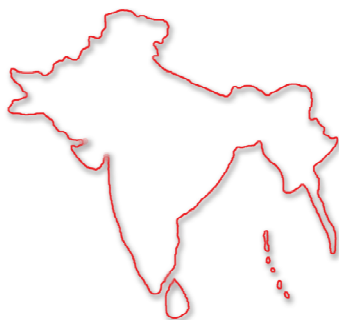


The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

April 2017



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

Year 8

Issue 1

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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 8

Issue 1

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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)

PRESENT POLITICS IN PERSPECTIVE: NATIONALISM IN INDIA

In many of our previous articles, we have expounded on the theme of nationalism. In this article, we want to reflect deeply on how the spirit of nationalism implicates the larger changes in the country, especially in the aftermath of the recent Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

The UP election outcome is just one among the many events that have heralded the ***beginning of a new spirit of political and social unification***, which will eventually spread across the country. This impulse towards political and social unification has India's inherent spirit of Sanatana Dharma at its base, and from its inchoate beginnings – as at present – it will soon transform the entire social fabric of the country.

Therefore, the key question before us is, what are the springs of nationalism – the Sanatana dharma.

It is to understand the springs of immediate unification in the country, that the UP elections become an important precursor. They revealed the ***unprecedented start of a conscious unity in Hindu society***, cutting across all caste, class and identity divisions. With this new wave the grand imaginations of an umbrella ideological coalition of backward castes, classes and minority religions tumbled down like a house of cards. These had been the mainstay of corrupt concentration of power in UP for too many years. It is the same in other states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where the existence of key political parties depends upon the continuation of caste divisions in the society which they have been exploiting.

WHY THE UP MANDATE WAS NECESSARY

UP has always been riddled with corruption, crime, poverty and all the major ills that could befall a region. Politically, everyone was suffering in the clutches of their narrow identity. Within the religion

of the vaunted Muslim minority, the women were being oppressed, and, in the name of Mandal-era assertion of the backward castes, the OBCs and mainly the Yadavs were perpetrating heinous crimes against all other castes, especially against the Dalits. So obsessed were we with this pseudo secularism that we refused to see the collective stagnation springing from rampant minority appeasement which benefitted no one in general and certainly not the minorities.

But now, in the aftermath of the elections, we are seeing an entirely new kind of political behavior in UP. For the first time, all political and governmental forces have come together to pointedly target and root out nepotism, corruption and lawlessness from UP, and to empower Muslim women and Shia Muslims.

These and many other day-to-day changes are, for the first time, inculcating civic awareness and unity and recharging the citizens of UP. With the perception that the government is firmly behind them and that the Chief Minister gives access to people easily, the people as a whole are feeling empowered, instead of just a particular caste getting all the privileges. In fact, the concept of privilege and entitlement is getting abolished rapidly.

These developments will set a very important precedent for the rest of the country, since UP is critical and has been one of the most difficult states to navigate. Already, the changes are visible in other states like Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand, where regional parties are smartening under the burden of a resurgent BJP and their own past sins.

THE HOSTILITY OF INDIA'S PAST POLITICS

Regional parties, based on extremely selfish, narrow and misplaced interests, gained ascendancy after 1980s, and, truly, in retrospect, if we look at the track record of these parties, it would seem that they – except for their role in precipitating the down-ward march of the polity and thus leading to a speedy coming out of it – they have been the real anti-nationals in the country since they have soiled Indian politics, making it utilitarian, corrupt and placed the

collective national interest at the very bottom.

These regional, selfish and identity-based parties were temporary formations which had come for the limited but important work of broadening the Hindu society, and facilitating the start of awareness among the lower castes and classes. However, their folly and intention was in thinking that this democratization will destroy the Hindu society. They failed to realize that all along they were instruments of the Time Spirit, preparing India for her future role in the world.

But now, regional parties are being forced to realize that they have outlived their utility. Whether it be the DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu or the SP and BSP in Uttar Pradesh, their ideology is no longer relevant. They have done more harm than good and been responsible for the degradation of our national character.

Not that before these changes, the Congress rule under Nehru achieved anything constructive. Most of the work done by the 'secular' parties – led by Congress – in Independent India's history was in the air. However, at least till Nehru's time, it had relevance, since most of the newly decolonized countries had lapsed into dictatorships or dictatorial theologies and the secular character of Nehru's Congress provided stability and open-mindedness to the political system, especially in the wake of the communal hostilities unleashed by the Partition, and prevented India from going down the same road as Pakistan.

However, this was about the only positive contribution of the Congress. The Congress and the other country-wide parties thereafter must be judged on the basis of ***their contribution to the revival of the nation***. And in this they have unequivocally failed. In fact, ***to promote their hostile and selfish interests, they have even sought to stifle any attempt at national revival***.

This kind of a stifling, falsely secular politics went against the basic cultural ethos of ***the nation, where, despite all alienation and divisions, a deep sense of cultural unity has always persisted in the***

society despite the caste-based inequalities. The progressive elements in all the castes, especially among the backward castes (including the Dalits), have been fighting against the injurious elements such as caste-pride and discriminations and oppressions of certain castes and female gender in the name of religion. The fight was never against the religion itself, but against the priests and powerful elements of conservatism which exercised control over its outer body.

Though there was no dearth of famous social reformers who attacked the very body of thought and philosophy and literature of Hinduism, none of these intellectual and political attempts succeeded in the long run. ***For, the common lower caste person, however bitter he may have been, always preserved in his heart an image of Shiva and remained true to his God, though the outer struggles for recognition, dignity and equality were long and protracted.***

OUR ANCIENT SPRINGS OF NATIONAL UNITY

The reason for this fidelity and implicit sense of oneness lies in the basic springs of unity provided by Sanatana Dharma and our Vedic bedrock that has nourished the Indian culture and civilization for ages. Its universal nature and synthetic spirit has, historically, enabled it to successfully interweave within its own basic fabric all foreign or even apparently anti-Vedic elements that have come in – so much so that even what seemed clearly hostile or anti-Vedic also flowed from the Vedic spirit itself, which “admits all beliefs, allowing even a kind of high-reaching atheism and agnosticism and permits all possible spiritual experiences, all kinds of religious adventures.”¹

A case in point is the outward denial of the Vedic thought, at one point, by Buddhism. Despite its clear denunciation and opposition to the Vedic religion, its ideal of Nirvana was simply a sharply negative and exclusive statement of the Vedic idea of the Impersonal. Thus, India took what it could of Buddhism, but rejected the religion in main, as its mental, logical and divisive approach rebelled against

the intuitive mentality of the Indian people.

This is just one example of the synthetic spirit of Indian culture. It was with all external influences – Western culture, Islam and Christianity – that our nation has followed this synthetic process of absorption of the elements that could be moulded into our national fabric and rejection of only those that could not be so subjected. Even monistic religions like Islam and Christianity – after existing in India for some time – began to mirror the Indian society and the spirit of the caste system, instead of the other way around.

This was despite the fact that in the increasingly modernized, utilitarian and West-influenced period following the years after our Independence, there was no dearth of challenges. The solid groundwork for modern secularization of both caste and religion – laid by Nehru and later transformed into Muslim appeasement after Indira Gandhi – which sought to completely negate the religious spirit of the Indian culture could not be successful. Neither could the huge corpus of poor and hostile intellectual education which was geared towards indoctrinating the minds of our younger generations.

All these challenges – even the biggest ones, which we tend to regard as determinants of future – were nothing but mere historical incidents. They constituted such gross distortions and misrepresentations of the true Indian spirit that they did not really have a chance in front of the mightiness of the Indian religion, the secret of whose longevity lies in the fact that it has always sought after the Infinite and the Eternal in all pursuits of Life. ***Be it politics, religion, art, culture, intellectual pursuits or any other, India has always sought to express everything from the source of highest possible consciousness and realization. And when you perceive Oneness everywhere, then there is no “other” or a real enemy in such a unity with the larger cosmic Spirit which will never allow you to perish.***

And this immortality of our religious spirit and culture, which nothing has been able to erode, is at the heart of the springs of

nationalism in this country. It is the impulse that is seeking to realize itself through the present wave and will determine the future course of politics in the country. All that have appeared as divisions and conflicts of history have also, despite all appearances, ultimately flowed from the original Indian spirit which shall, once again, consciously turn our collective existence towards the Infinite and the Eternal.

Having herself always turned towards the Infinite in all the pursuits, India's mighty spirit saw nothing as a fundamental obstruction to the basic Universal Oneness. ***As Sri Aurobindo writes of the Sanatan Dharma, "Observing the one Truth from all its many sides, it shut out none. It gave itself no specific name and bound itself by no limiting distinction. Allowing separative designations for its constituting cults and divisions, it remained itself nameless, formless, universal, infinite, like the Brahman of its agelong seeking."***²

This basic unity in Indian culture – and the synonymy of Indian religion and culture – is necessary for understanding the present wave of nationalism across the country. Compared to the mightiness of India's spirit and culture, this wave is still at a very nascent stage. However, it is beginning to be brought about through the collective conscious awakening of the people which will translate itself, among other things, into drastic changes into the outer machinery of government and society.

THE SENSE OF THE LARGER AIM

Despite the rapid psychological changes unleashed by the UP election mandate, we are still at a nascent stage as far as the real work of the country is concerned. In the light of what Sri Aurobindo has said about India's role in the future of humanity, we are still nowhere close to even starting the real work. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the current wave is just a very preliminary backgrounder and foundation and that, as of now, we are still busy dealing with our own conflicts and rooting out our own poison. ***We are the***

descendants of the mighty rishis and the Aryans and the current and long-entrenched state of selfishness and cowardliness is contrary to this country's swabhava.

The point of the present endeavour is not to go back to our past system – which is neither possible nor desirable – but to recover and live in the spirit of the original Aryan heritage and make it pervade our modern forms of life. ***India's "golden past" was constituted not merely by the riches of wealth and culture that we had before the British era – which were just the outer manifestation and consequence of our deeper spirit – but by the power of the soul. Once we lost hold of that power, we lost hold of everything else in our outer life too and the degeneration was the inevitable consequence. For, India's ancient destiny is linked to the power of her soul as expressed through Sanatan Dharma, and the fortunes of our soul which, though subject to the appearances of rises and falls, have been ever increasing.***

"I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism."³

References:

- 1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, p.180, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry***
- 2. Ibid, p.193***
- 3. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.8, p.12, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry***

NO WAR BETWEEN SECULARISM AND ISLAM

The internal conflict in Bangladeshi society is mistakenly being painted as a war between Islamic extremism and secularism. While attacks on 'secular' bloggers and minority communities have been on rise for some time now, the latest trigger of speculation is PM Sheikh Hasina's capitulation to Islamic fringe elements demanding the removal of the statue of 'Lady Justice' – borrowed from a Greek goddess, albeit one wearing the traditional sari – that was installed outside its Supreme Court premises. The contention of the Islamists is that Islam does not believe in idols.

Sheikh Hasina can be seen capitulating to the demands of fringe Islamic groups since elections are due in 2018 and she, like the Congress party of India, wants to keep both the urban, 'secular' population happy and also appease the rural orthodox Islamic constituencies. This appeasement may strengthen her chances against the conservative, pro-Islamic opposition Bangladesh National Party.

The developments in Bangladesh highlight what has been taking place all over the world. In all majority Islamic countries – including previously stable and peaceful tourism economies like Maldives – across South and Central Asia, there is a rise of Islamic extremism.

However, it would be a mistake to label it as a fight between Islamists and secularists for several reasons.

First, a divide – of any kind – between majority and minority can be acknowledged as existing only in a democratic political setup, like, for instance, in India, where both the majority and the minority have been provided a free cultural and political space to thrive and grow and the minorities can stake their claim to just treatment. In fact, in India, they do more – there is virtually a tyranny of the minority many times.

But it cannot exist in Islamic theological states where minorities have reconciled to their abject fate, do not have any rights, are treated

as second-class citizens, and merely exist instead of thriving in a different culture. The latter is the real nature of theologies like Pakistan. And even though Bangladesh proclaimed itself as being secular when it was formed in 1971, there have been constitutional flip-flops since then; further mere constitutional status does not matter, if the political and social fabric itself legalizes violence in the name of Islam.

Second, an majority Islamic population and secularism can never co-exist. In fact, an Islamic majority, especially of the hardliner Sunni or Wahabi type, can never co-exist with anything. Islam, by its fundamental nature, views everything and everyone non-Islamic as an object against which *jihad* has to be waged, either to eliminate them or convert them to Islam. Therefore, the question of a secular republic with an Islamic majority cannot even arise.

Certainly, there have been countries like Turkey – closer to Europe and highly westernized in their lifestyle – that have not always been bound by hardline injunctions. But that was in spite of Islam, much like the defunct and ornamental status of Christianity in Europe and America. However, even in Turkey now, we are seeing a lapse into dictatorship – the recent manipulated referendum by Erdogan to appropriate more powers for himself and erode the wishes of modern Turkish cities like Istanbul and more than half the population. And even though this lapse to extreme dictatorship of Erdogan is just political in nature right now, and he is more interested in eliminating the potential formation of Kurdistan on Turkish borders by fighting off Syrian rebels, this does not insulate it from becoming a hardliner Islamic theology.

The current political status of Islam is not like the un-influential, defunct status of Christianity. Its potency is very strong among its over-zealous followers and it can radicalize even an ordinary Muslim – so much so that the only deliverance from Islam can be when the religion crumbles and dies under the burden of its own internal conflicts, contradictions and wars, which Muslims wage against other Muslims, against their women and against other Muslim states.

There is no war between secularism and Islamic extremism in Muslim-majority states, since there is no such thing as secularism to begin with. It is merely a word to throw about for the sake of international diplomacy and all the power resides with the Islamic majority. In a country like Bangladesh, especially at present, the oppressions of the Islamic majority are so atrocious that even to speak of the conflict between secularism and Islam – as if the former ever had a chance of asserting itself – is laughable. Therefore, the idea that Bangladesh is seeing such a conflict is a misreading and a wrong perspective on facts that needs to be dismissed at once.

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (28)

XIII. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THE HISTORICAL BASES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA

C. SRI AUROBINDO'S DETAILED PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA

(viii) The Dasyus, the Aryans and the Conquest Over the Dasyus

“The Dasyus stand in opposition to both the Aryan gods and the Aryan seers. The Gods are born from Aditi in the supreme Truth of things, the Dasyus or Danavas from Diti in the nether darkness; they are the Lords of Light and the Lords of Night fronting each other across the triple world of earth, heaven and mid-air, body, mind and the connecting breath of life. ...the world of the falsehood.... is the darkness without knowledge, *tamo avayunam tatanvat*; Indra when his largeness exceeds (*virice*) heaven and earth and mid-world creates for the Aryan the opposite world of truth and knowledge, *vayunavat*, which exceeds these three domains and is therefore *reku padam*. This darkness, this lower world of Night and **the Inconscient in the formed existence of things** symbolised in the image of the mountain which rises from the bowels of earth to the back of heaven, **is represented by the secret cave at the base of the hill, the cave of the darkness.**

But the cave is only the home of the Panis, their field of action is earth and heaven and the mid-world. They are the sons of the Inconscience, but themselves are not precisely inconscient in their action; they have forms of apparent knowledge, *māyāḥ*, but these are forms of ignorance the truth of which is concealed in the darkness of the inconscient and their surface or front is falsehood, not truth. For the world as we see it has come out of the darkness concealed in darkness, the deep and abysmal flood that covered all things, the inconscient ocean, *apraketam salilam* (X.129.3); in that non-existence

the seers have found by desire in the heart and thought in the mind that which builds up the true existence.”¹

“The word *paṇi* means dealer, trafficker, from *paṇ* (also *pan*, cf. Tamil *paṇ*, Greek *ponos*, labour) and we may perhaps regard the Panis as the powers that preside over those ordinary unilluminated sense-activities of life whose immediate root is in the dark subconscious physical being and not in the divine mind. The whole struggle of man is to replace this action by the luminous working of mind and life which comes from above through the mental existence. **Whoever thus aspires, labours, battles, travels, ascends the hill of being is the Aryan (*ārya*, *arya*, *ari* with the various senses, to toil, to fight, to climb or rise, to travel, to prepare the sacrifice); for the work of the Aryan is a sacrifice which is at once a battle and an ascent and a journey, a battle against the powers of darkness, an ascent to the highest peaks** of the mountain beyond earth and heaven into Swar, a journey to the other shore of the rivers and the ocean into the farthest Infinity of things. The Aryan has the will to the work, he is the doer of the work (*kāru*, *kīri*, etc.), the gods who put their force into his work are *sukratu*, perfect in power for the sacrifice; the Dasyu or Pani is the opposite of both, he is *akratu*. The Aryan is the sacrificer, *yajamāna*, *yajyu*; the gods who receive, uphold, impel his sacrifice are *yajata*, *yajatra*, powers of the sacrifice; the Dasyu is the opposite of both, he is *ayajyu*. The Aryan in the sacrifice finds the divine word, *gīḥ*, *mantra*, *brahma*, *uktha*, he is the *brahmā* or singer of the word; the gods delight in and uphold the word, *girvāhas*, *girvaṇas*, the Dasyus are haters and destroyers of the Word, *brahmadviṣaḥ*, spoilers of speech, *mṛdhravācaḥ*. They have no force of the divine breath or no mouth to speak it, they are *anāsaḥ*; and they have no power to think and mentalise the word and the truth it contains, they are *amanyamānāḥ*: but the Aryans are the thinkers of the word, *manyamānāḥ*, holders of the thought, the thought-mind and the seer-knowledge, *dhīra*, *manīṣī*, *kavi*;...”²

“The Vedic idea was that the subconscious darkness and the ordinary life of ignorance held concealed in it all that belongs to

the divine life and that these secret riches must be recovered first by destroying the impenitent powers of ignorance and then by possessing the lower life subjected to the higher. Of Indra it has been said, as we have seen, that he either slays or conquers the Dasyu and transfers his wealth to the Aryan. So also Sarama refuses peace with alliance to the Panis, but suggests their submission to the gods and the Aryans by the surrender and ascent of the imprisoned cows and their own departure from the darkness to a better place (*ā varīyah*). And it is by the strenuous touch of the goad of the luminous seer, Pushan, lord of the Truth, the goad that drives open the closed heart and makes the sacred word to arise from its depths, **it is by this luminous-pointed goad which perfects the radiant cows, accomplishes the luminous thoughts, that the conversion of the Pani is effected;** then the Truth-god in his darkened heart also desires that which the Aryan desires. Therefore by this penetrating action of the Light and the Truth the powers of the ordinary ignorant sense-activity become subject to the Aryan.”³

(ix) The Angiras Legend, the Vritra Myths and the Real Sense of the Veda

“...the word Angiras is used in the Veda as an epithet, often in connection with the image of the Dawn and the Cows. Secondly, it occurs as a name of Agni, while Indra is said to become Angiras and Brihaspati is called Angiras and Angirasa, obviously not as a mere decorative or mythological appellation but with a special significance and an allusion to the psychological or other sense attached to the word. Even the Ashwins are addressed collectively as Angiras. It is therefore clear that the word Angiras is used in the Veda not merely as a name of a certain family of Rishis, but with a distinct meaning inherent in the word. It is probable also that even when used as a name it is still with a clear recognition of the inherent meaning of the name; it is probable even that names in the Veda are generally, if not always, used with a certain stress on their significance, especially the names of gods, sages and kings. The word Indra is

generally used as a name, yet we have such significant glimpses of the Vedic method as the description of Usha *indrataṃ āṅgirastamā*, ‘most-Indra’, ‘most-Angiras’, and of the Panis as *anindrāḥ*, ‘not-Indra’, expressions which evidently are meant to convey the possession or absence of the qualities, powers or functionings represented by Indra and the Angiras.”⁴

According to Sri Aurobindo, “...the Angiras legend and the Vritra mythus are the two principal parables of the Veda; they occur and recur everywhere; they run through the hymns as two closely connected threads of symbolic imagery, and around them all the rest of the Vedic symbolism is woven. Not that they are its central ideas, but they are two main pillars of this ancient structure. When we determine their sense, we have determined the sense of the whole Rik Sanhita. **If Vritra and the waters symbolise the cloud and the rain and the gushing forth of the seven rivers of the Punjab and if the Angirases are the bringers of the physical dawn, then the Veda is a symbolism of natural phenomena personified in the figure of gods and Rishis and maleficent demons. If Vritra and Vala are Dravidian gods and the Panis and Vritras human enemies, then the Veda is a poetical and legendary account of the invasion of Dravidian India by Nature-worshipping barbarians. If on the other hand this is a symbolism of the struggle between spiritual powers of Light and Darkness, Truth and Falsehood, Knowledge and Ignorance, Death and Immortality, then that is the real sense of the whole Veda.**”⁵

“The central conception of the Veda is the conquest of the Truth out of the darkness of Ignorance and by the conquest of the Truth the conquest also of Immortality. For the Vedic Ritam is a spiritual as well as a psychological conception. It is the true being, the true consciousness, the true delight of existence beyond this earth of body, this mid-region of vital force, this ordinary sky or heaven of mind. We have to cross beyond all these planes in order to arrive at the higher plane of that superconscient Truth which is the own home of the gods and the foundation of Immortality. This is the world of

Swar, to which the Angirases have found the path for their posterity.

The Angirases are at once the divine seers who assist in the cosmic and human workings of the gods and their earthly representatives, the ancient fathers who first found the wisdom of which the Vedic hymns are a chant and memory and renewal in experience. The seven divine Angirases are sons or powers of Agni, powers of the Seer-Will, the flame of divine Force instinct with divine knowledge which is kindled for the victory. The Bhrigus have found this Flame secret in the growths of the earthly existence, but the Angirases kindle it on the altar of sacrifice and maintain the sacrifice through the periods of the sacrificial year symbolising the periods of the divine labour by which the Sun of Truth is recovered out of the darkness.”⁶

(x) The Vedic Sacrifice and Its Principal Features

“The sacrifice is the giving by man of what he possesses in his being to the higher or divine nature and its fruit is the farther enrichment of his manhood by the lavish bounty of the gods. The wealth thus gained constitutes a state of spiritual riches, prosperity, felicity which is itself a power for the journey and a force of battle. For the sacrifice is a journey, a progression; the sacrifice itself travels led by Agni up the divine path to the gods and of this journey the ascent of the Angiras fathers to the divine world of Swar is the type. Their journey of the sacrifice is also a battle, for it is opposed by Panis, Vritras and other powers of evil and falsehood, and of this warfare the conflict of Indra and the Angirases with the Panis is a principal episode.

The principal features of sacrifice are the kindling of the divine flame, the offering of the *ghṛta* and the Soma wine and the chanting of the sacred word. By the hymn and the offering the gods are increased; they are said to be born, created or manifested in man and by their increase and greatness here they increase the earth and heaven, that is to say, the physical and mental existence to their utmost capacity and, exceeding these,

create in their turn the higher worlds or planes. The higher existence is the divine, the infinite of which the shining Cow, the infinite Mother, Aditi, is the symbol; the lower is subject to her dark form Diti. The object of the sacrifice is to win the higher or divine being and possess with it and make subject to its law and truth the lower or human existence. The *ghṛta* of the sacrifice is the yield of the shining Cow; it is the clarity or brightness of the solar light in the human mentality. The Soma is the immortal delight of existence secret in the waters and the plant and pressed out for drinking by gods and men. **The word is the inspired speech expressing the thought-illumination of the Truth which rises out of the soul, formed in the heart, shaped by the mind.** Agni growing by the *ghṛta*, Indra forceful with the luminous strength and joy of the Soma and increased by the Word, aid the Angirases to recover the herds of the Sun.

Brihaspati is the Master of the creative Word. If Agni is the supreme Angiras, the flame from whom the Angirases are born, Brihaspati is the one Angiras with the seven mouths, the seven rays of the illuminative thought and the seven words which express it, of whom these seers are the powers of utterance. It is the complete thought of the Truth, the seven-headed, which wins the fourth or divine world for man by winning for him the complete spiritual wealth, object of the sacrifice. Therefore Agni, Indra, Brihaspati, Soma are all described as winners of the herds of the Sun and destroyers of the Dasyus who conceal and withhold them from man. Saraswati, who is the stream of the Word or inspiration of the Truth, is also a Dasyu-slayer and winner of the shining herds; and they are discovered by Sarama, forerunner of Indra, who is a solar or dawn goddess and seems to symbolise the intuitive power of the Truth. Usha, the Dawn, is at once herself a worker in the great victory and in her full advent its luminous result.

Usha is the divine Dawn, for the Sun that arises by her coming is the Sun of the superconscient Truth; the day he brings is the day of the true life in the true knowledge, the night he dispels is the night of the ignorance which yet conceals the dawn in its bosom.

Usha herself is the Truth, *sūṇṛtā*, and the mother of Truths. These truths of the divine Dawn are called her cows, her shining herds; while the forces of the Truth that accompany them and occupy the Life are called her horses. Around this symbol of the cows and horses much of the Vedic symbolism turns; for these are the chief elements of the riches sought by man from the gods. The cows of the Dawn have been stolen and concealed by the demons, the lords of darkness in their nether cave of the secret subconscious. They are the illuminations of knowledge, the thoughts of the Truth, *gāvo matayah*, which have to be delivered out of their imprisonment. Their release is the upsurging of the powers of the divine Dawn.”⁷

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1. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.15, pp.232-33, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
2. *Ibid*, pp.233-34
3. *Ibid*, p.238
4. *Ibid*, pp.161-62
5. *Ibid*, p.241
6. *Ibid*, pp.241-42
7. *Ibid*, pp.242-44

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (28)

5. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

IV. THE AGE OF DARSHANAS, SMRITIS AND SUTRAS

“THE VEDA... the spiritual and psychological seed of Indian culture and the Upanishads the expression of the truth of highest spiritual knowledge and experience that has always been the supreme idea of that culture and the ultimate objective to which it directed the life of the individual and the aspiration of the soul of the people: and these two great bodies of sacred writing, its first great efforts of poetic and creative self-expression, coming into being at a time preceding the later strong and ample and afterwards rich and curious intellectual development, are conceived and couched in the language of a purely psychic and spiritual mentality. An evolution so begun had to proceed by a sort of enriching descent from the spirit to matter and to pass on first to an intellectual endeavour to see life and the world and the self in all their relations as they present themselves to the reasoning and the practical intelligence. The earlier movement of this intellectual effort was naturally accompanied by a practical development and organisation of life consciously expressive of the mind and spirit of the people, the erection of a strong and successful structure of society shaped so as to fulfil the mundane objects of human existence under the control of a careful religious, ethical and social order and discipline, but also so as to provide for the evolution of the soul of man through these things to a spiritual freedom and perfection. It is this stage of which we get a remarkably ample and effective representation in the immediately succeeding period of Indian literary creation.

This movement of the Indian mind is represented in its more critical effort on one side by a strenuous philosophical thinking crystallised into the great philosophic systems^a, on the other by an

^a These are namely, the Uttara *Mīmāṃsā* (Vedānta) of Bādarāyaṇa, Sāṅkhya of Kapila, Yoga of Patañjali, Vaiśeṣika of Kaṇāda, Nyāya of Gautama and the Purva *Mīmāṃsā* (Karma) of Jaimini.

equally insistent endeavour to formulate in a clear body and with a strict cogency an ethical, social and political ideal and practice in a consistent and organised system of individual and communal life and that endeavour resulted in the authoritative social treatises or Shastras of which the greatest and the most authoritative is the famous Laws of Manu. **The work of the philosophers was to systematise and justify to the reasoning intelligence the truths of the self and man and the world already discovered by intuition, revelation and spiritual experience and embodied in the Veda and the Upanishads, and at the same time to indicate and systematise methods of discipline founded upon this knowledge by which man might effectuate the highest aim of his existence.** The characteristic form in which this was done shows the action of the intuitive passing into that of the intellectual mentality and preserves the stamp and form expressive of its transitional character. The terse and pregnant phrase of the sacred literature abounding in intuitive substance is replaced by a still more compact and crowded brief expression, no longer intuitive and poetic, but severely intellectual, – the expression of a principle, a whole development of philosophic thought or a logical step burdened with considerable consequences in a few words, sometimes one or two, a shortest decisive formula often almost enigmatic in its concentrated fullness. These Sutras or aphorisms became the basis of ratiocinative commentaries developing by metaphysical and logical method and with a considerable variety of interpretation all that was contained at first in the series of aphoristic formulas. Their concern is solely with original and ultimate truth and the method of spiritual liberation, *mokṣa*.

The work of the social thinkers and legislators was on the contrary concerned with normal action and practice. It attempted to take up the ordinary life of man and of the community and the life of human desire and aim and interest and ordered rule and custom and to interpret and formulate it in the same complete and decisive manner and at the same time to throw the whole into an ordered relation to the ruling ideas of the national culture and frame and

perpetuate a social system intelligently fashioned so as to provide a basis, a structure, a gradation by which there could be a secure evolution of the life from the vital and mental to the spiritual motive. **The leading idea was the government of human interest and desire by the social and ethical law, the Dharma, so that it might be made, – all vital, economic, aesthetic, hedonistic, intellectual and other needs being satisfied duly and according to the right law of the nature, – a preparation for the spiritual existence.** Here too we have as an initial form the aphoristic method of the Vedic *gr̥hyasūtras*, afterwards the diffuser, fuller method of the Dharma Shastras, – the first satisfied with brief indications of simple and essential socio-religious principle and practice, the later work attempting to cover the whole life of the individual, the class and the people. The very character of the effort and its thoroughness and the constant unity of idea that reigns through the whole of it are a remarkable evidence of a very developed intellectual, aesthetic and ethical consciousness and a high turn and capacity for a noble and ordered civilisation and culture. The intelligence at work, the understanding and formative power manifested is not inferior to that of any ancient or modern people, and there is a gravity, a unified clarity and nobility of conception which balances at least in any true idea of culture the greater suppleness, more well-informed experience and science and eager flexibility of experimental hardihood which are the gains that distinguish our later humanity. At any rate **it was no barbaric mind that was thus intently careful for a fine and well unified order of society, a high and clear thought to govern it and at the end of life a great spiritual perfection and release.**"¹

V. THE MAHABHARATA AND THE RAMAYANA: THE ITIHASAS

"The pure literature of the period is represented by the two great epics, the Mahabharata, which gathered into its vast structure the greater part of the poetic activity of the Indian mind during several centuries, and the Ramayana. These two poems are epical in their

motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the world, but are entirely of their own kind and subtly different from others in their principle. It is not only that although they contain an early heroic story and a transmutation of many primitive elements, **their form belongs to a period of highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture, is enriched with a body of mature thought and uplifted by a ripe nobility and refined gravity of ethical tone and therefore these poems are quite different from primitive edda and saga and greater in breadth of view and substance and height of motive – I do not speak now of aesthetic quality and poetic perfection – than the Homeric poems, while at the same time there is still an early breath, a direct and straightforward vigour, a freshness and greatness and pulse of life, a simplicity of strength and beauty that makes of them quite another kind than the elaborately constructed literary epics of Virgil or Milton, Firdausi or Kalidasa.** This peculiar blending of the natural breath of an early, heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual, even the philosophic mind is indeed a remarkable feature; **these poems are the voice of the youth of a people, but a youth not only fresh and fine and buoyant, but also great and accomplished, wise and noble.** This however is only a temperamental distinction: there is another that is more far-reaching, a difference in the whole conception, function and structure.

One of the elements of the old Vedic education was a knowledge of significant tradition, Itihasa, and it is this word that was used by the ancient critics to distinguish the Mahabharata and the Ramayana from the later literary epics. **The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihisas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose.** The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not

intend merely to tell an ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things with a high success; **they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation.** The Mahabharata has been spoken of as a fifth Veda, it has been said of both these poems that they are not only great poems but Dharmashastras, the body of a large religious and ethical and social and political teaching, and their effect and hold on the mind and life of the people have been so great that they have been described as the bible of the Indian people. That is not quite an accurate analogy, for the bible of the Indian people contains also the Veda and Upanishads, the Purana and Tantras and the Dharma-shastras, not to speak of a large bulk of the religious poetry in the regional languages. The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice; it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India. All these things were brought together and disposed with artistic power and a telling effect in a poetic body given to traditions half legendary, half historic but cherished henceforth as deepest and most living truth and as a part of their religion by the people. Thus framed **the Mahabharata and Ramayana, whether in the original Sanskrit or rewritten in the regional tongues, brought to the masses by Kathakas, –**

rhapsodists, reciters and exegetes, – became and remained one of the chief instruments of popular education and culture, moulded the thought, character, aesthetic and religious mind of the people and gave even to the illiterate some sufficient tincture of philosophy, ethics, social and political ideas, aesthetic emotion, poetry, fiction and romance. That which was for the cultured classes contained in Veda and Upanishad, shut into profound philosophical aphorism and treatise or inculcated in dharma-shastra and artha-shastra, was put here into creative and living figures, associated with familiar story and legend, fused into a vivid representation of life and thus made a near and living power that all could readily assimilate through the poetic word appealing at once to the soul and the imagination and the intelligence.”²

A. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata

“It has been said, truly, that the Ramayana represents an ideal society and assumed, illogically, that it must therefore represent an altogether imaginary one. The argument ignores the alternative of a real society idealised. **No poet could evolve entirely out of his own imagination a picture at once so colossal, so minute and so consistent in every detail.** No number of poets could do it without stumbling into fatal incompatibilities either of fact or of view, such as we find defacing the Mahabharata. This is not the place to discuss the question of Valmiki’s age and authorship. This much, however, may be said that after excluding the Uttarakanda, which is a later work, and some amount of interpolation, for the most part easy enough to detect, and reforming the text which is not unfrequently in a state of truly shocking confusion, the Ramayana remains on the face of it the work of a single mighty and embracing mind. It is not easy to say whether it preceded or followed in date Vyasa’s epic; it is riper in form and tone, has some aspects of a more advanced and mellow culture, and yet it gives the general impression of a younger humanity and an earlier less sophisticated and complex mind. The

nature of the poem and much of its subject matter might at least justify the conclusion that Valmiki wrote in a political and social atmosphere much resembling that which surrounded Vyasa. He lived, that is to say, in an age of approaching if not present disorder and turmoil, of great revolutions and unbridled aristocratic violence, when the governing chivalry, the Kshatriya caste, in its pride of strength was asserting its own code of morals as the one rule of conduct. We may note the plain assertion of this stand-point by Jarasandha in the Mahabharata and Valmiki's emphatic and repeated protest against it through the mouth of Rama. This ethical code was like all aristocratic codes of conduct full of high chivalry and the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, but a little loose in sexual morality on the masculine side and indulgent to violence and the strong hand. To the pure and delicate moral temperament of Valmiki, imaginative, sensitive, enthusiastic, shot through with rays of visionary idealism and ethereal light, this looseness and violence were shocking and abhorrent. He could sympathise with them, as he sympathised with all that was wild and evil and anarchic, with the imaginative and poetical side of his nature, because he was a universal creative mind driven by his art-sense to penetrate, feel and re-embody all that the world contained; but to his intellect and peculiar emotional temperament they were distasteful. He took refuge therefore in a past age of national greatness and virtue, distant enough to be idealised, but near enough to have left sufficient materials for a great picture of civilisation which would serve his purpose, – an age, it is important to note, of grandiose imperial equipoise, such as must have existed in some form at least since a persistent tradition of it runs through Sanskrit literature. In the framework of this imperial age, his puissant imagination created a marvellous picture of the human world as it might be if the actual and existing forms and material of society were used to the best and purest advantage, and an equally marvellous picture of another non-human world in which aristocratic violence, strength, self-will, lust and pride ruled supreme and idealised or rather colossalised. He brought these two worlds into warlike collision by the hostile meeting of their champions and utmost

evolutions of their peculiar character-types, Rama and Ravana, and so created **the Ramayana, the grandest and most paradoxical poem in the world, which becomes unmatchably sublime by disdaining all consistent pursuit of sublimity, supremely artistic by putting aside all the conventional limitations of art, magnificently dramatic by disregarding all dramatic illusion, and uniquely epic by handling the least as well as the most epic material. Not all perhaps can enter at once into the spirit of this masterpiece; but those who have once done so, will never admit any poem in the world as its superior.**

My point here, however, is that it gives us the picture of an entirely moralised civilisation, containing indeed vast material development and immense intellectual power, but both moralised and subordinated to the needs of purity of temperament and delicate ideality of action. Valmiki's mind seems nowhere to be familiarised with the high-strung intellectual gospel of a high and severe Dharma culminating in a passionless activity, raised to a supreme spiritual significance in the Gita, which is one great keynote of the Mahabharata. Had he known it, the strong leaven of sentimentalism and femininity in his nature might well have rejected it; such temperaments when they admire strength, admire it manifested and forceful rather than self-contained. **Valmiki's characters act from emotional or imaginative enthusiasm, not from intellectual conviction; an enthusiasm of morality actuates Rama, an enthusiasm of immorality tyrannises over Ravana.** Like all mainly moral temperaments, he instinctively insisted on one old established code of morals being universally observed as the only basis of ethical stability, avoided casuistic developments and distasted innovators in metaphysical thought as by their persistent and searching questions dangerous to the established bases of morality, especially to its wholesome ordinariness and everydayness. Valmiki, therefore, the father of our secular poetry, stands for that early and finely moral civilisation which was the true heroic age of the Hindu spirit.

The poet of the Mahabharata lives nearer to the centre of an

era of aristocratic turbulence and disorder. If there is any kernel of historic truth in the story of the poem, it records the establishment of those imperial forms of government and society which Valmiki had idealised. Behind its poetic legend it celebrates and approves the policy of a great Kshatriya leader of men who aimed at the subjection of his order to the rule of a central imperial power which should typify its best tendencies and control or expel its worst. **But while Valmiki was a soul out of harmony with its surroundings and looking back to an ideal past, Vyasa was a man of his time, profoundly in sympathy with it, full of its tendencies, hopeful of its results and looking forward to an ideal future.** The one might be described as a conservative idealist advocating return to a better but departed model, the other is a progressive realist looking forward to a better but unborn model. Vyasa accordingly does not revolt from the aristocratic code of morality; it harmonises with his own proud and strong spirit and he accepts it as a basis for conduct, but purified and transfigured by the illuminating idea of the *niṣkāma dharma*.

But above all **intellectuality is his grand note, he is profoundly interested in ideas, in metaphysics, in ethical problems;** he subjects morality to casuistic tests from which the more delicate moral tone of Valmiki's spirit shrank; he boldly erects above ordinary ethics a higher principle of conduct having its springs in intellect and strong character; he treats government and society from the standpoint of a practical and discerning statesmanlike mind, idealising solely for the sake of a standard. He touches in fact all subjects, and whatever he touches he makes fruitful and interesting by originality, penetration and a sane and bold vision. In all this **he is the son of the civilisation he has mirrored to us, a civilisation in which both morality and material development are powerfully intellectualised.** Nothing is more remarkable in all the characters of the Mahabharata than this puissant intellectualism; every action of theirs seems to be impelled by an immense driving force of mind solidifying in character and therefore conceived and outlined as in stone. This orgiastic force of the intellect is at least as noticeable as the impulse of moral or immoral enthusiasm behind each great action

of the Ramayana. Throughout the poem the victorious and manifold mental activity of an age is prominent and gives its character to its civilisation. There is far more of thought in action than in the Ramayana, far less of thought in repose; the one pictures a time of gigantic creative ferment and disturbance; the other, as far as humanity is concerned, an ideal age of equipoise, tranquillity and order.”³

B. The Mahabharata

“The Mahabharata... is not only the story of the Bharatas, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India. It is said popularly of it and with a certain measure of truth that whatever is in India is in the Mahabharata. **The Mahabharata is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation; it is the poem of itself written by a whole people.** It would be vain to apply to it the canons of a poetical art applicable to an epic poem with a smaller and more restricted purpose, but still a great and quite conscious art has been expended both on its detail and its total structure. **The whole poem has been built like a vast national temple unrolling slowly its immense and complex idea from chamber to chamber, crowded with significant groups and sculptures and inscriptions, the grouped figures carved in divine or semi-divine proportions, a humanity aggrandised and half uplifted to superhumanity and yet always true to the human motive and idea and feeling, the strain of the real constantly raised by the tones of the ideal, the life of this world amply portrayed but subjected to the conscious influence and presence of the powers of the worlds behind it, and the whole unified by the long embodied procession of a consistent idea worked out in the wide steps of the poetic story.** As is needed in an epic narrative, the conduct of the story is the main interest of the poem and it is carried through with an at once large and minute movement,

wide and bold in the mass, striking and effective in detail, always simple, strong and epic in its style and pace. At the same time though supremely interesting in substance and vivid in the manner of the telling as a poetic story, it is something more, – a significant tale, Itihasa, representative throughout of the central ideas and ideals of Indian life and culture. The leading motive is the Indian idea of the Dharma. Here the Vedic notion of the struggle between the godheads of truth and light and unity and the powers of darkness and division and falsehood is brought out from the spiritual and religious and internal into the outer intellectual, ethical and vital plane. It takes there in the figure of the story a double form of a personal and a political struggle, the personal a conflict between typical and representative personalities embodying the greater ethical ideals of the Indian Dharma and others who are embodiments of Asuric egoism and self-will and misuse of the Dharma, the political a battle in which the personal struggle culminates, an international clash ending in the establishment of a new rule of righteousness and justice, a kingdom or rather an empire of the Dharma uniting warring races and substituting for the ambitious arrogance of kings and aristocratic clans the supremacy, the calm and peace of a just and humane empire. It is the old struggle of Deva and Asura, God and Titan, but represented in the terms of human life.

The way in which this double form is worked out and the presentation of the movement of individual lives and of the national life first as their background and then as coming into the front in a movement of kingdoms and armies and nations show a high architectonic faculty akin in the sphere of poetry to that which laboured in Indian architecture, and the whole has been conducted with a large poetic art and vision. There is the same power to embrace great spaces in a total view and the same tendency to fill them with an abundance of minute, effective, vivid and significant detail. There is brought too into the frame of the narrative a very considerable element of other tales, legends, episodes, most of them of a significant character suitable to the method of Itihasa, and an

extraordinary amount of philosophical, religious, ethical, social and political thinking sometimes direct, sometimes cast into the form of the legend and episode. The ideas of the Upanishads and of the great philosophies are brought in continually and sometimes given new developments, as in the Gita; religious myth and tale and idea and teaching are made part of the tissue; the ethical ideals of the race are expressed or are transmuted into the shape of tale and episode as well as embodied in the figures of the story, political and social ideals and institutions are similarly developed or illustrated with a high vividness and clearness and space is found too for aesthetic and other suggestions connected with the life of the people. All these things are interwoven into the epic narrative with a remarkable skill and closeness. The irregularities inevitable in so combined and difficult a plan and in a work to which many poets of an unequal power have contributed fall into their place in the general massive complexity of the scheme and assist rather than break the total impression. **The whole is a poetic expression unique in its power and fullness of the entire soul and thought and life of a people.**"⁴

C. The Ramayana

"The Ramayana is a work of the same essential kind as the Mahabharata; it differs only by a greater simplicity of plan, a more delicate ideal temperament and a finer glow of poetic warmth and colour. The main bulk of the poem in spite of much accretion is evidently by a single hand and has a less complex and more obvious unity of structure. There is less of the philosophic, more of the purely poetic mind, more of the artist, less of the builder. The whole story is from beginning to end of one piece and there is no deviation from the stream of the narrative. At the same time there is a like vastness of vision, an even more wide-winged flight of epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in the detail. The structural power, strong workmanship and method of disposition of the Mahabharata remind one of the art of the Indian builders, the

grandeur and boldness of outline and wealth of colour and minute decorative execution of the Ramayana suggest rather a transcript into literature of the spirit and style of Indian painting. The epic poet has taken here also as his subject an Itihasa, an ancient tale or legend associated with an old Indian dynasty and filled it in with detail from myth and folklore, but has exalted all into a scale of grandiose epic figure that it may bear more worthily the high intention and significance. The subject is the same as in the Mahabharata, the strife of the divine with the titanic forces in the life of the earth, but in more purely ideal forms, in frankly supernatural dimensions and an imaginative heightening of both the good and the evil in human character. On one side is portrayed an ideal manhood, a divine beauty of virtue and ethical order, a civilization founded on the Dharma and realising an exaltation of the moral ideal which is presented with a singularly strong appeal of aesthetic grace and harmony and sweetness; on the other are wild and anarchic and almost amorphous forces of superhuman egoism and self-will and exultant violence, and the two ideas and powers of mental nature living and embodied are brought into conflict and led to a decisive issue of the victory of the divine man over the Rakshasa. All shade and complexity are omitted which would diminish the single purity of the idea, the representative force in the outline of the figures, the significance of the temperamental colour and only so much admitted as is sufficient to humanise the appeal and the significance. The poet makes us conscious of the immense forces that are behind our life and sets his action in a magnificent epic scenery, the great imperial city, the mountains and the ocean, the forest and wilderness, described with such a largeness as to make us feel as if the whole world were the scene of his poem and its subject the whole divine and titanic possibility of man imaged in a few great or monstrous figures. The ethical and the aesthetic mind of India have here fused themselves into a harmonious unity and reached an unexampled pure wideness and beauty of self-expression. The Ramayana embodied for the Indian imagination its highest and tenderest human ideals of character, made strength and courage and gentleness and purity and fidelity

and self-sacrifice familiar to it in the suavest and most harmonious forms coloured so as to attract the emotion and the aesthetic sense, stripped morals of all repellent austerity on one side or on the other of mere commonness and lent a certain high divineness to the ordinary things of life, conjugal and filial and maternal and fraternal feeling, the duty of the prince and leader and the loyalty of follower and subject, the greatness of the great and the truth and worth of the simple, toning things ethical to the beauty of a more psychical meaning by the glow of its ideal hues. The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanuman, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human image of its ethical ideals; it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite yet firm soul tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable thing than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct.

The poetical manner of these epics is not inferior to the greatness of their substance. The style and the verse in which they are written have always a noble epic quality, a lucid classical simplicity and directness rich in expression but stripped of superfluous ornament, a swift, vigorous, flexible and fluid verse constantly sure of the epic cadence. There is a difference in the temperament of the language. The characteristic diction of the Mahabharata is almost austere masculine, trusting to force of sense and inspired accuracy of turn, almost ascetic in its simplicity and directness and a frequent fine and happy bareness; it is the speech of a strong and rapid poetical intelligence and a great and straightforward vital force, brief and telling in phrase but by virtue of a single-minded sincerity and, except in some knotted passages or episodes, without any rhetorical labour of compactness, a style like the light and strong body of a runner nude and pure and healthily lustrous and clear without superfluity of flesh or exaggeration of muscle, agile and swift and untired in the

race. There is inevitably much in this vast poem that is in an inferior manner, but little or nothing that falls below a certain sustained level in which there is always something of this virtue. The diction of the Ramayana is shaped in a more attractive mould, a marvel of sweetness and strength, lucidity and warmth and grace; its phrase has not only poetic truth and epic force and diction but a constant intimate vibration of the feeling of the idea, emotion or object: there is an element of fine ideal delicacy in its sustained strength and breath of power. In both poems it is a high poetic soul and inspired intelligence that is at work; the directly intuitive mind of the Veda and Upanishads has retired behind the veil of the intellectual and outwardly psychical imagination.

This is the character of the epics and the qualities which have made them immortal, cherished among India's greatest literary and cultural treasures, and given them their enduring power over the national mind."⁵

References:

- 1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.342-44, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 2. Ibid, pp.344-47**
- 3. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, pp.156-60, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 4. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.347-49, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 5. Ibid, pp.349-52**

“Religion has been a central preoccupation of the Indian mind; some have told us that too much religion ruined India, precisely because we made the whole of life religion or religion the whole of life, we have failed in life and gone under. I will not answer, adopting the language used by the poet in a slightly different connection, that our fall does not matter and that the dust in which India lies is sacred. The fall, the failure does matter, and to lie in the dust is no sound position for man or nation. But the reason assigned is not the true one. **If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religion in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell.”**

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, 20, pp.38-39)