

— The — Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

February 2016



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

– The Mother

Year 6

Issue 11

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

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

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

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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)

PUNJAB'S DRUG ADDICTION – THE WIDESPREAD USE AND DISTRIBUTION OF NARCOTICS

Punjab, a place which has been sanctified with the blessings of the ten Sikh Gurus and by the countless valiant warriors who have protected Hindus for generations, is crying out in agony today. The state which is known for its lush green farms, rivers and sheer beauty is now gaining notoriety for illicit drug abuse. Punjab has a history of use of narcotics as landowners gave raw opium to labourers so they would work harder. In the last three decades drug usage has become rife in Punjab as it has become a major transit route for the narcotics produced in the Golden Crescent Region (one of Asia's two principal areas of illicit opium production - the Golden Crescent (the other being the Golden Triangle) is the name given to the area located at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia.)¹

Punjab became a major route for drug trafficking with the rise of the Sikh militancy in the state. Militants often used trade in narcotics to fund their arms and training. As a result of ready availability, disenchanted youth, the main conscripts for the militants, turned to drugs to escape intolerable psychological conditions. During the 1980s, the most favoured route for trafficking was the Lahore-Fazilka-Bhatinda-Delhi route. Another frequently used route was the Attari-Wagah route. This route is still being exploited for trafficking drugs. The Samjhauta Express is alleged to have become a major carrier of illicit drugs from across the border. Consequently, Amritsar has emerged as a major centre for heroin trade in Punjab. The border towns of Ajnala and Gurdaspur have also become prominent heroin collection centres. Agricultural land across the fence, a good network of roads and rails right up to the borders, all facilitate trafficking of drugs in these sectors.² In the late 1980s, India began erecting a fence along its border with Pakistan that is now so brightly lit that it is clearly visible from space. But smugglers slip across at points where the fence is weak or interrupted by rivers. Attempts to tighten border security have driven up the prices of heroin coming from the other side of the border and forced local users toward over-the-

counter pharmaceuticals that produce a similar euphoric high.³ According to a report from Daily Mail, heroin is brought from Afghanistan at Rs.1 lakh a kg, passing through Pakistan it is smuggled into Punjab and sold for Rs. 30 lakh a kg. From Punjab it is sold to rest of India for Rs. 1 crore a kg.⁴

Recently, a survey was conducted by Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses in collaboration with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) which reveals the crude reality of the drug smuggling scenario in Punjab. According to this report opioids (opioids have similar properties to the opium from which they are derived) worth Rs. 7,500 crore are consumed by the state every year, and heroin constitutes a whopping Rs. 6,500 crore.⁵ The extent of drug addiction in Punjab is alarming. Near border areas the rate of heroin abuse among 15 to 25 year olds is as high as 75% – the percentage is 73% in other rural areas throughout the region. A Department of Social Security Development of Women and Children suggested that as many as 67% of rural households in Punjab have at least one drug addict in the family. There is at least one death due to drug overdose each week in the region.⁶ The huge profits involved and the reprehensible nature of the trade has encouraged extensive corruption among the local law enforcement and politicians. Indeed the terrorist attack on the airbase in Pathankot not so many days ago was allegedly facilitated by police officers initially turning a blind eye to the intruders, mistaking them for drug traffickers. Election officials seized more than 100 pounds of heroin that they said party workers intended to distribute to voters before state elections in January 2012. Giving out alcohol to bribe potential constituents is relatively common in India, but the plan to distribute heroin was unique to Punjab.⁷

Drugs are ruining the youth of Punjab and are a blight on her future. It's on record that thousands of families have lost their sons to the trade or to drug abuse, but the politicians are ignoring the issue for their own purposes. Police investigations have uncovered links between political leaders, businessmen and drug smugglers.

And now, with the elections scheduled for next year, politicians have started to make huge promises in their rallies e.g. when former chief minister captain Amarinder Singh held a rally in Bathinda in December 2015, he vowed to wipe out the drug menace within four weeks of a Congress win. This promise clearly echoed the tone set by the AAP party in the 2014 Lok Sabha when AAP surprisingly won four Lok Sabha seats in Punjab primarily on the basis of its vow to address the drug menace and now all the parties have joined the bandwagon.

Now, that the drug menace of Punjab is in spotlight and the elections just around the corner, 2017 could be a decisive year in the war against drugs. Voters have been convinced that the present Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-BJP leadership cannot deliver anything except disaster, especially if the Badals remain in power. The Congress has already lost its image due to various corruption charges and looking at performance of AAP in Delhi, not much can be expected from them either. What remains is the BJP but if it dissolves the alliance with the SAD then, on its own, chances of winning the assembly elections are meagre. So, it is up to the voters who they choose and if a wrong government gets elected, something most likely, then the drug menace is likely to assume greater proportions.

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POLITICAL ANTECEDENTS OF INDIAN SECULARISM: INDIAN NATIONALISM AND THE FRAMING OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

In the last issue, we gave a brief introduction to the key issues involved in understanding Indian secularism. The popular conceptions of Indian secularism have been interpreted by the leading Left-leaning intellectuals of the country. They see Indian secularism as a concept which has evolved independent of party politics, although influenced by it in the immediate contexts. Contrasting it with the Western notions of secularism and going back to the ‘tolerance’ and ‘pluralism’ practiced by rulers like Ashoka, Akbar et al, they have argued that India has its own unique brand of secularism. This is characterised by – multiple, competing or plurality of ideas and equality of all religions. Even though there are many debates among the Leftist Indian secularists on how secularism should be defined, whether there is a separate public sphere regulated by the state and the place of religion in the public sphere, they all converge on one key point: they all view ‘majoritarian’ Hindu nationalism as a threat to the secular ideal and only secondarily acknowledge the communalism perpetrated by Muslims and Christians. This is because either they are stuck in their abstract political theory frames and fail to recognize the other side of the secularism debate or/and are hostile to all mysticism and spirituality of which India has been the perennial fountain since times immemorial.

GOING BACK INTO NATIONALIST HISTORY: THE POLITICS OF GANDHI’S CONGRESS FROM A SECULARIST VIEWPOINT

Secularist history has widely vilified nationalist Hindu organizations and relegated them to the fringes of extremists or revolutionaries. It has often been argued that Gandhi was a devout Hindu and was yet a highly secular individual, and that the freedom movement, spearheaded by the Congress, was a diverse, pluralistic and secular movement. However, as the narrative below will show,

ideas like secularism were just a sham to mask the real political agenda of minority appeasement right through the early decades of the freedom struggle.

According to B.R. Ambedkar, who is venerated by all secularist intellectuals for his sense of social justice, formations like Hindu Mahasabha were a result of the survival instinct of the Hindu Nation when it had freed itself from the 'pseudo-nationalistic ideology of the Congress'. "It grew up of a fundamental necessity of the National life and not of any ephemeral incident. The constructive side of its aims and objects make it amply clear that its mission is as abiding as the life of the Nation itself. But that apart, even the day to day necessity of adapting its policy to the ever changing political currents makes it incumbent on Hindudom to have an exclusively Hindu organization independent of any moral or intellectual servility or subservience to any non-Hindu or jointly representative institution, to guard Hindu interests and save them from being jeopardised. It is so not only under the present political subjection of Hindustan but it will be all the more necessary to have some such exclusively Hindu organization, some such Hindu MahaSabha in substance whether it is identical with this present organization or otherwise to serve as a watchtower at the gates of Hindudom for at least a couple of centuries to come, even after Hindustan is partially or wholly free and a National Parliament controls its political destiny."¹

"Mr. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi)...He has never called the Muslims to account even when they have been guilty of gross crimes against Hindus. It is a notorious fact that many prominent Hindus who had offended the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims either by their writings or by their part in the Shudhi movement have been murdered by some fanatic Musalmans...But whether the number of prominent Hindus killed by fanatic Muslims is large or small matters little. What matters is the attitude of those who count, towards these murderers. The murderers paid the penalty of law where law is enforced. The leading Moslems, however, never condemned these criminals. On the contrary, they were hailed as religious martyrs and

agitation was carried on for clemency being shown to them.”²

Thus, the relationship between the Hindu and the Muslim communities during the peak years of the national movement from 1920 to 1940, as described by Ambedkar highlights the irreconcilability of the two communities and the fanaticism bubbling just beneath the surface of the Muslim community.

In 1920 took place the Mopala rebellion in Malabar, spearheaded by two Muslim organizations viz. the Khuddam-i-Kaba and the Central Khilafat Committee. “Agitators actually preached the doctrine that India under the British Government was Dar-ul-Harab and that the Muslims must fight against it and if they could not, they must carry out the alternative principle of *Hijrat*...The outbreak was essentially a rebellion against the British Government. The aim was to establish the kingdom of Islam by overthrowing the British Government...As a rebellion against the British Government it was quite understandable. But what baffled most was the treatment accorded by the Moplas to the Hindus of Malabar. The Hindus were visited by a dire fate at the hands of the Moplas. Massacres, forcible conversions, desecration of temples, foul outrages upon women, such as ripping open pregnant women, pillage, arson and destruction — in short, all the accompaniments of brutal and unrestrained barbarism, were perpetrated freely by the Moplas upon the Hindus...In the year 1921-22 communal jealousy did not subside. The Muharram Celebrations had been attended by serious riots both in Bengal and in the Punjab.”³

“Though the year 1922-23 was a peaceful year the relations between the two communities were strained throughout 1923-24. But in no locality did this tension produce such tragic consequences as in the city of Kohat [1924]. The immediate cause of the trouble was the publication and circulation of a pamphlet containing a virulently anti-Islamic poem...As a result of this reign of terror the whole Hindu population evacuated the city of Kohat. After protracted negotiations an agreement of reconciliation was concluded between the two communities. Government giving an assurance that, subject

to certain reservations, the prosecution pending against persons concerned in rioting should be dropped.”⁴

The two decades – the prime years of the national movement spearheaded by Gandhi and the Congress – were marked by vicious communal riots between the Hindus and the Muslims. “The examination of the circumstances of these numerous riots and affrays shows that they originated either in utterly petty and trivial disputes between individuals, as, for example, between a Hindu shopkeeper and a Mahomedan customer, or else, the immediate cause of trouble was the celebration of some religious festival or the playing of music by Hindu processionists in the neighbourhood of Mahomedan places of worship.”⁵

“There was carnage, pillage, sacrilege and outrage of every species, perpetrated by Hindus against Musalmans and by Musalmans against Hindus — more perhaps by Musalmans against Hindus than by Hindus against Musalmans. Cases of arson have occurred in which Musalmans have set fire to the houses of Hindus, in which whole families of Hindus, men, women and children were roasted alive and consumed in the fire, to the great satisfaction of the Muslim spectators. What is astonishing is that these cold and deliberate acts of rank cruelty were not regarded as atrocities to be condemned but were treated as legitimate acts of warfare for which no apology was necessary.”⁶

Ambedkar went on to conclude the impossibility of Hindu-Muslim unity under the given conditions. “Hindu-Muslim unity up to now was at least in sight although it was like a mirage. Today it is out of sight and also out of mind. Even Mr. Gandhi has given up what, he perhaps now realizes, is an impossible task.

But there are others who notwithstanding the history of the past twenty years, believe in the possibility of Hindu-Muslim unity. This belief of theirs seems to rest on two grounds. Firstly, they believe in the efficacy of a Central Government to mould diverse set of people into one nation. Secondly, they feel that the satisfaction of Muslim demands will be a sure means of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity...It

is an illusion to say that the Central Government in India has moulded the Indian people into a nation. What the Central Government has done, is to tie them together by one law and to house them together in one place, as the owner of unruly animals does, by tying them with one rope and keeping them in one stable.”⁷

THE PRESENT DELUSION OF SECULARISM IN INDIA: THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

This essay chose to extensively take excerpts from thinkers like Ambedkar who are venerated by the current generation of our secularist intellectuals for ideas of social justice. Yet, as these core excerpts show, the Hindu-Muslim situation has become no better. It is clear that the central concern that preoccupied the Congress party during the national movement was an artificial appeasement of Muslims, combined with a recourse to governmental machinery, to ensure the ‘secular’ character of India.

Yet, as Ambedkar concludes, “How to make the Muslims join the Hindus in the latter’s demands on the British is comparatively a very small question. In what spirit will they work the constitution? Will they work it only as aliens by an unwanted tie or will they work it as true kindreds, is the more important question. For working it as true kindreds, what is wanted is not merely political unity but a true union of heart and soul.”⁸

Our current approach to secularism continues to commit the folly of assuming that:

- Hindu-Muslim unity was a historical reality.
- Overlooking the assertion of every Muslim that ‘I am a Muslim first and Indian second’.
- Muslim inclusion in the Republic can be brought about by appeasing the community by acceding to their separatist demands and giving them political and economic preference.

This approach, traced historically, has dominated the thinking of the dominant political party of India viz. the Indian National

Congress. This was reflected in the Constituent Assembly debates over secularism. It is important to re-visit these debates to understand the validity of Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh's statement that secularism was artificially inserted into the Preamble to the Constitution through the 42nd Amendment Act in 1976 by the Indira Gandhi government – ostensibly to legitimize the Emergency rule of the government.

During the Constituent Assembly debates in the early 1950s, the discussion on secularism was the most acrimonious debate. It saw members like HV Kamath, Govind Malaviya and Pandit Kunzru arguing in favour of including a reference to God in the Preamble to the Constitution. While this proposal was defeated, the suggestions to include a reference to secularism – which does not favour either the majority or the minority community – was also opposed by the majority of the Constituent Assembly members. This kind of secularism was proposed by members like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, GB Pant, KT Shah, Tajamul Husain and M Masani.

It was based on the idea that nationalism should form the basis of the Indian state and religion should strictly form a part of an individual's private life. The Indian state cannot favour any religion and no religion should be allowed 'freedom of expression' or proselytization in the public life. Thus, these members clearly "dissented from the inclusion among fundamental rights of any provision guaranteeing institutions belonging to any religious community."⁹

It is clear that the current structure of Fundamental Rights does not adhere to this idea of secularism. Articles 25 to 28 guarantee the Right to Freedom of Religion. Instead of relegating religion to the private life of the individual, the current structure of our Constitution lays down that the state shall treat all religions with equal respect. During the Constituent Assembly debates, this view was initially put forward by KM Munshi and JB Kripalani. KM Munshi argued that, "We are a people with deeply religious moorings. At the same time, we have a living tradition of religious tolerance – the result of the broad outlook of

Hinduism that all religions lead to the same god...In view of this situation, our state could not possibly have a state religion, nor could a rigid line be drawn between the state and the church as in the US.”¹⁰

The view was widely favoured that India should retain her spiritual heritage instead of giving in to the materialism of the West. Thus, what should be encouraged was a dynamic relationship between state and religion, based on allowing religious practice rather than merely narrow religious worship. Further, to guard against communalism, people like JP Narayan suggested that use of religion for setting up of political organizations should be prohibited.

THE FLAW IN THE DEBATES

An extreme view that came up during the debates was that freedom of religion should also include the right to freely profess one's religion and that minorities should be allowed to even freely propagate their religion. This view was opposed by B.R. Ambedkar, GB Pant, Jagjivan Ram and others. They wanted only linguistic minorities to have the right to freely set up their cultural and educational institutions, instead of allowing the religious minorities to hold the Indian state to ransom. However, as the current structure of the Constitution shows, even religious minorities have been granted the right to establish and administer their educational institutions, under Article 30.

Historically, the colonial state too had granted immense power to the Muslims by allowing them separate electorates since 1909. It would have been much worse if religious minorities had been allowed quota along the same lines as caste minorities. This had almost happened during the framing of the Constitution, but was revoked in the final draft due to the Partition.

However, the idea of secularism persisted as the state recognition of all religions equally in the public sphere. The upshot was that over the following decades it was easily manipulated politically, with the Congress being the main agent of starting a policy of Muslim appeasement. Besides providing the Haj subsidy to the

Muslims, one of the consistent efforts of the Congress, till recently, has been to talk favourably about Muslim quota. Central universities like Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Milia Islamia have been granted a minority tag to facilitate 50% reservation for the Muslims, while majoritarian institutions are subjected to the provisions of the quota and the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE). The government, since the Nehruvian era, had also undertaken to 'reform' the Hindu personal laws and take state control of most Hindu temples and institutions. They left the discriminatory and unjust Muslim personal laws untouched.

Ironically, the majority of riots have occurred in Congress-ruled states since 1960. Yet, behold the politics of secularism, which publicizes only the Gujarat riots of 2002.

Table: Communal riots in India since 1960:¹¹

Year	City	Casualty	Government
1961	Jabalpur, MP	Not Clear	Congress
1967	Hatia-Ranchi	200+	Jana Kranti Dal
1969	Ahmedabad	1000+	Congress
1970	Jalgaon, Maharashtra	100+	Congress
1979	Jamshedpur	150+	Janta Party
1979	Aligarh	Not Clear	Congress
1980	Moradabad	1500+	Congress
1983	Nellie, Assam	2500+	President Rule
1984	Delhi	2700+	Congress
1984	Bhiwandi	200+	Congress
1985	Ahmedabad	300+	Congress
1987	Meerut, UP	350+	Congress
1989	Bhagalpur	1500+	Congress
1990	Delhi	100	-
1990	Hyderabad	365+	Congress
1990	Aligarh	150+	Janta Dal

1992	Surat	152	Congress + JD(G) + JD
1992	Kanpur	300+	President's Rule
1992	Bhopal	150+	President's Rule
1993	Mumbai	2000+	President's Rule
2002	Gujarat	1500+	BJP
2012	Assam	100+	Congress
2013	Muzaffarnagar, UP	-	Samajwadi Party

This is how the ideal of secularism has worked out in Indian politics. It has failed to recognize that such an approach has been counter-productive to Indian nationalism and has also left the Indian Muslims ghettoised and more radicalised. The recent chanting of anti-national slogans in Jawaharlal Nehru University – the hub of Indian academics – was nothing but the public exposure of a process that had been happening for a long time.

To be continued...

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HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (17)

X. INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA BY INDIAN SCHOLARSHIP

“It is when we come to the interpretation of the Veda and seek help from ancient Indian scholarship that we feel compelled to make the largest reserves. For even in the earlier days of classical erudition the ritualistic view of the Veda was already dominant, the original sense of the words, the lines, the allusions, the clue to the structure of the thought had been long lost or obscured; nor was there in the erudite that intuition or that spiritual experience which might have partly recovered the lost secret. In such a field mere learning, especially when it is accompanied by **an ingenious scholastic mind, is as often a snare as a guide.**”¹

A. YASKA’S LEXICON (NOT LATER THAN 500 B.C.)

“In Yaska’s lexicon, our most important help, we have to distinguish between two elements of very disparate value. When Yaska gives as a lexicographer the various meanings of Vedic words, his authority is great and the help he gives is of the first importance. It does not appear that he possessed all the ancient significances, for many had been obliterated by Time and Change and in the absence of a scientific Philology could not be restored. But much also had been preserved by tradition. Wherever Yaska preserves this tradition and does not use a grammarian’s ingenuity, the meanings he assigns to words, although not always applicable to the text to which he refers them, can yet be confirmed as possible senses by a sound Philology. But Yaska the etymologist does not rank with Yaska the lexicographer. Scientific grammar was first developed by Indian learning, but the beginnings of sound philology we owe to modern research. Nothing can be more fanciful and lawless than the methods of mere ingenuity used by the old etymologists down even to the nineteenth century, whether in Europe or India. And when Yaska follows these methods, we are obliged to part company with him entirely. Nor in his interpretation

of particular texts is he more convincing than the later erudition of Sayana.”²

B. SAYANA’S COMMENTARY (14TH CENTURY A.D.)

“The commentary of Sayana closes the period of original and living scholastic work on the Veda which Yaska’s Nirukta among other important authorities may be said to open. The lexicon was compiled in the earlier vigour of the Indian mind when it was assembling its prehistoric gains as the materials of a fresh outburst of originality; the Commentary is almost the last great work of the kind left to us by the classical tradition in its final refuge and centre in Southern India before the old culture was dislocated and broken into regional fragments by the shock of the Mahomedan conquest. Since then we have had jets of strong and original effort, scattered attempts at new birth and novel combination, but work of quite this general, massive and monumental character has hardly been possible.

The commanding merits of this great legacy of the past are obvious. Composed by Sayana with the aid of the most learned scholars of his time, it is a work representing an enormous labour of erudition, more perhaps than could have been commanded at that time by a single brain. Yet it bears the stamp of the coordinating mind. It is consistent in the mass in spite of its many inconsistencies of detail, largely planned, yet most simply, composed in a style lucid, terse and possessed of an almost literary grace one would have thought impossible in the traditional form of the Indian commentary. Nowhere is there any display of pedantry; the struggle with the difficulties of the text is skilfully veiled and there is an air of clear acuteness and of assured, yet unassuming authority which imposes even on the dissident. The first Vedic scholars in Europe admired especially the rationality of Sayana’s interpretations.

Yet, even for the external sense of the Veda, it is not possible to follow either Sayana’s method or his results without the largest reservation. It is not only that he admits in his method licences of

language and construction which are unnecessary and sometimes incredible, nor that he arrives at his results, often, by a surprising inconsistency in his interpretation of common Vedic terms and even of fixed Vedic formulae. These are defects of detail, unavoidable perhaps in the state of the materials with which he had to deal. **But it is the central defect of Sayana's system that he is obsessed always by the ritualistic formula and seeks continually to force the sense of the Veda into that narrow mould.** So he loses many clues of the greatest suggestiveness and importance for the external sense of the ancient Scripture, – a problem quite as interesting as its internal sense. The outcome is a representation of the Rishis, their thoughts, their culture, their aspirations, so narrow and poverty-stricken that, if accepted, it renders the ancient reverence for the Veda, its sacred authority, its divine reputation quite incomprehensible to the reason or only explicable as a blind and unquestioning tradition of faith starting from an original error.”³

Sayana's commentary has an element of naturalistic interpretation. “Not only are there the obvious or the traditional identifications, Indra, the Maruts, the triple Agni, Surya, Usha, but we find that Mitra was identified with the Day, Varuna with the Night, Aryaman and Bhaga with the Sun, the Ribhus with its rays. **We have here the seeds of that naturalistic theory of the Veda to which European learning has given so wide an extension.** The old Indian scholars did not use the same freedom or the same systematic minuteness in their speculations. Still this element in Sayana's commentary is the true parent of the European Science of Comparative Mythology.

But it is the ritualistic conception that pervades; that is the persistent note in which all others lose themselves. In the formula of the philosophic schools, the hymns, even while standing as a supreme authority for knowledge, are yet principally and fundamentally concerned with the Karmakanda, with works, – and by works was understood, preeminently, the ritualistic observation of the Vedic sacrifices. Sayana labours always in the light of this

idea. Into this mould he moulds the language of the Veda, turning the mass of its characteristic words into the ritualistic significances, – food, priest, giver, wealth, praise, prayer, rite, sacrifice.

Wealth and food; – for it is the most egoistic and materialistic objects that are proposed as the aim of the sacrifice, possessions, strength, power, children, servants, gold, horses, cows, victory, the slaughter and the plunder of enemies, the destruction of rival and malevolent critic. As one reads and finds hymn after hymn interpreted in this sense, one begins to understand better the apparent inconsistency in the attitude of the Gita which, regarding always the Veda as divine knowledge,^a yet censures severely the champions of an exclusive Vedism,^b all whose flowery teachings were devoted solely to material wealth, power and enjoyment.

It is the final and authoritative binding of the Veda to this lowest of all its possible senses that has been the most unfortunate result of Sayana's commentary. The dominance of the ritualistic interpretation had already deprived India of the living use of its greatest Scripture and of the true clue to the entire sense of the Upanishads. **Sayana's commentary put a seal of finality on the old misunderstanding** which could not be broken for many centuries. And its suggestions, when another civilisation discovered and set itself to study **the Veda, became in the European mind the parent of fresh errors.**

Nevertheless, if Sayana's work has been a key turned with double lock on the inner sense of the Veda, it is yet indispensable for opening the antechambers of Vedic learning. All the vast labour of European erudition has not been able to replace its utility. At every step we are obliged to differ from it, but at every step we are obliged to use it. It is a necessary springing-board, or a stair that we have to use for entrance, though we must leave it behind if we wish to pass forwards into the penetralia."⁴

^a Gita XV.15.

^b Ibid. II.42.

C. SWAMI DAYANAND'S INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA

Swami Dayananda, the founder of Arya Samaj, made a great attempt to re-establish the Veda as a living religious Scripture. "Dayananda took as his basis a free use of the old Indian philology which he found in the Nirukta. Himself a great Sanskrit scholar, he handled his materials with remarkable power and independence. Especially creative was his use of that peculiar feature of the old Sanskrit tongue which is best expressed by a phrase of Sayana's, – the 'multi-significance of roots'. We shall see that the right following of this clue is of capital importance for understanding the peculiar method of the Vedic Rishis.

Dayananda's interpretation of the hymns is governed by the idea that the Vedas are a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth. Its religious teaching is monotheistic and the Vedic gods are different descriptive names of the one Deity; they are at the same time indications of His powers as we see them working in Nature and by a true understanding of the sense of the Vedas we could arrive at all the scientific truths which have been discovered by modern research.

Such a theory is, obviously, difficult to establish. The Rig Veda itself, indeed, asserts^a that the gods are only different names and expressions of one universal Being who in His own reality transcends the universe; but from the language of the hymns we are compelled to perceive in the gods not only different names, but also different forms, powers and personalities of the one Deva. The monotheism of the Veda includes in itself also the monistic, pantheistic and even polytheistic views of the cosmos and is by no means the trenchant and simple creed of modern Theism. It is only by a violent struggle with the text that we can force on it a less complex aspect.

That the ancient races were far more advanced in the physical

^a R.V. I.164.46 and I.170.1.

sciences than is as yet recognised, may also be admitted. The Egyptians and Chaldeans, we now know, had discovered much that has since been rediscovered by modern Science and much also that has not been rediscovered. The ancient Indians were, at least, no mean astronomers and were always skilful physicians; nor do Hindu medicine and chemistry seem to have been of a foreign origin. It is possible that in other branches also of physical knowledge they were advanced even in early times. But **the absolute completeness of scientific revelation asserted by Swami Dayananda will take a great deal of proving.**"⁵

"Swami Dayananda ... preached a monotheistic religion founded on a new interpretation of the sacred hymns. But this important attempt successful & vigorous in the Panjab is not likely to command acceptance among the more subtle races of the south & west. It was based like the European rendering on a system of philology, – the Nirukta of Yaska used by the scholastic ingenuity & robust faith of Dayananda to justify conclusions far-reaching & even extravagant[,] to which it is difficult to assent unless we are offered stronger foundations. Moreover, by rejecting the authority of all later Scriptures and scouting even the Upanishads because they transcend the severity of his monotheistic teaching, Dayananda cut asunder the unity of [Hindu] religion even more fatally than the Europeans & by the slenderness of vision & the poverty of spiritual contents, the excessive simplicity of doctrine farther weakened the authority of this version for the Indian intellect. He created a sect & a rendering, but failed to rehabilitate to the educated mind in India the authority of the Vedas. Nevertheless, he put his finger on the real clue, the true principle by which Veda can yet be made to render up its long-guarded secret."⁶

"The hypothesis on which I shall conduct my own enquiry is that the Veda has a double aspect and that the two, though closely related, must be kept apart. The Rishis arranged the substance of their thought in a system of parallelism by which the same deities

were at once internal and external Powers of universal Nature, and they managed its expression through a system of double values by which the same language served for their worship in both aspects. But the psychological sense predominates and is more pervading, close-knit and coherent than the physical. The Veda is primarily intended to serve for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. It is, therefore, this sense which has first to be restored.”⁷

References:

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- 2. Ibid**, p.19
- 3. Ibid**, pp.19-21
- 4. Ibid**, pp.22-23
- 5. Ibid**, pp.31-32
- 6. Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research**, Issue December, 1984, p.135, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
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THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (16)

2. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

V. THE LINKING OF THE GRADED SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION TO THE GENERAL CULTURE OF THE LIFE OF THE HUMAN BEING AND HIS POWERS

The general culture of life and its powers must be the first care of any civilisation worth the name. The most important part of the incomparable genius of the Indian spiritual culture lay in the application of its lofty ideals to the life of the human being.

A. THE RISHI AND THE SHASTRA – THE LINKING AND THE CULTURE OF THE THINKING BEING OF MAN

“The most delicate and difficult part of this task of human development is concerned with the thinking being of man, his mind of reason and knowledge. No ancient culture of which we have knowledge, not even the Greek, attached more importance to it or spent more effort on its cultivation. The business of the ancient Rishi was not only to know God, but to know the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines and on a safe basis of wise method and order. The ripe result of this effort was the Shastra. When we speak of the Shastra nowadays, we mean too often only the religio-social system of injunctions of the middle age made sacrosanct by their mythical attribution to Manu, Parashara and other Vedic sages. But in older India Shastra meant any systematised teaching and science; each department of life, each line of activity, each subject of knowledge had its science or Shastra. The attempt was to reduce each to a theoretical and practical order founded on detailed observation, just generalisation, full experience, intuitive, logical and experimental analysis and synthesis, in order to enable man to know always with a just fruitfulness for life and to act with the security of right knowledge. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each

provided with its art and science. The name was given even to the highest spiritual knowledge whenever it was stated not in a mass of intuitive experience and revelatory knowledge as in the Upanishads, but for intellectual comprehension in system and order, – and in that sense the Gita is able to call its profound spiritual teaching the most secret science, *guhyaatama* ऽ गुह्यतमम्. This high scientific and philosophical spirit was carried by the ancient Indian culture into all its activities. No Indian religion is complete without its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its Yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living: most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance, has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical inquiry; whatever is ill-founded in experience and reason, that power can dissolve, but not the heart and mind of these great teachings. But what we have more especially to observe is that while Indian culture made a distinction between the lower and the higher learning, the knowledge of things and the knowledge of self, it did not put a gulf between them like some religions, but considered the knowledge of the world and things as a preparatory and a leading up to the knowledge of Self and God. All Shastra was put under the sanction of the names of the Rishis, who were in the beginning the teachers not only of spiritual truth and philosophy, – and we may note that all Indian philosophy, even the logic of Nyaya and the atomic theory of the Vaisheshikas, has for its highest crowning note and eventual object spiritual knowledge and liberation, – but of the arts, the social, political and military, the physical and psychic sciences, and every instructor was in his degree respected as a *guru* or ऽ गुरुः, a guide or preceptor of the human spirit. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge.”¹

B. THE DHARMA – THE CULTURE AND THE ORDERING OF THE ETHICAL NATURE

“The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was in the view of Indian culture a Dharma, a living according to a just

understanding and right view of self-culture, of the knowledge of things and life and of action in that knowledge. Thus each man and class and kind and species and each activity of soul, mind, life, body has its dharma. But the largest or at least most vitally important part of the Dharma was held to be the culture and ordering of the ethical nature of man. The ethical aspect of life, contrary to the amazingly ignorant observation of a certain type of critics, attracted a quite enormous amount of attention, occupied the greater part of Indian thought and writing not devoted to the things of pure knowledge and of the spirit and was so far pushed that there is no ethical formation or ideal which does not reach in it its highest conception and a certain divine absolutism of ideal practice. Indian thought took for granted, – though there are some remarkable speculations to the contrary, – the ethical nature of man and the ethical law of the world. It considered that man was justified in satisfying his desires, since that is necessary for the satisfaction and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the law of his being; for in all things there is a greater law, each has not only its side of interest and desire, but its dharma or rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion, regulation. The Dharma, then, fixed by the wise in the Shastra is the right thing to observe, the true rule of action. First in the web of Dharma comes the social law; for man's life is only initially for his vital, personal, individual self, but much more imperatively for the community, though most imperatively of all for the greatest Self one in himself and in all beings, for God, for the Spirit. Therefore first the individual must subordinate himself to the communal self, though by no means bound altogether to efface himself in it as the extremists of the communal idea imagine. He must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type and class, for the nation and in a higher reach of his being – this was greatly stressed by the Buddhists – for humanity. Thus living and acting he could learn to transcend the social scale of the Dharma, practise without injuring the basis of life the ideal scale and finally grow into the liberty of the spirit, when rule and duty were not binding because he would then move and act in a highest free and immortal dharma of the divine nature. All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked up together in a progressive unity. Thus, for an

example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule for the growth of the pure ethical being, and every man by observing his dharma and turning his action Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all dharma and ethics was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the continuity of life and of man's long pilgrimage through many births, a reminder of the Gods and planes beyond and of the Divine, and above it all the vision of a last stage of perfect comprehension and unity and of divine transcendence."²

C. ALL THE ARTS UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE RISHI – THE LINKING AND CULTURE OF AESTHETIC AND THE HEDONISTIC BEING OF MAN

"The system of Indian ethics liberalised by the catholicity of the ancient mind did not ban or violently discourage the aesthetic or even the hedonistic being of man in spite of a growing ascetic tendency and a certain high austerity of the summits. The aesthetic satisfactions of all kinds and all grades were an important part of the culture. Poetry, the drama, song, dance, music, the greater and lesser arts were placed under the sanction of the Rishis and were made instruments of the spirit's culture. A just theory held them to be initially the means of a pure aesthetic satisfaction and each was founded on its own basic rule and law, but on that basis and with a perfect fidelity to it still raised up to minister to the intellectual, ethical and religious development of the being. It is notable that the two vast Indian epics have been considered as much as Dharma-shastras as great historico-mythic epic narratives, *itihāsas*. They are, that is to say, noble, vivid and puissant pictures of life, but they utter and breathe throughout their course the law and ideal of a great and high ethical and religious spirit in life and aim in their highest intention at the idea of the Divine and the way of the mounting soul in the action of the world. Indian painting, sculpture and architecture did not refuse service to the aesthetic satisfaction and interpretation of the social, civic and individual life of the human being; these things, as all evidences show, played a great part in their motives of creation, but still their highest work was reserved for the greatest

spiritual side of the culture, and throughout we see them seized and suffused with the brooding stress of the Indian mind on the soul, the Godhead, the spiritual, the Infinite. And we have to note too that the aesthetic and hedonistic being was made not only an aid to religion and spirituality and liberally used for that purpose, but even one of the main gates of man's approach to the Spirit. The Vaishnava religion especially is a religion of love and beauty and of the satisfaction of the whole delight-soul of man in God and even the desires and images of the sensuous life were turned by its vision into figures of a divine soul-experience. Few religions have gone so far as this immense catholicity or carried the whole nature so high in its large, puissant and many-sided approach to the spiritual and the infinite."³

D. THE BUILDING UP OF GREAT SHASTRAS – THE DEALINGS WITH THE ORDINARY DYNAMIC, POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL BEING OF MAN

"Finally, there is the most outwardly vital life of man, his ordinary dynamic, political, economical and social being. This too Indian culture took strenuously in hand and subjected its whole body to the pressure of its own ideals and conceptions. Its method was to build up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economical well-being. These were directed on one side to success, expansion, opulence and the right art and relation of these activities, but on those motives, demanded by the very nature of the vital man and his action, was imposed the law of the Dharma, a stringent social and ethical ideal and rule – thus the whole life of the king as the head of power and responsibility was regulated by it in its every hour and function, – and the constant reminder of religious duty. In latter times a Machiavellian principle of statecraft, that which has been always and is still pursued by governments and diplomats, encroached on this nobler system, but in the best age of Indian thought this depravation was condemned as a temporarily effective, but lesser, ignoble and inferior way of policy. The great rule of the culture was that the higher a man's position and power, the larger the scope of his function

and influence of his acts and example, the greater should be the call on him of the Dharma. The whole law and custom of society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged to live and rule as the guardian and servant of the Dharma with only an executive power over the community which was valid so long as he observed with fidelity the Law. And as this vital aspect of life is the one which most easily draws us outward and away from the inner self and the diviner aim of living, it was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by religious rites, ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a supraterrrestrial aim of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yugadharma. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to change custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary social weft of binding rule and injunction. A rigid observation and discipline of the social law, a larger nobler discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of the religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection.”⁴

E. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE ENDEAVOUR TO APPLY INDIAN IDEALS TO LIFE

“Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for

its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary natural being of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion, a religion at first appealing to his more outward undeveloped mind, but in each of its outward symbols and circumstances opening to a profounder significance, armed with the indication of a profoundest spiritual and ideal meaning as its justification. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to their own heights of spiritual direction and potentiality. Finally, each of these growing powers in man was made on its own line of approach a gateway into his divine and spiritual being. Thus we may observe that there was created a Yoga of knowledge for the self-exceeding of the thinking intellectual man, a Yoga of works for the self-exceeding of the active, dynamic and ethical man, a Yoga of love and bhakti for the self-exceeding of the emotional, aesthetic, hedonistic man, by which each arrived to perfection through a self-ward, spiritual, God-ward direction of his own special power, as too a Yoga of self-exceeding through the power of the psychical being and even through the power of the life in the body, – Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis. But all these ways of self-exceeding led to a highest self-becoming. To become one with universal being and all existences, one with the self and spirit, united with God completed the human evolution, built the final step of man's self-culture.”⁵

References:

- 1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.20, pp.224-25, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
- 2 Ibid.**, pp.225-27
- 3 Ibid.**, pp.227-28
- 4 Ibid.**, pp.228-29
- 5 Ibid.**, pp.229-30

HINDU MUSLIM UNITY

“Sri Aurobindo: I am sorry they are making a fetish of this Hindu-Muslim unity. It is no use ignoring facts; some day the Hindus may have to fight the Muslims and they must prepare for it. Hindu-Muslim unity should not mean the subjection of the Hindus. Every time the mildness of the Hindu has given way. The best solution would be to allow the Hindus to organise themselves and the Hindu-Muslim unity would take care of itself, it would automatically solve the problem. Otherwise, we are lulled into a false sense of satisfaction that we have solved a difficult problem, when in fact we have only shelved it.”

— Sri Aurobindo

(A.B. Purani, Talks with Sri Aurobindo, 2007, p.301)