

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

May 2014



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

– The Mother

Year 5

Issue 2

CONTENTS

The Single Most Important Task Before the New Government	6
False Secularism	9
Corruption	10
The Greatness of India and Its Culture	18

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 SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT TASK BEFORE THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Narendra Modi has led the BJP to an incredible victory leaving no doubt about the choice of the people. It is crucial that we address the next question – the single most important task before the new government – in a serious manner and not in the spirit of rhetorical debate or mudslinging of the election campaign.

People have been searching for an alternative to the current political leadership, frustrated and dissatisfied by the corruption and its unabashed pursuit of narrow self-interest. Narendra Modi appeared as a ray of hope and, despite detractors even within his own party, managed to emerge as the prime ministerial candidate. His appeal to the people across lines of caste, religion, language etc. and beyond – to India and her development and progress has resonated with the voting public. A public who is now aware and awake and no longer swayed by the empty promises of secularism masking the appeasement of organized minorities in a calculated attempt to garner votes.

How far Narendra Modi as the focus of the hopes of the people is able to fulfill these hopes remains to be seen. The task before him is extremely complex and challenging as the expectations seem to be diverse and often conflicting. But common to all or to begin with better governance is needed. An efficient administration based on the rule of law and plugging the holes made by corruption nurtured by politicians masquerading as secular leaders of the nation. **The various arms of government – particularly the government administration, judiciary and financial system – mired in corruption and negligence have to be freed to fulfill their proper roles.** It may need a certain degree of authoritarianism – for the day-to-day running of government cannot be done by popular vote which is simply a crude machinery evolved by nature to ensure at least the semblance of basic democratic structure. A fundamental democratic spirit and a basic loyalty to Truth which will result in a freedom from all ill-will in thought and action is all that can, at best, be demanded from a political leader who should otherwise be left free to move towards the desired ends using whatever methods are appropriate and needed to accomplish the task at hand. It is immaterial whether they appear democratic, undemocratic or even outright authoritarian to the gaze of some. (A democratic free-for-all may not always be the best way to achieve our goals and a skillful manager – while adhering to the strictest moral imperatives – uses whatever methods are appropriate for the task in hand without binding himself to any one system.) Narendra Modi has the support of the people, they have voted for him and for his plans for India. For the first time in a long time a leader at the helm of the country has been given an overwhelming and unequivocal mandate. Drawing upon this support he should **boldly but judiciously pull India out of the**

vicious grip of inefficient government.

An efficient government can provide a framework in which a modicum of people's wants and needs can be satisfied without extraordinary efforts. And at present that seems to be the sum of most people's expectations. But we cannot stop at this and have to look behind the surface to see where this push, this expectation, this aspiration is coming from. There is a psychological need in a people which seeks expression and satisfaction and this is what drives development at a personal level or at the level of the community, society, nation. Once this synergy gets going in a nation it can produce great results – the phenomenal economic growth of Japan after the Second World War is an obvious example. **At this critical moment in her history, the destiny of India is calling and these limited aspirations of the people are only the foam on the sea of the true potential. The single most important task before the new government will be to channelise this energy to higher and higher expressions to create a society where spiritual enrichment is the basis of all development – whether material or moral or intellectual.** India has always lived for the Spirit and that has been the guiding principle behind not only her religion but all her cultural, social, political, economic structures and the source of her legendary material wealth.

The coming of the British and their rule over India seemed to create a hiatus in this journey towards a greater and greater manifestation of consciousness in the life and society of the Indian people. But now the time has come for India to get back on track with the added impetus of forms and institutions reverberating with a greater power of the spirit. **A greater sense of nationalism, a certain degree of material prosperity, are the first steps** on the road to a truly liberated India ready to take her place as the guru of the world. A place she will take only “when she will become integrally the messenger of the Divine Life.”¹ For India is one country that never has or can ever live for herself alone. It is for humanity and for the progressive manifestation of the Spirit in terrestrial nature – the sole purpose of Sanatana Dharma – that India has always lived. “When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the *dharma* and by the *dharma* that India exists.”² For the Sanatana Dharma is not confined – even when at times it apparently seems to go along with them – to any specific religion or way of looking at or understanding things, for such things can scarcely be sanatana (eternal). It is rather the deep, wide and irresistible law of man's ascension towards the One who behind his infinity and eternity is the Absolute for whom man from earliest times has always knowingly or unknowingly, sought for in the symbols of God, Freedom, Light and Immortality. The pursuit of this has been the essence of the spirit of Indian culture. Speaking about Indian religious

culture Sri Aurobindo said, "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 many staged 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, sanātana 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."³

References:

1. *Collected Works of The Mother* 13: 372
2. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* 08: 10
3. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* 20: 179

"...Of all the proud nations of the West there is an end determined. When their limited special work for mankind is done they must decay and disappear. But the function of India is to supply the world with a perennial source of light and renovation. Whenever the first play of energy is exhausted and earth grows old and weary, full of materialism, racked with problems she cannot solve, the function of India is to restore the youth of mankind and assure it of immortality. She sends forth a light from her bosom which floods the earth and the heavens, and mankind bathes in it like St. George in the well of life and recovers strength, hope and vitality for its long pilgrimage. Such a time is now at hand."

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 07, p. 1086)

FALSE SECULARISM

'Secularism' has been a much abused word in Indian politics and media. It is a mask that hides many sins. Indeed, in practical politics, it has come to mean the exact opposite of its real meaning. If you are 'secular' you must pander to the more extreme fringe of a minority community – often outright terrorists. All this is done while completely neglecting or denigrating the feelings of the majority community. A 'secular' politician belonging to the majority community cannot possibly show respect for his community or religion if he wants to keep his vote bank among the minorities.

The Congress and parties of its ilk have been using the secularist label to divide the country along lines of religion, caste, language – to exploit differences, wherever possible, to play a cynical game of numbers and win power at any cost. 'Secular' politicians have been solely interested in appeasing minorities – whether they be Muslims, Dalits, Harijans, Christians etc. – or in making them insecure. Their only motive – to get more votes.

But talking to the Hindus in India about secularism is preaching to the choir. Hinduism is and has been the most inclusive and tolerant of all religions because it is not a religion as understood by the adherents of the Semitic religions. It is a dharma, a way of life, which accommodates the needs and natures of the various types of human beings to lead them in the best possible way to God. Reformers have come from within its folds time and again to correct and counteract social inequalities or injustices which have crept into society.

During the freedom struggle an anglicised class, molded in foreign ways of thought, tried to put right what they saw as the evils of Indian society. And in an often genuine, though misguided, attempt to correct the inequalities of representation in the emerging democratic systems of governance, minorities and backward classes were given special status. In the post-independence era this trend continued but slowly and steadily deteriorated into a naked and calculated policy of 'divide and rule.' As more and more politicians from different parties and from the backward classes themselves learnt this game of appeasement, the whole political scenario become nothing but a cut throat competition to see who could buy more votes by making promises to the minorities. As a result, corruption, nepotism, cronyism became the watchwords of the political establishment and the nation went on a downward spiral in practically every field.

The coming of the government of Narendra Modi will hopefully see the end of this false secularism. Without an emergence of a truly national broad based government any hopes of a resurgence of India can be only incompletely realised or be forever deferred.

CORRUPTION

Violations of one or more of the established legal, aesthetic, ethical and religious codes of a society are often termed corruption. It is important to know what is behind the sense of corruption and how it is related to the other notions or labels such as that of Legal and Illegal, True and False, Right and Wrong, Beautiful and Ugly, Virtue and Sin, and Dharma and Adharma which are commonly used to characterize the actions of individuals and societies. All these concepts or notions are overlapping, invariably run into each other's territories and have their common source or origin in the legal, aesthetic, moral or ethical and religious codes of a society or collectivity which again in their turn, have their source in the fundamental Truths of the Spirit or the highest approachable Reality. The exact form that these codes take depends on the times and the culture or society to which they belong, even though the Truths of the Spirit are independent of these and the forms – always more or less inadequate – in which they get expressed. They are the one source of all the ultimate standards of the race.

We shall discuss the problem of corruption under the following three headings: (1) The Legal Code and Corruption, (2) The Aesthetic, Ethical and Religious Code and Corruption, and (3) The Spiritual Code and Corruption.

(I) THE LEGAL CODE AND CORRUPTION

Infringement or violation of the legal (civil or criminal) code is often termed corruption. The acts that are termed illegal are, most of the time, such as to imply also a breach of the aesthetic, moral and/or religious code of the society. In such cases it is easier to tackle the problem of corruption because the measures to counter such corrupt acts have, in addition to the force of the law, also the full force of the aesthetic, moral and religious standards or codes of the society behind them. When some acts are deemed corrupt solely on the ground that they constitute a violation of the legal code then it is very difficult to control them and is practically impossible to abolish them altogether. The above proposition which may be disputed by some, particularly in the light of the experience (in this respect) in the West, is yet mostly valid. There are a number of important and fundamental reasons behind an increasing failure of the elected governments in India to contain legal corruption i.e. corruption consisting primarily of the violations of the legal code. It is very important to consider these in detail and bring them out into the open for creating a deeper awareness and understanding of the problem of corruption among the law makers and the people at large.

1. It is a common knowledge that in the West, although there is an elaborate, extensive and all pervasive legal code – seemingly independent of all ethical or religious codes – yet, so efficient is its application and accompanying

administration that the violations or infringements of rules and laws derived from it, particularly those which are deemed essential for the maintenance, well being and progress of the collectivity (local, regional or national), are very uncommon. This may seem to contradict the proposition advanced earlier about the ineffectuality of the legal code when it stands alone without much support from the ethical and religious codes. But the contradiction is only apparent and is easily resolved by bringing into consideration the effects of the diametrically opposite division of the stress of the moral code (between the personal and the collective morality) in India and the West. In the West there is a strong and well developed civic sense (pleasing to the eye and other senses) accompanied by the almost universally accepted standards of collective and national ethics or morality which few can ignore without getting into serious trouble. But there is little or no social or collective pressure or curb on an individual's hedonistic tendencies whose naked and unabashed pursuit – often shocking to Oriental sensibilities – characterises the life of individuals in the West. The opposite is the case in India where there are very strong curbs exercised by family, caste and community on an individual's behavior but, although growing, there is still very little of developed civic sense or a sense of collective and national ethics to regulate the conduct of individuals in matters of common interest or concern. In the West the lawmakers and the administrators share with the common people a strong sense of collective ethics inculcated through education and training conducted under the shadow of a strong and supportive collective suggestion. This enables the elected governments to achieve a strict and rigorous enforcement of laws and rules made by them.

In India the situation is just the opposite. Here the political and bureaucratic machinery – like the masses or perhaps even more than them – is entirely devoid of any civic sense or sense of collective morality or any sense of obligation to the common people who alone ultimately bear the burden of maintaining it. Therefore, it is not only useless for any collective good but is being seen by an increasing number of people as a growing monster – in size and depravity – and threatening the very existence of the race.

In order to understand the above mentioned juxtaposition between India and the West, we have to widen our perspective by looking at the whole scenario of the division of humanity in two complementary parts of the divine Whole. Reason plays an overwhelming and important part in Western societies and people find it easier to overcome the pull of lower tendencies when they are in contradiction with those canons of reason that have come to be commonly accepted by the collectivity as reasonable. Thus, the Western Semitic races can and have undergone a considerable amount of rationalization for which they are suited. But the Indians are, by their very nature, not suited for such a high degree of rationalization and governance of life primarily by reason. They are, by their

very Aryan constitution, intuitional either directly or through and by the heart and mind. An overwhelming majority of Indians spontaneously use their intuition to guide their action and behavior and to find their way out of a difficulty or to solve a problem. The constructions of reason carry little weight – at least for action – for most of them and this is true even for those who may have gone through a considerable degree of rationalization during their education and training. This is the basic reason why the present educational, economic, political, administrative, legal and judicial systems which have their origin in the Western mentality and cult of reason are found wanting and unsuitable for the temperament of the Indian people who, wherever possible, spontaneously tend to bypass such systems – which not unoften appears to them like a jungle of blind rules and laws – either by means of some subtle arrangement or personal relationship and approach or by the use of money. As things stand, the latter means is increasingly replacing the former ones as they are getting increasingly blunted under the pressure of a growing utilitarian spirit.

Now, what does it all portend? Where are we going from here? Indian culture, in facing the invasion of the Western culture during the past two hundred years, has been largely successful in assimilating those parts of it which were conducive to its own rejuvenation and revival and rejecting those that were contrary to its fundamental spirit. Even during the worst periods of India's total political, economic and military subjugation, the Western spirit could never make such deep inroads in India as it has been increasingly successful in making ever since the beginning of the economic liberalization in the nineteen nineties. With the beginning of this century and especially during the past few years, there has been such an onslaught of a whole set of Western lifestyles, modes of thinking, feeling, conduct that it is not without an apparent danger for the very existence of Indian culture at least in India – rather one should say at most – because the West is facing a similar situation as it finds itself progressively subjected to an ever increasing invasion by the Indian spiritual culture which seems clearly to be moving the world over towards its destined goal of preparing humanity for the advent of a spiritual age. Actually, even in India, the danger is only apparent because, as it is, it is only a stalemate. For, if under the present apparent siege of Western culture we have failed to effectively retain the principles of inner greatness known to our forefathers, we have also failed to rationalize ourselves sufficiently to organize the intellectual efficiency characteristic of that culture. If the human race is to survive – and this is a big "if" – the present stalemate in India cannot but result in a decisive victory and reassertion of the Indian spiritual culture enriched and vivified by the present ordeal. In spite of all that we have been and are going through "...we still have among us important remnants of the old knowledge & discipline & we have firm hold in our schools of Yoga on the supreme means by which its lost parts can be recovered. The key of a divine life upon earth lies, rusted indeed in an obscure corner of our mansion, used only by

a few, but still it lies there & is still used. It has to be singled out from amid much waste matter, made fit for complete & general use and given freely to mankind. We have kept, fortunately, the intuitional temperament to which its use is easy & natural. The failure of the intellect to assume complete sway and entirely rationalise our life, was a necessary condition for the preservation of that temperament, itself necessary for the appointed work & God-decreed life of our nation.”¹

2. Another important reason for the failure of the elected governments – ever since the beginning of the economic planning in 1951 when they were not so infected with the utilitarian spirit – to contain legal corruption is that the laws made out of an inordinate desire to control and direct the socio-economic systems have been, in general, most ill-conceived and enacted in a hurry without understanding or giving due consideration to the innate Dharma of the health and functioning of these systems. Drawing inspiration from the Soviet model of development and planning, the first few five year plans envisaged the necessity of an increasing governmental intervention leading to a systematic control and regulation of the economic systems by the state because this was deemed essential for a rapid economic development along socially preferred tracks. This attitude continued unabated till the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early nineties after which the government policy gradually took a diametrically opposite turn in this respect and started to liberalize and privatize the economic system by progressively dismantling the machinery of detailed governmental controls and regulations put in place during the first four decades or the first phase of economic planning in India. By the end of this phase, the dense net of the vast arrays of ill-conceived, inept and misapplied government laws, rules and regulations had become very suffocating for the people and gave the impression of being an unconscious attempt, not so much at regulation but at a “strangulation” of the whole living economic system. The saving grace was that a good number of really fatal laws and rules neither were, nor really could have been rigorously enforced, for, had it been possible to do so, the whole economic system would have at once come to a standstill and would have swiftly moved towards a complete collapse bringing home to everyone the real nature and true worth of a good deal of governmental intervention in the economic system. In the nature of the functioning of things, ineffective governance invariably attempts to make up for its incompetence by enacting more and more elaborate laws and regulations and devising novel schemes.

When a living system is subjected to very dumb and paralyzing restrictions and regulations, its natural and virtually invincible survival instinct sets out to discover and develop further necessary means and ways for bypassing these – a thing easily done in India whose people are well known – the world over – for their genius in such things. All this results in a tremendous pressure on all the

participants – but more so on those at the receiving end – to at once find a way out taking all possible advantage of the new situation by some kind of manipulation or arrangement or simply by bribing the regulators. The regulators and the newly sprung class of intermediaries also undergo a similar process and attempt to optimize their gains. By a strictly legal criterion, all these things are illegal and often even criminal. However, when such a network of laws not only remains intact over a long period of time but even grows in perversity and pervasiveness, an understanding and tolerance gradually develops among the masses for whom it becomes a habitual thing and any element of moral disapprobation that might have been there initially, completely evaporates from the psychology of the participants and spectators in this tragic – tragic for the moral and emotional health of the people – and seemingly never ending drama which keeps on growing ever more tragic. The obstinate and increasingly shameless attempts of the elected government to burden the governmental machinery with this kind of background with the task of administering ever more elaborate and expensive programmes and schemes for the upliftment of the masses are like someone shamelessly spending huge amount of precious resources and energy for developing a stage and elaborately planning a series of intricate dance performances – with an avowed object of entertaining the people – for someone who, with a long history of affliction from cerebral palsy, cannot even walk few steps straight without help. One can easily understand that initially, in the absence of any sufficient and concrete experience of the workings of modern governmental machinery on the part of the past independence leaders, the whole approach may have been adopted due to its then popular intellectual appeal, but to understand its continuation even after its true colours have been vividly revealed to the gaze of all, one needs to look deeply into the motive of the political leadership. If it is continuing even at present then it can only be because the present day politicians allow themselves to believe that Indian people are still so shortsighted and foolish that they can be manipulated by the promises and announcements of ingenious schemes, plans to be carried out for their benefit and outright handouts to be delivered to them by the same government machinery which has been ever busy designing and inflicting more and more unspeakable forms of privations on them. If such political leaders do not get thrown out of power even after such blatantly shameless acts, then it cannot be because most people are taken in by their cunning designs but simply because the people may not have any really less unpalatable choice available to them under the workings of our democratic system. The democratic system which has, of late, become so wonderful that when a new political party or an alliance of political parties comes to power, it is not because people expect anything good from them but simply because they had gotten so sickened by the previous ones that they couldn't do anything but throw them out and replace them by these whose earlier misdeeds have gotten somewhat dimmed in their short memory. If we are ever going to

come out of this futile circle, we have to realize, once for all, that no outer machinery, however ingenious, can make our life blessed for us unless we change from within. What one is within that one shall enjoy outside. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“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.”²

Now, coming back to the issue under consideration, it is obvious from the discussion above that a good deal of the so-called corruption in the financial and business field has its origin in the survival instinct of the socio-economic system. In dealing with such corruption, when further attempts are made to check it by filling the loopholes etc. then, ultimately, things do not improve but often get worse. Most of the laws, rules and regulations aimed at controlling, regulating and improving the functioning of social, political and economic systems have often been contrary to the dharma of the functioning of these systems and have been instrumental in spreading the contagion of corruption to most other areas of the system including the judiciary. Government’s further legislations and other attempts in this direction – without any truer or deeper understanding and even a feeling for the necessity or utility of such an understanding – makes the whole governmental machinery even more cumbersome and an extra burden, not to those who have learned their lessons and have become adept at profiting, or at least buying their way out of it, but to those who are either not in a position to participate in the above profitable (corrupt) activity or are incapable of stooping to such low level of functioning due to the peculiarity of their psychological constitution. The end result, witnessed no matter where one looks at present, is that life becomes progressively more difficult and the whole atmosphere thoroughly suffocating for the heart, mind and soul of the people at large who end up bearing the burden of supporting an ever growing and more and more corrupt and expensive government machinery.

3. The laws and rules having their origin in an unabashed demagoguery of the politicians.

The government’s laws and rules and actions which have such origins are deprived of even the remnants of sanctity or validity they might still have had for the gullible people who are easily deceived by fine words. The process has been going on for quite some time now and at present things have reached such a state that politicians are, almost universally, held in a very low esteem by the people. So widespread has become the utilitarian spirit that even when the common people know – as most of them seem to – they quite routinely put up with the

demagogic acts of the politicians because they are no less infected with this spirit and, therefore, rather than oppose such acts – which they vociferously do only when they feel that they stand to lose by it – they invariably look for and are ever busy discovering and devising more and more ingenious ways and means of taking advantage of these.

In its culmination in the political field, the utilitarian spirit has brought things to such a state that, at present, most politicians have either consciously (very rare) or subconsciously – coupled with a spontaneous and unsuspecting belief in the critical importance of their staying in office for the good of the country, – reached such a psychological state that they have, behind all their apparent solemn professions; only a one point program – to acquire power or stay in power, if they already have it, by using all and whatever means that are at their disposal. Among countless acts and schemes enacted in this spirit, two have stood out persistently, openly and blatantly to the gaze of all. First, it has been found expedient by those in power to profess love and sympathy and ponder to the prejudices and weaknesses of the organized communal, caste or regional groups while almost completely disregarding those that are not so well organized. A plethora of special laws, agencies, rules and quotas have been designed with solely this end in view. The second important thing that has found common favour with politicians is the practice of using all the money that can possibly be siphoned out of the public purse to pursue their one point agenda. The practice has become so popular with governments that in an attempt to outdo their competitors they, in a spirit of self-praise, unashamedly flout the list of programs and schemes and handouts enacted by them before the eyes of the common people – whose dear money they are thus misusing – by advertising these (so called achievements) in various newspapers and magazines at a huge cost to the public purse. All such things are aimed at buying the support (votes) of all the groups who may be labeled poor, oppressed or underprivileged. The latest trend in this field is to attempt to progressively widen this net by bringing as many groups as possible under it. This has become possible because in a fast growing economy the government's revenues tend to grow even faster. Now, what is this whole thing all about? Isn't it an outright pick-pocketing of the people? – especially when in their own statements politicians admit that they are aware of the fact that only a very very small and progressively declining fraction of the money thus spent (mostly on paper) ever reaches those for whom it was intended. Now, the question is what happens to the money on its way to the intended? Obviously, most of it gets absorbed by a league of corrupt business and government machinery which owes its origin and progressive evolution in shamelessness and cunningness to the sustained ill-conceived and motivated actions of the elected governments over time. It is a good measure of peoples' growing cynicism and indifference that such things continue their march unabated even after they have visibly stooped to such low and unethical levels as they have done during

the past few years. No wonder people have become so unscrupulous about taking advantage of such motivated government measures without any regard to whether their acts would be considered as legal or illegal by the corrupt prompters and intermediaries of these measures.

(to be continued...)

References:

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 08: 564-65*
2. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 12: 468*

“...If India follows in the footsteps of Europe, accepts her political ideals, social system, economic principles, she will be overcome with the same maladies. Such a consummation is neither for the good of India nor for the good of Europe. If India becomes an intellectual province of Europe, she will never attain to her natural greatness or fulfil the possibilities within her. *Paradharmo bhayavahah*, to accept the *dharma* of another is perilous; it deprives the man or the nation of its secret of life and vitality and substitutes an unnatural and stunted growth for the free, large and organic development of Nature. Whenever a nation has given up the purpose of its existence, it has been at the cost of its growth. India must remain India if she is to fulfil her destiny. Nor will Europe profit by grafting her civilisation on India, for if India, who is the distinct physician of Europe’s maladies, herself falls into the clutch of the disease, the disease will remain uncured and incurable and European civilisation will perish...”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 07, p. 1041)

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE

It is essential, if we are to get a right view of Indian culture, to keep to the central, living, governing things and not be led away by the confusion of accidents and details. The critics of this culture who refuse to take this precaution find themselves in a maze without a clue and stumble about among false and partial conclusions and miss entirely the true truth of the matter.

THE CENTRAL MOTIVE

“... the essential intention of Indian culture was extraordinarily high, ambitious and noble, the highest indeed that the human spirit can conceive. For what can be a greater idea of life than that which makes it a development of the spirit in man to its most vast, secret and high possibilities, a culture that conceives of life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the universal in the individual, of the infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man, or holds that man can become not only conscious of the eternal and the infinite, but live in its power and universalise, spiritualise and divinise himself by self-knowledge? What greater aim can be for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence? And that is the whole sense of the striving of Indian culture.

It is easy to say that these ideas are fantastic, chimerical and impracticable, that there is no spirit and no eternal and nothing divine, and man would do much better not to dabble in religion and philosophy, but rather make the best he can of the ephemeral littleness of his life and body. That is a negation natural enough to the vital and physical mind, but it rests on the assumption that man can only be what he is at the moment, and there is nothing greater in him which it is his business to evolve; such a negation has no enduring value. The whole aim of a great culture is to lift man up to something which at first he is not, to lead him to knowledge though he starts from an unfathomable ignorance, to teach him to live by

his reason, though actually he lives much more by his unreason, by the law of good and unity, though he is now full of evil and discord, by a law of beauty and harmony, though his actual life is a repulsive muddle of ugliness and jarring barbarisms, by some high law of his spirit, though at present he is egoistic, material, unspiritual, engrossed by the needs and desires of his physical being. If a civilisation has not any of these aims, it can hardly at all be said to have a culture and certainly in no sense a great and noble culture. But the last of these aims, as conceived by ancient India, is the highest of all because it includes and surpasses all the others. To have made this attempt is to have ennobled the life of the race; to have failed in it is better than if it had never at all been attempted; to have achieved even a partial success is a great contribution to the future possibilities of the human being.”¹

Reference:

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* 20: 231-32

The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content.

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 08, p. 247)

Price: Rs. 31/-