

The above psychological truth of our nature must have been at the root of this prohibition because, otherwise, if based on a system of distinguishing between persons merely on the basis of a system of Caste or Varna based on birth, it is an entire absurdity to which no right minded person can acquiesce to. It is however, correct to say that no person who lives predominantly in his surface physical nature (as most do) and is, therefore, a being of very small (sudra) consciousness, can profitably study the veda.

and inner light which is the vehicle of the mental, vital and psychic consciousness and a highest inmost light of spiritual illumination. Surya, the Sun- God, was the lord of the physical Sun; but he is at the same time to the Vedic seer-poet the giver of the rays of knowledge which illumine the mind and he is too the soul and energy and body of the spiritual illumination. And in all these powers he is a luminous form of the one and infinite Godhead. All the Vedic godheads have this outer and this inner and inmost function, their known and their secret Names. All are in their external character powers of physical Nature; all have in their inner meaning a psychic function and psychological ascriptions; all too are various powers of some one highest Reality, *ekaṁ sat*, the one infinite Existence. This hardly knowable Supreme is called often in the Veda 'That Truth' or 'That One', *tat satyam, tad ekam*. **This complex character of the Vedic godheads assumes forms which have been wholly misunderstood by those who ascribe to them only their outward physical significance. Each of these gods is in himself a complete and separate cosmic personality of the one Existence and in their combination of powers they form the complete universal power, the cosmic whole, *vaiṁvadevyam*. Each again, apart from his special function, is one godhead with the others; each holds in himself the universal divinity, each god is all the other gods. This is the aspect of the Vedic teaching and worship to which a European scholar, mistaking entirely its significance because he read it in the dim and poor light of European religious experience, has given the sounding misnomer, henotheism.** Beyond, in the triple Infinite, these godheads put on their highest nature and are names of the one nameless Ineffable.

But the greatest power of the Vedic teaching, that which made it the source of all later Indian philosophies, religions, systems of Yoga, lay in its application to the inner life of man. Man lives in the physical cosmos subject to death and the "much falsehood" of the mortal existence. To rise beyond this death, to become one of the immortals, he has to turn from the falsehood to the Truth; he has

to turn to the Light and to battle with and to conquer the powers of the Darkness. This he does by communion with the divine Powers and their aid; the way to call down this aid was the secret of the Vedic mystics. The symbols of the outer sacrifice are given for this purpose in the manner of the Mysteries all over the world an inner meaning; they represent a calling of the gods into the human being, a connecting sacrifice, an intimate interchange, a mutual aid, a communion. There is a building of the powers of the godheads within man and a formation in him of the universality of the divine nature. For the gods are the guardians and increasers of the Truth, the powers of the Immortal, the sons of the infinite Mother; the way to immortality is the upward way of the gods, the way of the Truth, a journey, an ascent by which there is a growth into the law of the Truth, *ītasya panthā*. Man arrives at immortality by breaking beyond the limitations not only of his physical self, but of his mental and his ordinary psychic nature into the highest plane and supreme ether of the Truth: for there is the foundation of immortality and the native seat of the triple Infinite. On these ideas the Vedic sages built up a profound psychological and psychic discipline which led beyond itself to a highest spirituality and contained the nucleus of later Indian Yoga. Already we find in their seed, though not in their full expansion, the most characteristic ideas of Indian spirituality. There is the one Existence, *eka sat*, supracosmic beyond the individual and the universe. There is the one God who presents to us the many forms, names, powers, personalities of his Godhead. There is the distinction between the Knowledge and the Ignorance,^a the greater truth of an immortal life opposed to the much falsehood or mixed truth and falsehood of mortal existence. There is the discipline of an inward growth of man from the physical through the psychic to the spiritual existence. There is the conquest of death, the secret of immortality, the perception of a realisable divinity of the human spirit. In an age to which in the insolence of our external knowledge we are accustomed to look back as the childhood of

^a *Cittim acitti cinavad vi vidvān*. "Let the knower distinguish the Knowledge and the Ignorance."

humanity or at best a period of vigorous barbarism, this was the inspired and intuitive psychic and spiritual teaching by which the ancient human fathers, *pṛve pitaraṁ manuṁyāṁ*, founded a great and profound civilisation in India.

This high beginning was secured in its results by a larger sublime efflorescence. The Upanishads have always been recognised in India as the crown and end of Veda; that is indicated in their general name, Vedanta. And they are in fact a large crowning outcome of the Vedic discipline and experience. The time in which the Vedantic truth was wholly seen and the Upanishads took shape, was, as we can discern from such records as the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka, an epoch of immense and strenuous seeking, an intense and ardent seed-time of the Spirit. In the stress of that seeking the truths held by the initiates but kept back from ordinary men broke their barriers, swept through the higher mind of the nation and fertilised the soil of Indian culture for a constant and ever increasing growth of spiritual consciousness and spiritual experience. This turn was not as yet universal; it was chiefly men of the higher classes, Kshatriyas and Brahmins trained in the Vedic system of education, no longer content with an external truth and the works of the outer sacrifice, who began everywhere to seek for the highest word of revealing experience from the sages who possessed the knowledge of the One. But we find too among those who attained to the knowledge and became great teachers men of inferior or doubtful birth like Janashruti, the wealthy Shudra, or Satyakama Jabali, son of a servant-girl who knew not who was his father. The work that was done in this period became the firm bedrock of Indian spirituality in later ages and from it gush still the life-giving waters of a perennial and never failing inspiration. This period, this activity, this grand achievement created the whole difference between the evolution of Indian civilisation and the quite different curve of other cultures.

For a time had come when the original Vedic symbols must lose their significance and pass into an obscurity that became

impenetrable, as did the inner teaching of the Mysteries in other countries. The old poise of culture between two extremes with a bridge of religious cult and symbolism to unite them, the crude or half-trained naturalness of the outer physical man on one side of the line, and on the other an inner and secret psychic and spiritual life for the initiates could no longer suffice as the basis of our spiritual progress. The human race in its cycle of civilisation needed a large-lined advance; it called for a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution to help it to grow into the light. This turn had to come in India as in other lands. But the danger was that the greater spiritual truth already gained might be lost in the lesser confident half-light of the acute but unilluminated intellect or stifled within the narrow limits of the self-sufficient logical reason. That was what actually happened in the West, Greece leading the way. The old knowledge was prolonged in a less inspired, less dynamic and more intellectual form by the Pythagoreans, by the Stoics, by Plato and the Neo-Platonists; but still in spite of them and in spite of the only half-illuminated spiritual wave which swept over Europe from Asia in an ill-understood Christianity, the whole real trend of Western civilisation has been intellectual, rational, secular and even materialistic, and it keeps this character to the present day. Its general aim has been a strong or a fine culture of the vital and physical man by the power of an intellectualised ethics, aesthesis and reason, not the leading up of our lower members into the supreme light and power of the spirit. The ancient spiritual knowledge and the spiritual tendency it had created were saved in India from this collapse by the immense effort of the age of the Upanishads. The Vedantic seers renewed the Vedic truth by extricating it from its cryptic symbols and casting it into a highest and most direct and powerful language of intuition and inner experience. It was not the language of the intellect, but still it wore a form which the intellect could take hold of, translate into its own more abstract terms and convert into a starting-point for an ever widening and deepening philosophic speculation and the reason's long search after a Truth original, supreme and

ultimate. There was in India as in the West a great upbuilding of a high, wide and complex intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture. But left in Europe to its own resources, combated rather than helped by obscure religious emotion and dogma, here it was guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated and suffused by a great saving power of spirituality and a vast stimulating and tolerant light of wisdom from a highest ether of knowledge.”²

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“I have never had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world – I am not speaking of personal things – which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster. There was a time when Hitler was victorious everywhere and it seemed certain that a black yoke of the Asura would be imposed on the whole world; but where is Hitler now and where is his rule? Berlin and Nuremberg have marked the end of that dreadful chapter in human history. Other blacknesses threaten to overshadow or even engulf mankind, but they too will end as that nightmare has ended.”

– **Sri Aurobindo**

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.35, Page 208)