

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

August 2017



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

Year 8

Issue 5

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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

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

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

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

— The Mother

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

THE REALITY OF INDIA-SRI LANKA FISHERMEN DISPUTE

For the past few months, the Modi government has been making efforts to improve relations with Sri Lanka and permanently move beyond engagement on longstanding disputes. Notable amongst these persistent disputes is the issue of Indian (Tamil) fishermen frequently straying into the Lankan waters for fishing and then getting arrested or shot by the Lankan Coast Guard. No bilateral talks between India and Sri Lanka have been conducted without reference to this issue. However, now the Modi government is seeking to move beyond it, instead of letting it act as an obstruction to the development of India-Sri Lanka relations.

This is fine. But the issue of fishermen raises more serious questions about how India is rapidly depleting its scarce fishery resources and how unfair our dealing on this issue has been so far.

The state government has proposed a deep-sea fishing policy that will be jointly subsidized by the central and state governments. In this, mainly, the destructive bottom-trawling fishing (where heavy fishing nets or trawls are dragged across the sea-bed) will be replaced by sophisticated vessels for deep-sea fishing. Bottom trawling has been banned in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, since the 1950s, it has been encouraged by Tamil Nadu as a part of its push towards a mechanized fishing sector. The mechanized fishing sector mainly caters to the export market for trading in fishes. This is different from the simple near-shore fishing that artisanal fishermen did. Over the years, bottom trawling has completely decimated our near-shore fisheries and we are fast destroying the fisheries farther off also.

In fact, Indian fishermen frequently knowingly encroached on Sri Lanka's fisheries, which had banned bottom trawling to protect its own marine resources. Yet the Tamil government, despite being in the wrong, continued to be aggressive and belligerent towards Sri Lanka on the fishing issue. Anybody can see how fair that is! Now we have almost depleted all our fisheries and are realizing that there

is little left for export, little left for the artisanal fishermen and little left for eating. The greed for foreign exchange and relentless and unthinking exploitation of the marine resources has led to this. Now that nothing is left, we want Sri Lanka to give up its claims on Katchatheevu island – a long dispute – and redraw the International Maritime Boundary Line which was finalized in 1974. Why? So that we can get more fish.

The Tamil Nadu government is always trying to look like a martyr by showing that its fishermen are deprived of their needs and are arrested or shot by Sri Lankan Coast Guard. This is far from the truth. The fishermen who actually trespass the maritime boundary are the ones who engage in bottom trawling to get fish for export in the Palk Bay – an entirely commercial motive of greed for which they unfairly want to destroy Sri Lanka's fisheries after having finished their own. The actual victim fishermen were the ones who only did near-shore fishing and whose interests were brazenly killed by the Tamil government itself. Even as Jayalalitha continued to pretend to regard herself as a mother of the fishermen, unbridled commercialism was being promoted and the Tamil government was recklessly straining India-Sri Lanka relations.

What the Tamil government fails to realize or wants to overlook is that demanding or blaming Sri Lanka or gaining the island or redrawing the maritime boundary line, will not solve the larger problem. According to figures, roughly 2000 bottom trawlers operate in Palk Bay three days a week. Even if India were to gain the Katchatheevu island (whose fishes are also depleting), it would just take a few days to completely fish out the whole island. Then Tamil Nadu's commercial, export-oriented fishermen would continue to try to enter Sri Lankan waters and poach its marine resources, while the Tamil government will continue to cry itself hoarse about how its 'victimized' fishermen are targeted by the Lankan authorities.

It is obvious that the Tamil government should be stopped from being so self-destructive. The real situation is that after having exhausted its own fisheries solely for export purposes, they want to

poach as much as they can on Sri Lanka's resources too – they especially enter the Lankan waters to poach 'high value' resources like the shrimp which can bring more money. The conduct of Tamil bottom trawlers has been making headlines in Sri Lanka. Modi will no longer be able to sit with the Lankan premier and defend Tamil Nadu, as previous central governments have done. In India-Lanka talks, India had committed to phase out bottom trawling but did not keep its promise. Under such conditions, we are in no position to blame Lanka. It would be better if the Tamil government stopped playing dirty politics over the issue.

The sole motive of Tamil government is to poach endlessly for export. So its latest deep sea fishing policy will use sophisticated fishing equipment to ensure that 'high-value' species like tuna are targeted. Not only will this permanently wipe out whatever little marine resources we have left, but will also benefit only a small group of commercial fishermen who can afford the technology – thus, standing contrary to Tamil Nadu's martyred image of it trying to protect its victim fishermen. Not Lanka, but Tamil Nadu is responsible for destroying its fishermen. Tamil government is working not just against Lanka, but also against the long-term interests of India.

In these times of climate change, nothing will be left and Lankans and Tamils killing each other over fisheries will become more common. In fact, in drought years, when the burden on fisheries increases, there is conflict among Tamils themselves. With climate change, there will be more drought and more unpredictable monsoons. At the same time, we will continue destroying our resources for profit. Already we are seeing a mad rush where people will kill each other for these resources and this will increase. It will then no longer be merely a Lankan-Tamil fishermen dispute.

The way this issue raises questions about the serious impacts on the ocean's fishes shows how the deep malaise of utilitarianism is showing its results in various guises. The crux of the whole problem of depleting fish stock and the fight over who gets more fish is the fact that unbridled greed and commercial interests of the state

government and the commercial fishermen (who were painted as victims) led to this state of things. We have already degraded our land resources, have manipulated the atmosphere and have impacted the oceans' health. The malaise of the utilitarian spirit will single-handedly ensure the planet's destruction.

VISIBLE RESULTS OF MODI'S EFFORTS IN KASHMIR

When the Home Minister, Rajnath Singh had, last year, mysteriously but firmly predicted that India will see a transformed Kashmir in a year's time, his meaning was not clear to generations of people who have observed how Kashmiri politics have played out. But now it is becoming evident, as actions speak louder than words.

The foremost development is that Indian Army has been given free hand in Kashmir. Earlier, during the Congress era, the Army's wings were clipped and it was merely a stooge of politicians, to be used when convenient and pulled back when appeasement came into play. Recently, some army men beat up policemen near Gunderbal, after a minor altercation. Many have condemned the Army's aggression, but this is not surprising, since we must remember that Army has – and rightly so – suspected the Kashmiri policemen, here and there, of leaking information to separatists and having secret sympathy with Kashmiri separatism. There have always been tensions between the army and the police in Kashmir, since Army officials come from non-Muslim religions and from across the country, while the police is drawn from the locals. Not much can be expected of the police. The institution of police is rotten and petty across the country. So we should think twice before passing judgment.

Nonetheless, both army and police had become slaves and stooges of regional political parties in Kashmir. Look at NCP's Abdullah dynasty – it had become a mini-royal family in its own right, blackmailing the centre whenever it wanted. Regional parties have been shown their place now. For years, Congress had endlessly pampered the regional parties – all of which had separatist leanings. ***As usual, the Congress, since Nehru, wrongly presumed that the only way to gain a foothold in the Valley is to be at the mercy of regional parties,*** as Article 370 vested massive powers in them. As a result, the regional parties like PDP and NCP relentlessly extorted money from the Centre – with J&K even becoming one of the

wealthiest states in India and full of rich people with lot of landholdings. At the same time, these parties would continue pampering the pro-Pakistan Islamist separatists. This led to a view in the Congress that separatists are integral to finding a solution in Kashmir. The resulting mess came at the cost of India's security and integrity. The centre always tried to pamper these hostile elements in Kashmir. Separatists were funneling lots of money through legal and illegal means, travelling all over India and across Pakistan, amassing massive wealth and properties. The Congress was a spectator and facilitator of this whole farce, which kept worsening the situation.

Yet, the lack of reason and sense was so all-pervasive that everyone, from the Atal Bihari government to the Manmohan Singh government, was fully convinced that without the support of rogue Kashmiri regional parties and the separatists, they were nothing and no solution could be found.

The main problem was the uncertain and cowardly approach of the centre during the last so many years. India always approached Kashmir in a cautious and manipulative way, always hankering after international recognition and always trying to establish its legitimacy through various means, hoping to slowly gain acceptance in the Valley. This shows that India implicitly regarded Kashmir as a disputed territory. There is no use parroting that India regards Kashmir as an integral part of itself, while actions on the ground show that India approached Kashmir as an alien and disputed land for which it had to prove itself. This has been a very dangerous and senseless approach, and it is a miracle that Kashmir is still with us.

The Modi government has, in one sweep, struck a swift and brutal blow to this entire misplaced system. Unlike the previous governments, ***Modi does not approach Kashmir manipulatively.*** He knows that Kashmir is part of India and the only problem is to root out the hostile elements. This is the clear-cut picture in the mind of the BJP. Irrespective of the alliance with the PDP, Modi has shown

regional parties their place. NCP and PDP and the fledgling Congress unit of Kashmir stand powerless, as they should. Separatists like Mizwaiz Farooq, Geelani and Yasin Malik, who have fattened their coffers and stature at the cost of India, are in deep trouble.

For the latter to happen, the masterstroke has been the network of hawala transactions unearthed by the NIA with damning proofs leading up to Geelani. It was obvious to everyone that illegal money was sustaining the separatist campaign in Kashmir. But instead of stopping it, Congress gave them more money, as per its universal appeasement policy. Now that the money has stopped, the NIA, by pursuing the separatists, is swiftly isolating them from the Valley, while NCP and PDP watch incredulously.

This strategy of BJP – of striking at the heart of the problem in Kashmir – is already showing visible results. Reports indicate that the public is gradually returning to normalcy and incidents of public violence against the security forces are now more easily brought under control. To give an example, when after the unearthing of their hawala transactions, the Hurriyat called for a state-wide bandh, there was no response from the public, as colleges and shops continued to run normally. After all, besides the enticement of radical Islam, the other major enticement was that of money. It was money that swelled the ranks of stone-pelters and militant's helpers or 'overground workers'.

This is the initial tangible result of the Modi government's actions in Kashmir. Despite Modi's swift and courageous approach in Kashmir, no other country has dared to utter a word in criticism. This is not Nehru's India. As of now, all world leaders are beholden to Modi. India is buying arms and opening its defence markets and cultivating strong defence allies. They are already eating out of India's hand, thanks to Modi's foreign policy. After these tangible results on the ground, let us see what the government does next. But it is clear that the government is proceeding systematically and clearly on the Kashmir issue, with no rhetoric and all action.

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (30)

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

D. SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEW OF HIS WORK ON THE VEDA AND SOME SELECTIONS FROM HIS FURTHER WORK AIMED AT MAKING HIS PRIMA FACIE CASE ENTIRELY FIRM

(ii) *Indra and the Thought-Forces (I.171)*

“A sequel to the colloquy of Indra and Agastya, this Sukta is Agastya's hymn of propitiation to the Maruts whose sacrifice he had interrupted at the bidding of the mightier deity. Less directly, it is connected in thought with the 165th hymn of the Mandala, the colloquy of Indra and the Maruts, in which the supremacy of the Lord of Heaven is declared and these lesser shining hosts are admitted as subordinate powers who impart to men their impulsions towards the high truths which belong to Indra.”¹

According to Sri Aurobindo the hymn I.171 clearly fixes the psychological function of the Maruts. “They are not properly gods of thought, rather gods of energy; still, it is in the mind that their energies become effective. To the uninstructed Aryan worshipper, the Maruts were powers of wind, storm and rain; it is the images of the tempest that are most commonly applied to them and they are spoken of as the Rudras, the fierce, impetuous ones, – a name that they share with the god of Force, Agni. Although Indra is described sometimes as the eldest of the Maruts, – *indrajyeṣṭho marudgaṇaḥ*, – yet they would seem at first to belong rather to the domain of Vayu, the Wind-God, who in the Vedic system is the Master of Life, inspirer of that Breath or dynamic energy, called the Prana, which is represented in man by the vital and nervous activities. But this is only a part of their physiognomy. **Brilliance, no less than impetuosity, is their characteristic.** Everything about

them is lustrous, themselves, their shining weapons, their golden ornaments, their resplendent cars. Not only do they send down the rain, the waters, the abundance of heaven, and break down the things best established to make way for new movements and new formations, – functions which, for the rest, they share with other gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, – but, like them, they also are friends of Truth, creators of Light. It is so that the Rishi, Gotama Rahugana, prays to them, ‘O ye who have the flashing strength of the Truth, manifest that by your might; pierce with your lightning the Rakshasa. Conceal the concealing darkness, repel every devourer, create the Light for which we long.’ And in another hymn, Agastya says to them, ‘They carry with them the sweetness (of the Ananda) as their eternal offspring and play out their play, brilliant in the activities of knowledge.’ The Maruts, therefore, are energies of the mentality, energies which make for knowledge. Theirs is not the settled truth, the diffused light, but the movement, the search, the lightning-flash, and, when Truth is found, the many-sided play of its separate illuminations.”²

“There has been wrath and strife between the divine Intelligence that governs the world and the vehement aspiring powers of Agastya’s mind. Both would have the human being reach his goal; but not as the inferior divine powers choose must that march be directed, – rather as it has been firmly willed and settled above by the secret Intelligence that always possesses for the manifested intelligence that still seeks. Therefore the mind of the human being has been turned into a battle-field for greater Powers and is still quivering with the awe and alarm of that experience.

The submission to Indra has been made; Agastya now appeals to the Maruts to accept the terms of the reconciliation, so that the full harmony of his inner being may be restored. He approaches them with the submission he has rendered to the greater god and extends it to their brilliant legions. The perfection of the mental state and its powers which he desires, their clearness, rectitude, truth-observing

energy, is not possible without the swift coursing of the Thought-Forces in their movement towards the higher knowledge. But that movement, mistakenly directed, not rightly illumined, has been checked by the formidable opposition of Indra and has departed for a time out of Agastya's mentality. Thus repelled, the Maruts have left him for other sacrificers; elsewhere shine their resplendent chariots, in other fields thunder the hooves of their wind-footed steeds. The Seer prays to them to put aside their wrath, to take pleasure once more in the pursuit of knowledge and in its activities; not passing him by any more, let them unyoke their steeds, descend and take their place on the seat of the sacrifice, assume their share of the offerings.

For he would confirm again in himself these splendid energies, and it is a hymn of affirmation that he offers them, the *stoma* of the Vedic sages. In the system of the Mystics, which has partially survived in the schools of Indian Yoga, the Word is a power, the Word creates. For all creation is expression, everything exists already in the secret abode of the Infinite, *guhā hitam*, and has only to be brought out here in apparent form by the active consciousness. Certain schools of Vedic thought even suppose the worlds to have been created by the goddess Word and sound as first etheric vibration to have preceded formation. In the Veda itself there are passages which treat the poetic measures of the sacred mantras, – *anuṣṭubh*, *triṣṭubh*, *jagatī*, *gāyatrī*, – as symbolic of the rhythms in which the universal movement of things is cast.

By expression then we create and men are even said to create the gods in themselves by the mantra. Again, that which we have created in our consciousness by the Word, we can fix there by the Word to become part of ourselves and effective not only in our inner life but upon the outer physical world. By expression we form, by affirmation we establish. As a power of expression the word is termed *gīḥ* or *vacas*; as a power of affirmation, *stoma*. In either aspect it is named *manma* or *mantra*, expression of thought in mind, and *brahman*, expression of the heart or the soul, – for this seems to

have been the earlier sense of the word *brahman*,^a afterwards applied to the Supreme Soul or universal Being.

The process of formation of the mantra is described in the second verse^b along with the conditions of its effectivity. Agastya presents the *stoma*, hymn at once of affirmation and of submission, to the Maruts. **Fashioned by the heart, it receives its just place in the mentality through confirmation by the mind. The mantra, though it expresses thought in mind, is not in its essential part a creation of the intellect. To be the sacred and effective word, it must have come as an inspiration from the supra-mental plane, termed in Veda, Ritam, the Truth, and have been received into the superficial consciousness either through the heart or by the luminous intelligence, *manīṣā*. The heart in Vedic psychology is not restricted to the seat of the emotions; it includes all that large tract of spontaneous mentality, nearest to the subconscious in us, out of which rise the sensations, emotions, instincts, impulses and all those intuitions and inspirations that travel through these agencies before they arrive at form in the intelligence. This is the ‘heart’ of Veda and Vedanta, *hṛdaya*, *hṛd*, or *brahman*. There in the present state of mankind the Purusha is supposed to be seated centrally. Nearer to the vastness of the subconscious, it is there that, in ordinary mankind, – man not yet exalted to a higher plane where the contact with the Infinite is luminous, intimate and direct, – the inspirations of the Universal Soul can most easily enter in and most swiftly take possession of the individual soul. It is therefore by the power of the heart that the mantra takes form. But it has to be received and held in the thought of the intelligence as well as in the perceptions of the heart; for not till the intelligence has accepted and even brooded upon it, can that truth of thought which the truth of the Word**

^a Also found in the form *bṛh* (Brihaspati, Brahmanaspati); and there seem to have been older forms, *bṛhan* and *brahan*. It is from *brahan* (gen. *brahmas*) that, in all probability, we have the Greek *phren*, *phrenos*, signifying mind.

^b I.171.2

expresses be firmly possessed or normally effective. Fashioned by the heart, it is confirmed by the mind.

But another approval is also needed. The individual mind has accepted; the effective powers of the Cosmos must also accept. The words of the hymn retained by the mind form a basis for the new mental posture from which the future thought-energies have to proceed. The Maruts must approach them and take their stand upon them, the mind of these universal Powers approve and unite itself with the formations in the mind of the individual. So only can our inner or our outer action have its supreme effectivity.

Nor have the Maruts any reason to refuse their assent or to persist in the prolongation of discord. Divine powers who themselves obey a higher law than the personal impulse, it should be their function, as it is their essential nature, to assist the mortal in his surrender to the Immortal and increase obedience to the Truth, the Vast towards which his human faculties aspire.

Indra, affirmed and accepted, is no longer in his contact with the mortal a cause of suffering; the divine touch is now utterly creative of peace and felicity. The Maruts too, affirmed and accepted, must put aside their violence. Assuming their gentler forms, benignant in their action, not leading the soul through strife and disturbance, they too must become purely beneficent as well as puissant agencies.”³

“Formerly Agastya had prepared the sacrifice for the Maruts under other conditions. He had put their full potentiality of force into all in him that he sought to place in the hands of the Thought-Powers; but because of the defect in his sacrifice he had been met midway by the Mighty One as by an enemy and only after fear and strong suffering had his eyes been opened and his soul surrendered. Still vibrating with the emotions of that experience, he has been compelled to renounce the activities which he had so puissantly prepared. Now he offers the sacrifice again to the Maruts, but couples with that brilliant Name the more puissant godhead of Indra. Let the Maruts then bear no wrath for the interrupted sacrifice but accept

this new and more justly guided action.

Agastya turns, in the two closing verses, from the Maruts to Indra. **The Maruts represent the progressive illumination of human mentality**, until from the first obscure movements of mind which only just emerge out of the darkness of the subconscious, they are transformed into an image of the luminous consciousness of which Indra is the Purusha, the representative Being. Obscure, they become conscient; twilit, half-lit or turned into misleading reflections, they surmount these deficiencies and put on the divine brilliance. This great evolution is effected in Time gradually, in the mornings of the human spirit, by the unbroken succession of the Dawns. For Dawn in the Veda is the goddess symbolic of new openings of divine illumination on man's physical consciousness. She alternates with her sister Night; but that darkness itself is a mother of light and always Dawn comes to reveal what the black-browed Mother has prepared. Here, however, the seer seems to speak of continuous dawns, not broken by these intervals of apparent rest and obscurity. By the brilliant force of that continuity of successive illuminations the mentality of man ascends swiftly into fullest light. But always the force which has governed and made possible the transformation, is the puissance of Indra. **It is that supreme Intelligence which through the Dawns, through the Maruts, has been pouring itself into the human being.** Indra is the Bull of the radiant herd, the Master of the thought-energies, the Lord of the luminous dawns.

Now also let Indra use the Maruts as his instruments for the illumination. By them let him establish the supramental knowledge of the seer. By their energy his energy will be supported in the human nature and he will give that nature his divine firmness, his divine force, so that it may not stumble under the shock or fail to contain the vaster play of puissant activities too great for our ordinary capacity.

The Maruts, thus reinforced in strength, will always need the guidance and protection of the superior Power. They are the Purushas

of the separate thought-energies, Indra the one Purusha of all thought-energy. In him they find their fullness and their harmony. Let there then be no longer strife and disagreement between this whole and these parts. The Maruts, accepting Indra, will receive from him the right perception of the things that have to be known. They will not be misled by the brilliance of a partial light or carried too far by the absorption of a limited energy. They will be able to sustain the action of Indra as he puts forth his force against all that may yet stand between the soul and its consummation.

So in the harmony of these divine Powers and their aspirations **may humanity find that impulsion which shall be strong enough to break through the myriad oppositions of this world and, in the individual with his composite personality or in the race, pass rapidly on towards the goal so constantly glimpsed but so distant even to him who seems to himself almost to have attained."**⁴

(iii) The Psychological Sense of the Vedic Symbol

"Indra with his shining hosts, the Maruts, Agni, the divine force, fulfiller of the Aryan sacrifice, are the most important deities of the Vedic system. Agni is the beginning and the end. This Will that is knowledge is the initiator of the upward effort of the mortal towards Immortality; to this divine consciousness that is one with divine power we arrive as the foundation of immortal existence. **Indra, lord of Swar, the luminous intelligence into which we have to convert our obscure material mentality in order to become capable of the divine consciousness, is our chief helper. It is by the aid of Indra and the Maruts that the conversion is effected. The Maruts take our animal consciousness made up of the impulses of the nervous mentality, possess these impulses with their illuminations and drive them up the hill of being towards the world of Swar and the truths of Indra.** Our mental evolution begins with these animal troops, these 'Pashus'; they become, as we progress in the ascension, the brilliant herds of the Sun, *gāvaḥ*, rays, the divine cows of the Veda. Such is the psychological sense of the Vedic symbol."⁵

“Life is the condition from which the Will and the Light emerge. It is said in the Veda that Vayu or **Matarishwan, the Life-principle, is he who brings down Agni from Surya** in the high and far-off supreme world. Life calls down the divine Will from the Truth-consciousness into the realm of mind and body to prepare here, in Life, its own manifestation. **Agni, enjoying and devouring the things of Life, generates the Maruts, nervous forces of Life that become forces of thought; they, upheld by Agni, prepare the action of Indra,** the luminous Mind, who is for our life-powers their Rishi or finder of the Truth and Right. Indra slays Vritra, the Coverer, dispels the darkness, causes Surya to rise upon our being and go abroad over its whole field with the rays of the Truth. Surya is the Creator or manifestor, Savitri, who manifests in this mortal world the world or state of immortality, dispels the evil dream of egoism, sin and suffering and transforms Life into the Immortality, the good, the beatitude. **The Vedic gods are a parable of human life emerging, mounting, lifting itself towards the Godhead.**”⁶

References:

1. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, p.268, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
2. **Ibid, pp.268-69**
3. **Ibid, pp.270-72**
4. **Ibid, pp.273-75**
5. **Ibid, p.286**
6. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.17, p.78, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (30)

5. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

VI. KALIDAS

A. *The Age of Kalidasa*

“VALMIKI, Vyasa and Kalidasa are the essence of the history of ancient India; if all else were lost, they would still be its sole and sufficient cultural history. Their poems are types and exponents of three periods in the development of the human soul, types and exponents also of the three great powers which dispute and clash in the imperfect and half-formed temperament and harmonise in the formed and perfect. At the same time their works are pictures at once minute and grandiose of three moods of our Aryan civilisation, of which the first was predominately moral, the second predominately intellectual, the third predominately material. The fourth power of the soul, the spiritual, which can alone govern and harmonise the others by fusion with them, had not, though it pervaded and powerfully influenced each successive development, any separate age of predominance, did not like the others possess the whole race with a dominating obsession. It is because, conjoining in themselves the highest and most varied poetical gifts, they at the same time represent and mirror their age and humanity by their interpretative largeness and power that our three chief poets hold their supreme place and bear comparison with the greatest world-names, with Homer, Shakespeare and Dante.”¹

Many centuries after Valmiki and Vyasa, “...perhaps a thousand years or even more, came the third great embodiment of the national consciousness, Kalidasa. There is a far greater difference between the civilisation he mirrors than between Vyasa’s and Valmiki’s. He came when the daemonic orgy of character and intellect had worked itself out and ended in producing at once its culmination and reaction

in Buddhism. There was everywhere noticeable a petrifying of the national temperament, visible to us in the tendency to codification; philosophy was being codified, morals were being codified, knowledge of any and every sort was being codified; it was on one side of its nature an age of scholars, legists, dialecticians, philosophical formalisers. On the other side the creative and aesthetic enthusiasm of the nation was pouring itself into things material, into the life of the senses, into the pride of life and beauty. The arts of painting, architecture, song, dance, drama, gardening, jewellery, all that can administer to the wants of great and luxurious capitals, received a grand impetus which brought them to their highest technical perfection.... Almost all the concrete features of the age may be found as separate facts in ancient India: codes existed from old time; art and drama were of fairly ancient origin, to whatever date we may assign their development; physical yoga processes existed almost from the first, and the material development portrayed in the Ramayana and Mahabharata is hardly less splendid than that of which the Raghuvamsa is so brilliant a picture. But whereas, before, these were subordinated to more lofty ideals, now they prevailed and became supreme, occupying the best energies of the race and stamping themselves on its life and consciousness. In obedience to this impulse the centuries between the rise of Buddhism and the advent of Shankaracharya became, though not agnostic and sceptical, for they rejected violently the doctrines of Charvak, yet profoundly scientific and outward-going even in their spiritualism. It was therefore the great age of formalised metaphysics, science, law, art and the sensuous luxury which accompanies the arts.

Nearer the beginning than the end of this period, when India was systematising her philosophies and developing her arts and sciences, turning from Upanishad to Purana, from the high rarefied peaks of early Vedanta and Sankhya with their inspiring sublimities and bracing keenness to physical methods of ascetic yoga and the dry intellectualism of metaphysical logic or else to the warm sensuous humanism of emotional religion, – before its full tendencies

had asserted themselves, in some spheres before it had taken the steps its attitude portended, Kalidasa arose in Ujjayini and gathered up in himself its present tendencies while he foreshadowed many of its future developments. He himself must have been a man gifted with all the learning of his age, rich, aristocratic, moving wholly in high society, familiar with and fond of life in the most luxurious metropolis of his time, passionately attached to the arts, acquainted with the sciences, deep in law and learning, versed in the formalised philosophies.... His writings show.. a keen appreciation of high ideal and lofty thought, but the appreciation is aesthetic in its nature: he elaborates and seeks to bring out the effectiveness of these on the imaginative sense of the noble and grandiose, applying to the things of the mind and soul the same aesthetic standard as to the things of sense themselves.... Kalidasa is the great, the supreme poet of the senses, of aesthetic beauty, of sensuous emotion. His main achievement is to have taken every poetic element, all great poetical forms, and subdued them to a harmony of artistic perfection set in the key of sensuous beauty. In continuous gift of seizing an object and creating it to the eye he has no rival in literature. A strong visualising faculty such as the greatest poets have in their most inspired descriptive moments, was with Kalidasa an abiding and unfailing power, and the concrete presentation which this definiteness of vision demanded, suffused with an intimate and sovereign feeling for beauty of colour and beauty of form, constitutes the characteristic Kalidasian manner. He is besides a consummate artist, profound in conception and suave in execution, a master of sound and language who has moulded for himself out of the infinite possibilities of the Sanskrit tongue a verse and diction which are absolutely the grandest, most puissant and most full-voiced of any human speech, a language of the Gods.”²

“With these supreme gifts Kalidasa had the advantage of being born into an age with which he was in temperamental sympathy and a civilisation which lent itself naturally to his peculiar descriptive genius. It was an aristocratic civilisation, as indeed were those which had preceded it, but it far more nearly resembled the aristocratic

civilisations of Europe by its material luxury, its aesthetic tastes, its polite culture, its keen worldly wisdom and its excessive appreciation of wit and learning. Religious and ethical thought and sentiment were cultivated much as in France under Louis XIV, more in piety and profession than as swaying the conduct; they pleased the intellect or else touched the sentiment, but did not govern the soul. It was bad taste to be irreligious, but it was not bad taste to be sensual or even in some respects immoral. The splendid and luxurious courts of this period supported the orthodox religion and morals out of convention, conservatism, the feeling for established order and the inherited tastes and prejudices of centuries, not because they fostered any deep religious or ethical sentiment. Yet they applauded high moral ideas if presented to them in cultured and sensuous poetry much in the same spirit that they applauded voluptuous description similarly presented. The ideals of morality were much lower than of old; free drinking was openly recognised and indulged in by both sexes; purity of life was less valued than in any other period of our civilisation. Yet the unconquerable monogamous instinct of the high-class Hindu woman seems to have prevented promiscuous vice and the disorganisation of the home which was the result of a similar state of society in ancient Rome, in Italy of the Renaissance, in France under the Bourbons and in England under the later Stuarts. The old spiritual tendencies were also rather latent than dead, the mighty pristine ideals still existed in theory, – they are outlined with extraordinary grandeur by Kalidasa, – nor had they yet been weakened or lowered to a less heroic key. It was a time in which one might expect to meet the extremes of indulgence side by side with the extremes of renunciation; for the inherent spirituality of the Hindu nature finally revolted against the splendid and unsatisfying life of the senses. But of this phase Bhartrihari and not Kalidasa is the poet. The greater writer lived evidently in the full heyday of the material age, and there is no sign of any setting in of the sickness and dissatisfaction and disillusionment which invariably follow a long outburst of materialism.”³

“As in the Ramayana and Mahabharata we have an absorbing intellect impulse or a dynamic force of moral or immoral excitement driving the characters, so we have in Kalidasa an intense hedonistic impulse thrilling through speech and informing action. An imaginative pleasure in all shades of thought and of sentiment, a rich delight of the mind in its emotions, a luxuriousness of ecstasy and grief, a free abandonment to amorous impulse and rapture, a continual joy of life and seeking for beauty mark the period when India, having for the time exhausted the possibilities of soul-experience attainable through the spirit and the imaginative reason, was now attempting to find out the utmost each sense could feel, probing and sounding the soul-possibilities in matter and even seeking God through the senses.”⁴

B. The Poetical Genius of Kalidasa

“Kalidasa ranks among the supreme poetic artists with Milton and Virgil and he has a more subtle and delicate spirit and touch in his art than the English, a greater breath of native power informing and vivifying his execution than the Latin poet. There is no more perfect and harmonious style in literature, no more inspired and careful master of the absolutely harmonious and sufficient phrase combining the minimum of word expenditure with the fullest sense of an accomplished ease and a divine elegance and not excluding a fine excess that is not excessive, an utmost possible refined opulence of aesthetic value. More perfectly than any other he realises the artistic combination of a harmonious economy of expression, not a word, syllable, sound in superfluity, and a total sense of wise and lavish opulence that was the aim of the earlier classical poets. None so divinely skilful as he in imparting without any overdoing the richest colour, charm, appeal and value, greatness or nobility or power or suavity and always some kind and the right kind and the fullest degree of beauty to each line and each phrase. The felicity of selection is equalled by the felicity of combination. One of the most splendidly

sensuous of poets in the higher sense of that epithet because he has a vivid vision and feeling of his object, his sensuousness is neither lax nor overpowering, but always satisfying and just, because it is united with a plenary force of the intelligence, a gravity and strength sometimes apparent, sometimes disguised in beauty but appreciable within the brodered and coloured robe, a royal restraint in the heart of the regal indulgence. And Kalidasa's sovereign mastery of rhythm is as great as his sovereign mastery of phrase. Here we meet in each metrical kind with the most perfect discoveries of verbal harmony in the Sanskrit language (pure lyrical melody comes only afterwards at the end in one or two poets like Jayadeva), harmonies founded on a constant subtle complexity of the fine assonances of sound and an unobtrusive use of significant cadence that never breaks the fluent unity of tone of the music. And the other quality of Kalidasa's poetry is the unfailing adequacy of the substance. Careful always to get the full aesthetic value of the word and sound clothing his thought and substance, he is equally careful that the thought and the substance itself should be of a high, strong or rich intellectual, descriptive or emotional value. His conception is large in its view though it has not the cosmic breadth of the earlier poets and it is sustained at every step in its execution. The hand of the artist never fails in the management of its material, – exception being made of a fault of composition marring one, the least considerable of his works, – and his imagination is always as equal to its task as his touch is great and subtle.”⁵

C. The World's Greatest Poets

“When I said there were no greater poets than Homer and Shakespeare, I was thinking of their essential poetic force and Beauty – not of the scope of their work as a whole, for there are poets greater in their range. The Mahabharata is from that point of view a far greater creation than the Iliad, the Ramayana than the Odyssey, and either spreads its strength and its achievement over a larger field than the whole dramatic world of Shakespeare; both are built

on an almost cosmic vastness of plan and take all human life (the Mahabharata all human thought as well) in their scope and touch too on things which the Greek and Elizabethan poets could not even glimpse. But as poets – as masters of rhythm and language and the expression of poetic beauty – Vyasa and Valmiki are *not inferior*, but also not greater than the English or the Greek poet.”⁶

References:

- 1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.1, p.156, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 2. *Ibid*, pp.160-63**
- 3. *Ibid*, pp.163-64**
- 4. *Ibid*, p.165**
- 5. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.358-60, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 6. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.27, pp.367-68, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**

Perils of Materialistic Science

“...if Science teaches men to regard themselves as distinct and purely corporeal beings, with no connection with others except such as may be created by physical contact and the communication of the senses, it is obvious that the human Will under the obsession of this belief, will inevitably shape its action & thought in accordance passing over the more shadowy moral generalities of evolutionary theorists or play with them only as intellectual marbles. And that spells in the end a colossal selfishness, an increasing sensuality, lust of power, riches, comfort & dominion, a monstrous & egoistic brutality like that of a hundred-armed Titan wielding all the arms of the Gods in those hundred hands. If man believes himself to be an animal he will act like an animal & exalt the animal impulse into his guide. That Europe does not approach more swiftly to this condition is due to the obstinate refusal of Jnana, Religion, true enlightenment, maimed & wounded tho’ it be, to perish and make an end; it will not allow the human Will to believe that it is no more than nerve & flesh & body, animal & transitory. It persists & takes a hundred forms to elude the pursuit of materialistic Science, calling upon the Eternal Mother to come down and save; and surely before long she shall come. ...”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo, 17, p.160)