

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

July 2016



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

– The Mother

Year 7

Issue 4

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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 7

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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)

CITIZENSHIP BILL REPRESENTS THE FIRST-OF-ITS KIND PROGRESSIVE STEP BY THE GOVERNMENT

The government has recently tabled, in the Lok Sabha, the proposed amendments to the Citizenship Act of 1955, with the objective of facilitating Indian citizenship for religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, who have faced persecution in their home countries. With around 400 Pakistani Hindu refugee settlements in cities like Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Raipur, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Kutch, Bhopal, Indore, Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Delhi and Lucknow, the government has been consistently flagging this issue since early last year, and also made it a part of its election manifesto in 2014.

BACKGROUND

The move by the Centre, last year, was in response to a 2012 petition by two NGOs – Swajan and Bimalangshu Roy Foundation – pleading that minority Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Bangladesh migrating to India to escape religious persecution must not be bracketed with illegal migrants and sent back¹ under the Assam Accord which provides for deportation of illegal migrants that have come in since 1971. The verification of the identity of the migrants will be traced, by making 1971 the cut-off year, to the ‘legacy data’ to be ascertained through the 1971 voters’ list.² The matter came up for hearing in the Supreme Court and became a national issue in 2013, with the bench observing that the problem of religious minorities coming from Bangladesh to India was not confined to Assam alone.³

Prior to this, in April 2015, the government had also facilitated an online system for Long Term Visa Application that allowed the minority migrants from neighbouring countries to reside in India for a period of five years, and allowed them to reside in the country even after their visas expire. The government has already granted 4300 citizenships to minority migrant Hindus.⁴

PROPOSED RELAXATIONS

The changes will involve a two-track process whereby the minority migrants will first be admitted as refugees in the country and will then be able to claim their citizenship rights. The following relaxations have been proposed:

- Cancellation of the requirement of a renunciation certificate from the home country (in this case – Pakistan).

- Relaxation in registration fee – While the registration fee for each member of the family is 5000 INR under registration and 15,000 INR under naturalisation, in the proposed amendments, it could be made as low as a uniform fee of 100 INR for the entire process.

- Delegation of procedure – The process of dealing with citizenship rights will be delegated to the district level, under the supervision of the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police.

- Allowances –

- > Applicants eligible for such citizenship claims will be subsequently able to avail of Driving License, Aadhar Card, PAN number and conditional opening of a bank account without prior approval from the RBI.

- > They will also be able to take up self-employment and get permission for doing business, subject to the security requirements, without needing to register with the foreigners' registration office.

- > They can buy property.

- > Freedom of movement within the state/UT of the allotted residence, besides allowing conditional movement across states.

THE KEY ISSUE

The proposed bill has been widely welcomed, except in some political and intellectual circles that seek to politicize any issue to appease the Muslim lobbies. The key issue that the bill addresses is the poor plight of the refugees, in India, who have migrated from Muslim-majority countries. Under the current provisions, they can

be granted citizenship only after they have stayed in the country for 12 years, through ‘naturalization’ – and even then their future remains precarious. Now, the time period will be shortened to 7 years.

These people – mainly Hindus – have fled from religious persecution in our Muslim-majority neighbours and, yet, when they enter India, they continue to suffer discrimination – they cannot access basic public services, have no identity, and live in ghettoized conditions or ‘mohallas’. This is the first time that a government has made consistent efforts to improve their plight and has taken up the responsibility to better the condition of 2 lakh refugees who have been living as second-class citizens in India. The previous government had tried to deport them to Pakistan.

This was unfortunate, since, while the expedient, minority-driven Indian politics ensured that India fully respected the protection of minority rights under the Liaquat-Nehru pact of 1950, Pakistan did not do the same. The Indian government is also set to flag this issue with Pakistan.

The bill will ensure that they no longer have to live like refugees. They will get Aadhar card, voter ID card and a right to buy property and start their own businesses.

The issue was raised by the government in early 2015 with the BJP President, Amit Shah, clearly declaring that, “Some Hindus have come from Bangladesh due to religious disturbances. The BJP will give all of them citizenship once we come to power in Assam next year.”⁵ Recently, the BJP refugee cell urged the government to expedite the Citizenship Bill for the Hindu refugees and to start granting citizenship to Hindu refugees under Section 18 of the Citizenship Act.

The government did not shy away from declaring India a ‘natural home for persecuted Hindus’. This is important, given the historical pattern of immigration from Bangladesh. Assam has borne the burden of illegal – mainly Muslim – immigration from Bangladesh, which has occurred mainly due to economic reasons. This bill gives us an opportunity to clearly distinguish this illegal economic immigration

from the genuine need of Hindu refugees who are seeking shelter in India due to religious persecution.

The problem has become even more severe in the last two years. The world is seeing an expansion of Islamic radicalism and, in Bangladesh, we are facing a major national security threat because of the added danger of homegrown terrorism in that country. Incidents of machete-wielding radical Islamists brutally hacking and murdering Hindus and Buddhists have become a regular phenomenon. The recent Dhaka attacks – where those who could not recite Koran, mainly the foreigners, were killed by terrorists in a Dhaka café – were just the tip of the iceberg. The worst part is that in localized incidents where minority individuals are hacked to death on nearly a daily basis, are not the work of ISIS – increasingly we have a tendency of complacently siphoning off everything to the ISIS, as if that were an entity not representative of Muslim radicalization – but, as per Bangladeshi intelligence reports, that of home-grown terrorists, including the sons of educated, rich elite.

This is the larger framework through which the issue needs to be seen.

CHALLENGES

But the government is set to face hurdles on several counts:

First, when the Citizenship Bill was proposed and debated in India, the minority Hindus living in Bangladesh began to confront a fresh onslaught of hate crimes, facing the prospect of being forcibly evicted from their lands and asked to go back to India, since the government was already making provisions to accommodate them, through the bill. According to a Bangladeshi minority organization, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad, the move may intensify the torture and travails of religious minorities in Bangladesh, enabling the extremists to forcibly evict them from their lands and send them back to India.⁶

Second, in the context of the Citizenship bill, the issue of Rohingyas in India – who have fled religious persecution in Myanmar

– has also been raised, with the community demanding that India protect its interests too and take the issue to the United Nations on their behalf. They are demanding that they be treated like victims of religious persecution rather than as illegal (economic) immigrants.

Finally, it will complicate the BJP's Assam alliance. This issue is important and Assam is the key state since the major part of 'illegal immigration' to India is from Bangladesh, followed – to much lesser extent – by Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 1986, the Parliament amended the Citizenship Act, 1955, and added Section 6A to apply specifically to immigration from Bangladesh. The amended Act stated that persons of Indian origin, residing in India, who had come to India before 1 January, 1966, would be regarded as citizens. Persons of Indian origin who came between 1 January, 1966 and 25 March, 1971, would be regarded as foreigners under the existing foreigner laws and would require registration.⁷ Those who came after 25 March, 1971 would be 'illegal immigrants'.

The politics of citizenship that played out behind this history was dominated by the mobilizations around the consolidation of an Assamese cultural-national identity, spearheaded by the AASU, its political party, the AGP and the ULFA. These discourses were both pitted against the Indian state and against the influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, irrespective of whether they were Hindus or Muslims. In fact, early this year AASU had filed a court petition seeking revocation of the central government decision to grant citizenship to persecuted Hindus.

Steadily, the current government radically altered this discourse. Prior to this, the Tarun Gogoi government had also petitioned, in 2012, for protecting the rights of the people fleeing religious persecution from neighbouring countries, and had consolidated its Hindu base. But the BJP, by pitching Mr. Sonowal as its chief ministerial candidate during the recent Assam elections, allying with the AGP and, at the same time, wooing away from the Congress the majority of Barak Valley Hindu vote-base by promising citizenship to persecuted Hindus, has carved out an expedient, but temporary space, for

persecuted Hindus within the dominant discourse of Assamese identity.

However, this patchwork of expedient alliances cannot last forever. Just after the bill was tabled, about two days ago, a pro-Assamese NGO led by Upamanyu Hazarika protested against it, arguing that it will encourage illegal immigration and threaten the Assamese identity. So if the bill is enforced, the government will have to consider the political ramifications carefully.

Despite all these challenges, in the final analysis, the bill represents a progressive and bold legislation by the government. It is not only a response to the severe, and mounting, persecution faced by minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also the first time that the Indian state has acknowledged open support and measures for the Hindu community overseas. The public discourse in India has, for far too long, been skewed in favour of the argument that was made by Manmohan Singh few years back – Muslims have the first right over the country's resources. This minority-driven politics of secularism has prevented the state from working, objectively, in the national interest, thereby harming the interests of all communities and stoking communal fires.

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THE THIRD WAVE OF JUDICIAL ACTIVISM: OVERTURNING THE POLITICAL PROCESS

A recent Supreme Court order restored the erstwhile Congress-led government of Arunachal Pradesh of Nabam Tuki. The order is both questionable in its rationale and speaks of the dangers of the increasing judicial overreach. The fact that the very next day, the state Governor ordered Nabam Tuki to prove his government's majority on the floor of the assembly by the following day, should come as a rude wake-up call to the long-protected sanctity of the Supreme Court, since the Governor's action displays disenchantment of the political process with the judicial decision.

There have been a series of orders and judgements by the courts that show that the judicial interference with the policy-making processes of the executive and the legislature has intensified in the recent years. However behind this intensification is not the mere policy overreach of the courts – which has been an issue for the last 25 years – but its new political overreach. It is this new kind of judicial overreach that threatens to spell the end of the apparent moral sanctity of the judiciary. The decline is captured aptly in Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley's statement that “step by step, brick by brick, the edifice of India's legislature is being destroyed” by the judiciary.¹

The reasons behind this lie in a system of intellectualized governance encouraged by regimes like the Congress and the AAP that promote the dictatorship of the technocrats and has led to the sharp autonomy and politicization of what used to be neutral-government institutions. In the case of judiciary, this further combines with the failure of the judiciary to understand that, irrespective of whether it is right or wrong, it must desist from interfering in the politics of the country and the policy work of the government.

FROM JUDICIAL ACTIVISM TO POLITICAL OVERREACH

The evolution of the Indian judiciary in the post-Independence period traces its history from being a mere passive third arm of the

government (mainly during the Nehruvian period) to being in a mode of institutional difference with the government (during the early Indira Gandhi period) and finally of assuming the mantle of an activist judiciary (after the PIL was launched and citizens supposedly began to engage with the judicial process).

During the Nehruvian period, the judiciary was seen as upholding the interests of the elite landowners and the propertied classes and had little to do with social justice. However, after the 1970s, during the phase of Indira Gandhi government, there was a marked change in the judiciary's relationship with the executive as the court began to intervene in social matters, sometimes overriding executive authority. This became even more pronounced after the Emergency phase, when the judiciary and the executive became actively opposed to each other.

With the launch of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL), the judiciary's power of review was transformed into judicial activism. The PIL became an instrument whereby the judiciary was seen as privileging the rights of the poor who previously had little access to the courts. It was based on procedures that were non-adversarial, epistolary jurisdiction (whereby, the court could accept petitions through letters), and where poor had a locus standi. The judiciary was now seen as supporting the pro-poor Directive Principles as opposed to the individualistic Fundamental Rights. Many judges themselves, like Justice PN Bhagwati, have characterized this activist judiciary as supporting, not merely the PIL, but the more socially-involved Social Action Litigation (SAL).

The activist mantle of the judiciary was also supported by the launch of the era of coalition politics post-1989, which weakened the power of the executive to take politically difficult decisions in order to please their constituencies, thereby enhancing the power of the judiciary to assume the role of social and developmental activism.

However, if this evolution of the judiciary was really that progressive then how is it that the net result we see now is a worsened delivery of justice and a corrupt regression of the judiciary itself?

This is because the image of an activist judiciary is a very polarized and romanticized version of judicial history that has come down to us – mainly from the Left-liberal intellectuals like Upendra Baxi, Rajeev Dhawan, Indira Jaising et al. In reality, the post-1985 era of ‘judicial activism’ had nothing to do with the citizens or the poor and everything to do with the activists. It marked the beginning of the rise of secular, Left-oriented intellectuals and activists who began to take-over the perspectives of the judiciary and many of the autonomous regulatory judicial institutions. Combined with its status as the supreme upholder of the Constitution, this provided a life of its own to the judiciary and it began to intervene freely in the policy matters of governance, which should have been the domain of the executive and the legislature.

This judicial activism has continued steadily for the last 25 years and has now precipitated into something completely unparalleled and very regressive – the judiciary has started playing politics for the last year and a half. And the fact that it has gone unnoticed in the media shows that the trend is dangerously insinuating itself in our society.

DANGEROUS JUDICIAL OVERREACH

This trend is becoming more visible now because the Modi government is taking strong corrective action in dismantling the false politics that got institutionalized in the name of secularism and liberalism. However, the power of judiciary has gone unchecked for a long time.

Gradually, since the 1990s, the judiciary has moved on from the phase of PIL to ‘public cause litigation’ – an apt description for the kind of events it has been intervening in. These events, by no means, constitute a ground for any kind of legal action by the court, yet the judiciary, on the pretext of upholding public interest, has been issuing numerous orders and directives in these areas. Since the 90s, it has issued judgements in a range of everyday areas, covering issues like automobile emissions, wearing of seatbelts and helmets and dealing

with the menace of monkeys!²

It has intervened actively in three main spheres where it has no business interfering: national security, governance/development and politics. Of these three, the spheres of national security and politics are now overlapping.

In politics, the apex court and the High Courts have actively intervened in the proceedings of the state assemblies to overturn decisions by elected governments to impose President's rule – in Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh – despite Article 212 clearly stating that the courts cannot inquire into the proceedings of the legislature.

In terms of national security, the Court, in 1993, issued orders on the conduct of a military operation in Kashmir, where the army had, as a matter of strategy, restricted food supplies to hostages. The court ruled that food of 1200 calorific value should be supplied to hostages, thereby prompting an army general to write, "For the first time in history, a court of law was asked to pronounce judgment on the conduct of an ongoing military operation. Its verdict materially affected the course of operation".³

In terms of governance/development, the judiciary has been issuing pronouncements and directives that have only served to duplicate work that is already being done or to help establish its own self-importance. For instance, recently the Chief Justice of India (CJI) pronounced that the polluter pays principle should be applied to the US and not to India in the climate change regime. While the position is correct and in tune with the government's climate change policy – it is irrelevant whether the position is correct or not – there was no need for the court to assume a moral position on a policy issue, least of all a foreign policy issue. What if, tomorrow, the Court – like in trade negotiations – were to spell out a stand that compromises the sovereignty of the country?

In the domestic sphere, the judiciary recently intervened in yet another environmental issue by directing the government to setup a National Disaster Mitigation Fund, even though national and state

disaster response funds already exist. The courts should realize that nothing will come of asserting their power by directing the government to set up more institutions other than creating further opaqueness and institutional burdens.

Prior to that, when the Supreme Court ordered to move the Indian Premier League out of Maharashtra given the drought in Latur, the decision was again seen as the unnecessary encroachment by the Court in the sphere of the executive.⁴

Similarly, it was again overweening arrogance by the apex court which propelled it to issue directives against pollution in Delhi, by doubling the entry tax on trucks entering Delhi, and by, recently, banning diesel vehicles in the city.

Now, the court is even meddling in trivial everyday governance problems like fixing air connectivity and helping in sports nominations – do the people really want a meddlesome unelected judiciary in their daily lives?

Even though the Court's intervention in environmental issues is a mix of progressive and unnecessary, by interfering in these governance matters, it is transgressing its own boundaries and increasing its own burden. What right did the CJI have of emotionally cornering the government on the judicial backlog and pleading for more appointments, unless the apex court is bent on transforming itself from a limited law and order institution into a complex political one?

Moreover, the Court's rift with the executive over the issue of appointment of judges – the government has refused to allow the appointment of judges till the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) which gives a say to the government in the process of appointment, is finalized – shows that the judicial system is bent on remaining shrouded in a non-transparent and non-accountable functioning, even as it keeps on expanding its ambit of power.

And from where does it derive all this power? The apex court has original jurisdiction only to entertain petitions for breach of fundamental rights under Article 32 of the Constitution. It is only

when it tenuously combines this Article with either Article 21 (Right to Personal Liberty) or Article 14 (Right to Equality before Law) that it derives the so-called moral authority to intervene in daily matters on the behalf of citizens, when, in reality, there are no legal grounds involved in such petitions except the imperative of better governance.⁵

All these cases show that often the Indian judiciary takes decisions to assert its own power and claim absolute, unquestionable moral authority. The more it does this, the more it is being rejected by the country; for, it is simply acting in an autocratic manner and exceeding its boundaries. In February this year, a Congress magazine challenged the fact that the judiciary is often above question and reproach and issues contempt of court notices arbitrarily to people who dare to question its self-assumed authority – its recommendation was that this needs to change and we should be able to question the judiciary.

This is only fair. The courts have brought this criticism on themselves by jumping into the fray of politics and seeking more autocratic power. It was already rife with corruption, inefficiency and delaying and denying justice, for a long time. But now, an uglier aspect is coming to the fore.

THE TRUE RELEVANCE OF THE JUDICIARY

As the events unfold and the judiciary falls into its own power-trap, it will increasingly become clear that, for decades, our institutions of nation-building have been built on a flawed foundation. Not only have they been built to actively promote organized selfishness, but are also beset by the cruel irony of giving recognition and credibility to social disorder. The police state which is a product of our institutions is nothing but a reaction to the deteriorating national character, and instead of tackling the roots of the degrading collective consciousness, becomes a part of the general problem.

In this apparatus of the state, what is the true value of the judiciary? If we trace the evolution of the spirit of the judicial system, we will find that it does not at all deserve to be vested with the kind of moral authority that it has claimed since the dawn of the modern judicial system.

In ancient India, there never was an independent legal system in place – the concept of ‘rule of law’ is a uniquely modern, 18th century British construct. Instead, what prevailed was the ‘Dharma’. Dharma did not constitute a set of codes or rules that could be imposed on the society and the state by some institutional authority – as the present judiciary does. Instead, Dharma lay in the internal, organic, self-evolved processes through which the community governed itself and the King. It was as the civilization departed from its Golden Age and became more and more intellectualized and went farther away from the Truth of intuition that Dharma needed to be enforced, by the Pandits, on the King. Even then, the rule of Dharma prevailed as it was never the task of the Pandits to promulgate the Dharma. The society was still not so recalcitrant.

Since such were the conditions during the ancient times, where was the need of a judiciary? The modern judiciary is not only a product of the collective degradation, but is also a part of it. The basis on which it sets apart the true from the false in delivering justice – by audaciously laying claim to objectivity – is based on a process of reason, instead of being rooted in a higher authority. But then reason is simply an instrument that can be used to logically justify anything – wrong or right. And so, the modern law is actually blind.

As Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“Under a civilised disguise these Courts are really the mediaeval ordeal by battle; only in place of the swords and lances of military combatants we have the tongues and technicalities of lawyers and the mutually tilting imaginations of witnesses. The victory is to the skilfullest liar and the most plausible workman in falsehoods and insincerities. It is largely an elaborate pitch and toss, an exhilarating gamble, a very Monte Carlo of surprising chances. But there is skill in it, too; it satisfies the intellect as well as the sensations. One should rather call it a game of human Bridge which admirably combines luck and skill, or consider it as an intellectual gladiatorial show. In big cases the stake is worthy of the play and the excitement, a man’s property or his life. But woe to the beaten! In a criminal case, the tortures of the

jail or the terrifying drop from the gallows are in prospect, and it is rather the hardihood of guilt than the trembling consciousness of innocence that shall best help him. Woe to him if he is innocent! As he stands there, – for to add to the pleasurable of his condition, the physical ache of hours of standing is considerably added to the cruel strain on his emotions, – he looks eagerly not to the truth or falsehood of the evidence for or against him, but to the skill with which this or that counsel handles the web of skilfully mixed truth and lies and the impression he is making on the judge or the jury. A true witness breaking down under a confusing cross-examination or a false witness mended by a judicious reexamination may be of much better service to him than the Truth, which, our Scriptures tell us, shall prevail and not falsehood, – eventually perhaps and in the things of the truth, but not in the things of falsehood, not in a court of Justice, not in the witness box. There the last thing the innocent man against whom circumstances have turned, dare tell is the truth; it would either damn him completely by fatally helping the prosecution or it is so simple and innocent as to convince the infallible human reason of its pitiful falsity. The truth! Has not the Law expressly built up a hedge of technicalities to keep out the truth?”⁶

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INDIAN ECONOMY AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN (1951)

The pre-independence period was the period of a near stagnation for the Indian economy. At the time of independence the Indian economy was caught in a vicious circle of poverty characterized by one of the lowest per capita incomes (1950-51, Rs. 255) among the countries of the world. In 1950-51, the national income was Rs. 204,924 crores (at 2006-07 prices) and the domestic rate of saving was 8.6 percent. This low rate of saving resulted in low capital formation and therefore low production of basic goods. Further the size of the market being limited, investors had little incentive for making investment and due to this economic productivity continued to be low. During this period the country was faced with three problems:— influx of refugees, severe food shortages and mounting inflation (1948 - 22%). India's economy was disequilibriumed by the Second World War and the partition of the country.

Even though India has been primarily an agrarian economy, 85 percent of the population (total population 1951 - 36.10 crores) lived in villages and derived their livelihood from agriculture, the country was not self-sufficient in food-grains (1950 - 50.8 million tonnes). The average availability of food was not only deficient in quantity but also uncertain, as there were regular famines. This required a massive import of food-grains and during 1948-51, import of cereals was on the increase and rose to 4.7 million tonnes which was about 10 percent of the domestic production. These food imports cost India more than Rs. 200 crores in 1951 and thus counter balanced more than 20 percent of her export receipts. The prominence of agriculture in Indian economy during this period can be seen in its occupational structure from the following table. The next table displays the contribution of agriculture and other sectors to National income.

Occupational structure: Distribution of Labour 1950-51¹

	(In Million)	(Percent)
Agriculture	103.6	72.3

Industry (Total)	15.3	10.7
Mines	0.8	0.6
Industrial establishments	3.0	2.1
Small enterprises	11.5	8.0
Trade and Transport (Total)	11.0	7.7
Railways and postal services	1.4	1.0
Organized bank and insurance companies	0.1	0.1
Other trades and transports	9.5	6.6
Services (Total)	13.2	9.3
Professions	6.4	4.5
Administration	3.9	2.7
Domestic services	2.9	2.0
Grand Total	143.1	100.0

Distribution of National Income By Sector²

(As percentage of total Income) in the Year 1948-49

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture	
Agriculture, stock-breeding and auxiliary	48.1
Forestry	0.7
Fisheries	0.3
Total	49.1
Mines, Manufacturing Industries, Small Enterprises	
Mines	0.7
Industrial establishments	6.3
Small enterprises	10.1
Total	17.1
Trade, Transport and Communications	
Postal services	0.3
Railways	2.0
Organized banks and insurance companies	0.6
Other trades and transports	15.6
Total	18.5
Other Services	
Professions, teaching, health services, justice, etc.	5.0

Administration	4.6
Domestic services	1.6
Building rent	4.5
Total of other services	15.7
Net national product at factor cost	100.12
Transfers abroad	0.2
Nation income	100.0

In 1951 the main industries in India were sugar, jute, textiles, steel, iron etc. The country produced only consumer goods and lacked in the production of the capital goods.

Illiteracy in the country was as high as 84 percent and majority of the children i.e. 60 percent in the age group of 6-11 did not attend school. Mass communicable diseases were widespread in absence of good public health services. Epidemics like small-pox, plague and cholera and diseases like dysentery, diarrhea, malaria and other fevers carried away millions. Malaria affected nearly one-fourth of the population. In 1943 there were 10 medical colleges turning out about 700 graduates. In 1951, there were only 18,000 graduate doctors in independent India. Now here we will focus separately on important sectors of the economy at the time of independence.

(I) AGRICULTURE

In the year 1950-51, the agricultural activities of India accounted for 56.5 percent of the total GDP and nearly 49 percent of the National income. The production of food grains was 51 million tonnes and the cropped area was 130 million hectares. Even though contributing nearly 50 percent in GDP and national income, the Indian agriculture was in a deplorable state. This condition of the Indian agriculture was due to the deceitful policies of the British government. The British government pursued a typical colonial policy and systematically destroyed the Indian economy. They created a land tenure system and imposed heavy land taxes on farmers. A substantive part of the produce was taken away and the farmers were left only with subsistence food. Because of the heavy land taxes and a minimum

share in the production, the farmers neither had incentives nor resources for agricultural investment. This resulted in food shortages and frequent famines.

Soon after independence and at the beginning of the first five year plan some measures were taken in the field of agriculture but they were not very significant. In the year 1950-51, 76.5 percent of the total cropped area was meant for food grains and remaining 23.5 percent was for non-food items. So, on three fourths of all the cropped area food grains and other food items were cultivated. During 1950-51, India's total export was Rs. 606 crores of which agricultural products like jute, tea, textiles accounted for more than 50 percent of the export earnings. If we add other agricultural products like oil, sugar, cashews, tobacco, the share in total exports rose to 70 to 75 percent. The production, gross area and yield per hectare of some of the major crops during 1950-51 were as follows:

Major crops: Area, Yield and Production³

Food items	Area (m/h)	Yield/hectare (kg/h)	Production (mt)
Foodgrains	97.3	522	58.8
Cereals	78.2	542	42.4
Pulses	19.1	441	8.4
Rice	30.8	668	20.6
Wheat	9.8	663	6.5
Jowar	15.6	353	5.5
Maize	3.2	547	1.7
Cotton	5.9	88	3.3 (bales)
Jute	0.6	1043	3.3 (bales)
Tea	0.3	876	0.3
Coffee	0.1	298	Neg
Rubber	neg	343	Neg
Potato	0.2	7 (tonnes/hectare)	1.7
Bajra	9.0	288	2.6

Gram	7.6	482	3.6
Tur	2.2	788	1.7
Oilseeds	10.7	481	5.2
Groundnuts	4.5	775	3.5
Mustard	2.1	368	0.8
Sugarcane	1.7	33 (tonnes/hectare)	57.1

Cotton- Bales of 170 Kg

Jute- Bales of 180 Kg

(2) INDUSTRY

In the year 1950-51, the industrial activities of India accounted for 15 percent of the total GDP and nearly 17 percent of the national income. The above figure clearly illustrates that India at the time of independence was industrially very poor and underdeveloped. The deplorable condition of the industries was due to the deceitful policies of the British government. Before the rise of the modern industrial system, the Indian manufactures had a world wide market. In the year 1700, Britain's share in world GDP was mere 2.9 percent while India contributed 24.4 percent. Within 250 years, i.e., in 1950, Britain's world share in world GDP rose to 6.5 percent while India's declined to 4.2 percent. In his book "India's Spiritual Destiny", Mr. Mangesh Nadkarni describes that, "By every account of European visitors, India was extremely wealthy until the mid 1800. Samuel Huntington of Harvard University writes that in 1750, India had 25 percent of the world's manufacturing output while Europe and America combined had less than 18 percent. But by 1900, after a hundred years of British rule, India's manufacturing output had collapsed to less than 2 percent whereas America and West combined had 84 percent of world's share."⁴

This clearly shows how much India was exploited by the Britishers. Before the industrial revolution (1850), Indian muslins and calicoes were in great demand around the world. Indian industries not only produced sufficient materials to meet domestic

demand but also enabled India to export its finished goods. The Indian exports chiefly consisted of cotton, silk fabrics, silk and woolen clothes. The impact of British colonization and Industrial Revolution (1850) led to the decay of Indian industries. The drain of capital from India to England made a significant contribution to the Industrial Revolution there. By pouring machine made goods into India, the British government systematically destroyed India's industries. Heavy import duties were imposed on Indian goods in Britain and the British goods in India were kept duty free. The policies of the British government were such as to encourage the production of raw cotton, raw jute and other raw materials for Britain's industries and to discourage the production of manufactured goods in India. This policy of discrimination against Indian products was forced on India and since India had been subjugated, she could not retaliate but had to endure this attack on her industries. As Romesh Chandra Dutta in his book 'The Economic History of India - Part I' writes, "Had this not been the case, had not such prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifices of the Indian manufactures. Had India been independent she would have retaliated, would have imposed prohibitive duties upon British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defense was not permitted to her; she was at the mercy of the strangers. British goods were forced on her without paying any duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep her down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."⁵

It is quite obvious from the above facts that the British government made all possible efforts to destroy Indian industries. At the outbreak of the second World-War in 1939 to its end in 1945, the Indian industrial output grew about 20 percent annually. This was mainly because Britain was under attack and the required materials had to be produced in a place away from the war zone.

Soon after independence the Indian government, for the development of Indian industries, granted certain tax concessions to industries in 1948-49 and made the Industrial Policy of 1948 to establish the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI). Industrial Finance Corporation of India was the first development financial institution in the country to cater to the long term financial needs of the industrial sector. It provided access to low cost funds through the central bank (Reserve Bank of India) and provided loans to corporate borrowers at concessional rates. The Industrial Policy Resolution Act was passed in 1948.

The Industrial Policy Resolution Act of 1948 was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) To establish a social order where justice and equality of opportunity shall be secured to all the people.
- (ii) To promote standard of living of the people.
- (iii) To increase both agricultural and industrial production.
- (iv) To offer employment opportunities to all.

The Industries were classified into four categories:

(a) Industries where state had a monopoly

In this category, three fields of activity were specified – arms and ammunition, atomic energy and rail transport.

(b) Mixed sector

In this category, the following six industries were specified – coal, iron and steel, aircraft manufacture, ship building, manufacture of telephone, telegraph and mineral oils. New undertakings in this category were to be set up by State but existing private undertakings were allowed to continue for ten years after which the government was to review the situation and acquire any existing undertakings after paying compensation on a fair and equitable basis.

(c) The field of government control

Eighteen industries of national importance were included in this category. The government did not undertake the responsibility of developing these industries but considered them of such importance that their regulation and direction was necessary.

(d) The field of private enterprise

All other industries were left open to private sector. However, the State could take over any industry in this sector also if its progress was unsatisfactory.

The main thrust of the policy was to lay the foundation of a mixed economy in which both private and public enterprises would work together to accelerate industrial development in the country.

At the beginning of the first five year plan, the major industries were – sugar, oil, jute, textiles, iron and steel. In short the industrial pattern in India in year 1950-51 was marked by low capital intensity, underdeveloped infrastructure and prominence of consumer goods over capital goods. The following table shows the production of certain industries in 1950-51.

Production of Certain Industries (1950-51)

Industry	Unit	Figure
Coal	Million Tonnes	32.3
Iron ore	Million Tonnes	3.0
Automobiles	Thousands	16.5
Cement	Million Tonnes	2.7
Cloth	m sq meters	4215
Finished Steel	Million Tonnes	1.0

(3) FOREIGN TRADE AND BALANCE OF PAYMENT

Before 1947, when India was the colony of the British, the pattern of her foreign trade was typically colonial. India was a supplier of food stuffs and raw materials to the industrialised nations particularly

England and importer of manufactured goods. The direction of India's foreign trade was determined by the British government. In other words it was Britain that decided from which country India could import its requirements and to which country it could export its products. Naturally a major part of India's trade was either directly with Britain or its colonies or allies. This pattern continued for some years after independence. For example: the combined share of UK and the USA in India's export earning was 42 percent in 1950-51. On the eve of the planning the foreign trade of India showed an excess of import over exports. In 1950-51, India's total export was Rs. 606 crores and imports were Rs. 608 crores. In 1947-48, India's main exports were primary goods like jute, tea, cotton, textiles etc. while manufactured goods constituted the bulk of imports. The main item of imports were machinery of all kinds, oil, grains, pulses, vehicles, chemicals, drugs and medicines and metals other than iron and steel. The following table indicates the percentage distribution of India's exports and imports to other regions during 1951-52.

Direction of India's imports and exports (1951-52) Figures in crores⁶

Country	Exports	Imports
America	201.91 (28.20%)	323.07 (36.3%)
Europe	71.60 (10%)	115.7 (13%)
United Kingdom	191.88 (26.8%)	164.65 (18.5%)
Asia and Oceania	199.04 (27.8%)	202.03 (22.7%)
Africa	51.55 (7.2%)	84.55 (9.5%)
Total	716 (100%)	890 (100%)

In 1947, India had a sterling balance of Rs. 1733 crores. This was the result of a sizeable surplus on balance of trade with the UK during the Second World War period when UK had made large scale purchasing from India to meet its war requirements. However, the immediate post independence period was characterized by the release of pent up demand for imports, suppressed during the war and shortages of food and raw materials. Thus, the import bill increased

substantially while export remained stagnant. The deficit had to be made up from the sterling balances. This resulted in heavy deficit in the balance of trade and the government was forced to impose restrictions on imports.

The rupee was historically linked to the British pound sterling till 1946. The rate of the exchange of rupee was 1 shilling 6 pence; this rate was fixed in 1927. Soon after the Second World War, the IMF (1945) was set up and as one of the founder members of the IMF, India had to fix and maintain the external value of the rupee in terms of gold or the US dollars. India followed the par value system of the IMF. Initially the Indian government had fixed the par value of the rupee at Rs. 3.30 per US dollar. This was the official rate of exchange and the RBI would buy and sell foreign currencies at this rate. But since the demand of dollar was heavy, dollar appreciated in value and the value of the rupee depreciated. The par value of the rupee was periodically changed to correspond with the market rate of exchange. For example, it was changed to Rs. 4.76 per dollar in 1949 and to Rs. 7.50 in 1966. This exchange rate of the rupee remained constant till 1971, when the Bretton Woods system collapsed with the suspension of gold convertibility of the dollar by the USA. Soon after independence the government of India had enacted the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act 1947 (FERA) to regulate the operation of foreign controlled companies in India. This act remained till 1973 and then was amended comprehensively.

At the time of the first five year plan, the banking system was controlled by the Reserve Bank of India. The RBI was established in April 1943 on the model of the Bank of England. The entire share capital was owned by private share holders. After gaining independence, the Indian government decided to initiate the process of planned economic development. It was felt that a state owned central bank was better suited to the requirements of the country. Hence, the RBI was nationalized on January, 1949.

From the above facts we can conclude that the British rule was a long story of the systematic exploitation of the people of India. The

main motive of all British policies was to serve the interest of England. Thus in 1947, when India gained independence, India inherited a crippled economy with stagnant agriculture and low industrialization. So, soon after independence the government of India established the National Income Committee (1949). The committee consisted of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, Prof D.R.Gadgil and Prof V.K.R.V. Rao. The report of NIC appeared in 1954. From the years 1947-50, the Indian government took a few steps to bring reforms to Indian economy. In 1948, the government passed the Industrial policy Resolution and nationalized the RBI. Finally to move along the path of development, the First Five Year Plan was launched on April 1st, 1951 which ended on March 31st, 1956.

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HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (20)

XII. THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

“No interpretation of the Veda can be sound which does not rest on a sound and secure philological basis; and yet this scripture with its obscure and antique tongue of which it is the sole remaining document offers unique philological difficulties. To rely entirely on the traditional and often imaginative renderings of the Indian scholars is impossible for any critical mind. Modern philology strives after a more secure and scientific basis, but has not yet found it.

In the psychological interpretation of the Veda there are, especially, two difficulties which can only be met by a satisfactory philological justification. This interpretation necessitates the acceptance of several new senses for a fair number of fixed technical terms of the Veda, – terms, for example like \square ti, *avas*, *vayas*. These new renderings satisfy one test we may fairly demand; **they fit into every context, clarify the sense and free us from the necessity of attributing quite different significances to the same term in a work of so fixed a form as the Veda. But this test is not sufficient. We must have, besides, a philological basis which will not only account for the new sense, but also explain how a single word came to be capable of so many different meanings, the sense attached to it by the psychological interpretation, those given to it by the old grammarians and those, if any, which are attached to it in later Sanskrit.** But this is not easily possible unless we find a more scientific basis for our philological deductions than our present knowledge affords.

Secondly, the theory of the psychological interpretation depends very often on the use of a double meaning for important words, – the key-words of the secret teaching. The figure is one that is traditional in Sanskrit literature and sometimes employed with an excess of artifice in the later classical works; it is the \square le \square a or rhetorical figure of double entendre. But its very artificiality predisposes us to believe

that this poetical device must belong necessarily to a later and more sophisticated culture. How are we to account for its constant presence in a work of the remotest antiquity? Moreover, there is a peculiar extension of it in the Vedic use, a deliberate employment of the “multi-significance” of Sanskrit roots in order to pack as much meaning as possible into a single word, which at first sight enhances the difficulty of the problem to an extraordinary degree. For instance, the word, *aiva*, usually signifying a horse, is used as a figure of the Prana, the nervous energy, the vital breath, the half-mental, half-material dynamism which links mind and matter. Its root is capable, among other senses, of the ideas of impulsion, force, possession, enjoyment, and we find all these meanings united in this figure of the Steed of Life to indicate the essential tendencies of the Pranic energy. Such a use of language would not be possible if the tongue of the Aryan forefathers obeyed the same conventions as our modern speech or were in the same stage of development. But if we can suppose that there was some peculiarity in the old Aryan tongue as it was used by the Vedic Rishis by which words were felt to be more alive, less merely conventional symbols of ideas, more free in their transitions of meaning than in our later use of speech, then we shall find that these devices were not at all artificial or far-fetched to their employers, but were rather the first natural means which would suggest themselves to men anxious at once to find new, brief and adequate formulae of speech for psychological conceptions not understood by the vulgar and to conceal the ideas contained in their formulae from a profane intelligence. I believe that this is the true explanation; it can be established, I think, by a study of the development of Aryan speech that language did pass through a stage peculiarly favourable to this cryptic and psychological use of words which in their popular handling have a plain, precise and physical significance.”¹

“... my first study of Tamil words had brought me to what seemed a clue to the very origins and structure of the ancient Sanskrit tongue; and so far did this clue lead that I lost sight entirely of my original subject of interest, the connections between Aryan and

Dravidian speech, and plunged into the far more interesting research of the origins and laws of development of human language itself. It seems to me that this great inquiry and not the ordinary preoccupations of linguistic scholars should be the first and central aim of any true science of Philology.

Owing to the failure of the first hopes which attended the birth of modern Philology, its meagre results, its crystallisation into the character of a 'petty conjectural science', the idea of a Science of Language is now discredited and its very possibility, on quite insufficient reasoning, entirely denied. It seems to me impossible to acquiesce in such a final negation. **If there is one thing that Modern Science has triumphantly established, it is the reign of law and process of evolution in the history of all earthly things. Whatever may be the deeper nature of Speech, in its outward manifestation as human language it is an organism, a growth, a terrestrial evolution.** It contains indeed a constant psychological element and is therefore more free, flexible, consciously self-adaptive than purely physical organisms; its secret is more difficult to seize, its constituents yield themselves only to more subtle and less trenchant methods of analysis. But law and process exist in mental no less than in material phenomena in spite of their more volatile and variable appearances. Law and process must have governed the origins and developments of language. Given the necessary clue and sufficient data, they must be discoverable. It seems to me that in the Sanskrit language the clue can be found, the data lie ready for investigation.

The error of Philology which prevented it from arriving at a more satisfactory result in this direction, was its preoccupation in the physical parts of speech with the exterior morphology of language and in its psychological parts with the equally external connections of formed vocables and of grammatical inflexions in kindred languages. But the true method of Science is to go back to the origins, the embryology, the elements and more obscure processes of things. From the obvious only the obvious and superficial results. **The profundities of things, their real truth, can best be discovered by penetration into the hidden things that the surface of phenomena**

conceals, into that past development of which the finished forms present only secret and dispersed indications or into the possibilities from which the actualities we see are only a narrow selection. A similar method applied to the earlier forms of human speech can alone give us a real Science of Language.

It is not in a short chapter of a treatise itself brief and devoted to another subject that it is at all possible to present the results of the work that I have attempted on these lines.^a I can only briefly indicate the one or two features which bear directly on the subject of Vedic interpretation. **And I mention them here solely to avoid any supposition in the minds of my readers that in departing from the received senses of certain Vedic words I have simply taken advantage of that freedom of ingenious conjecture which is at once one of the great attractions and one of the most serious weaknesses of modern Philology.**

My researches first convinced me that **words, like plants, like animals, are in no sense artificial products, but growths, – living growths of sound with certain seed-sounds as their basis. Out of these seed-sounds develop a small number of primitive root-words with an immense progeny** which have their successive generations and arrange themselves in tribes, clans, families, selective groups each having a common stock and a common psychological history. For the factor which presided over the development of language was the association, by the nervous mind of primitive man, of certain general significances or rather of certain general utilities and sense-values with articulate sounds. The process of this association was also in no sense artificial but natural, governed by simple and definite psychological laws.

In their beginnings language-sounds were not used to express what we should call ideas; they were rather the vocal equivalents of certain general sensations and emotion-values. It was the nerves

^a I propose to deal with them in a separate work on “The Origins of Aryan Speech”. [See Vedic Studies with Writings on Philology, volume 14 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.]

and not the intellect which created speech. To use Vedic symbols, Agni and Vayu, not Indra, were the original artificers of human language. Mind has emerged out of vital and sensational activities; intellect in man has built itself upon a basis of sense-associations and sense-reactions. By a similar process **the intellectual use of language has developed by a natural law out of the sensational and emotional.** Words, which were originally vital ejections full of a vague sense-potentiality, have evolved into fixed symbols of precise intellectual significances.

In consequence, **the word originally was not fixed to any precise idea. It had a general character or quality (*guṇa*), which was capable of a great number of applications and therefore of a great number of possible significances.** And this *guṇa* and its results it shared with many kindred sounds. At first, therefore, word-clans, word-families started life on the communal system with a common stock of possible and realised significances and a common right to all of them; their individuality lay rather in shades of expression of the same ideas than in any exclusive right to the expression of a single idea. The early history of language was a development from this communal life of words to a system of individual property in one or more intellectual significances. The principle of partition was at first fluid, then increased in rigidity, until word-families and finally single words were able to start life on their own account. The last stage of the entirely natural growth of language comes when the life of the word is entirely subjected to the life of the idea which it represents. For in the first state of language the word is as living or even a more living force than its idea; sound determines sense. In its last state the positions have been reversed; the idea becomes all-important, the sound secondary.

Another feature of the early history of language is that it expresses at first a remarkably small stock of ideas and these are the most general notions possible and generally the most concrete, such as light, motion, touch, substance, extension, force, speed, etc. Afterwards there is a gradual increase in variety of idea and precision

of idea. The progression is from the general to the particular, from the vague to the precise, from the physical to the mental, from the concrete to the abstract, from the expression of an abundant variety of sensations about similar things to the expression of precise difference between similar things, feelings and actions. This progression is worked out by processes of association in ideas which are always the same, always recurrent and, although no doubt due to the environments and actual experiences of the men who spoke the language, wear the appearance of fixed natural laws of development. And after all **what is a law but a process which has been worked out by the nature of things in response to the necessities of their environment and has become the fixed habit of their action?**

From this past history of language certain consequences derive which are of considerable importance in Vedic interpretation. In the first place by a knowledge of the laws under which the relations of sound and sense formed themselves in the Sanskrit tongue and by a careful and minute study of its word-families it is possible to a great extent to restore the past history of individual words. It is possible to account for the meanings actually possessed by them, to show how they were worked out through the various stages of language-development, to establish the mutual relations of different significances and to explain how they came to be attached to the same word in spite of the wide difference and sometimes even the direct contrariety of their sense-values. It is possible also to restore lost senses of words on a sure and scientific basis and to justify them by an appeal to the observed laws of association which governed the development of the old Aryan tongues, to the secret evidence of the word itself and to the corroborative evidence of its immediate kindred. Thus **instead of having a purely floating and conjectural basis for our dealings with the vocables of the Vedic language, we can work with confidence upon a solid and reliable foundation.**

Naturally, **it does not follow that because a Vedic word may or must have had at one time a particular significance, that significance can be safely applied to the actual text of the Veda.** But we do establish a sound sense and a clear possibility of its being the right

sense for the Veda. The rest is a matter of comparative study of the passages in which the word occurs and of constant fitness in the context. **I have continually found that a sense thus restored illumines always the context wherever it is applied and on the other hand that a sense demanded always by the context is precisely that to which we are led by the history of the word. This is a sufficient basis for a moral, if not for an absolute certainty.**

Secondly, one remarkable feature of language in its inception is the enormous number of different meanings of which a single word was capable and also the enormous number of words which could be used to represent a single idea. Afterwards this tropical luxuriance came to be cut down. The intellect intervened with its growing need of precision, its growing sense of economy. The bearing capacity of words progressively diminished; and it became less and less tolerable to be burdened with a superfluous number of words for the same idea, a redundant variety of ideas for the same word. A considerable, though not too rigid economy in these respects, modified by a demand for a temperate richness of variation, became the final law of language. But the Sanskrit tongue never quite reached the final stages of this development; it dissolved too early into the Prakrit dialects. Even in its latest and most literary form it is lavish of varieties of meanings for the same word; it overflows with a redundant wealth of synonyms. Hence its extraordinary capacity for rhetorical devices which in any other language would be difficult, forced and hopelessly artificial, and especially for the figure of double sense, of *Upekā*.

The Vedic Sanskrit represents a still earlier stratum in the development of language. Even in its outward features it is less fixed than any classical tongue; it abounds in a variety of forms and inflexions; it is fluid and vague, yet richly subtle in its use of cases and tenses. And on its psychological side it has not yet crystallised, is not entirely hardened into the rigid forms of intellectual precision. **The word for the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative, formative.** It is not yet a conventional symbol for an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its roots, is still conscient of its own history.

The Rishis' use of language was governed by this ancient psychology of the Word. When in English we use the word 'wolf' or 'cow', we mean by it simply the animal designated; we are not conscious of any reason why we should use that particular sound for the idea except the immemorial custom of the language; and we cannot use it for any other sense or purpose except by an artificial device of style. But for the Vedic Rishi 'vrika' meant the tearer and therefore, among other applications of the sense, a wolf; 'dhenu' meant the fosterer, nourisher, and therefore a cow. But the original and general sense predominates, the derived and particular is secondary. Therefore, it was possible for the fashioner of the hymn to use these common words with a great pliability, sometimes putting forward the image of the wolf or the cow, sometimes using it to colour the more general sense, sometimes keeping it merely as a conventional figure for the psychological conception on which his mind was dwelling, sometimes losing sight of the image altogether. It is in the light of this psychology of the old language that we have to understand the peculiar figures of Vedic symbolism as handled by the Rishis, even to the most apparently common and concrete. It is so that words like 'ghritam', the clarified butter, 'soma', the sacred wine, and a host of others are used.

Moreover, the partitions made by the thought between different senses of the same word were much less separative than in modern speech. In English 'fleet' meaning a number of ships and 'fleet' meaning swift are two different words; when we use 'fleet' in the first sense we do not think of the swiftness of the ship's motion, nor when we use it in the second, do we recall the image of ships gliding rapidly over the ocean. But this was precisely what was apt to occur in the Vedic use of language. 'Bhaga', enjoyment, and 'bhaga', share, were for the Vedic mind not different words, but one word which had developed two different uses. Therefore it was easy for the Rishis to employ it in one of the two senses with the other at the back of the mind colouring its overt connotation or even to use it equally in both senses at a time by a sort of figure of cumulative significance. 'Chanas' meant food but also it meant 'enjoyment, pleasure'; therefore it could

be used by the Rishi to suggest to the profane mind only the food given at the sacrifice to the gods, but for the initiated it meant the Ananda, the joy of the divine bliss entering into the physical consciousness and at the same time suggested the image of the Soma-wine, at once the food of the gods and the Vedic symbol of the Ananda.

We see everywhere this use of language dominating the Word of the Vedic hymns. It was the great device by which the ancient Mystics overcame the difficulty of their task. Agni for the ordinary worshipper may have meant simply the god of the Vedic fire, or it may have meant the principle of Heat and Light in physical Nature, or to the most ignorant it may have meant simply a superhuman personage, one of the many 'givers of wealth', satisfiers of human desire. How suggest to those capable of a deeper conception the psychological functions of the God? The word itself fulfilled that service. For Agni meant the Strong, it meant the Bright, or even Force, Brilliance. So it could easily recall to the initiated, wherever it occurred, the idea of the illumined Energy which builds up the worlds and which exalts man to the Highest, the doer of the great work, the Purohit of the human sacrifice.

Or how keep it in the mind of the hearer that all these gods are personalities of the one universal Deva? The names of the gods in their very meaning recall that they are only epithets, significant names, descriptions, not personal appellations. **Mitra is the Deva as the Lord of love and harmony, Bhaga as the Lord of enjoyment, Surya as the Lord of illumination, Varuna as the all-pervading Vastness and purity of the Divine supporting and perfecting the world. 'The Existent is One,' says the Rishi Dirghatamas, 'but the sages express It variously; they say Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni; they call It Agni, Yama, Matarishwan.'** The initiate in the earlier days of the Vedic knowledge had no need of this express statement. The names of the gods carried to him their own significance and recalled the great fundamental truth which remained with him always.

But in the later ages the very device used by the Rishis turned against the preservation of the knowledge. For language changed its

character, rejected its earlier pliability, shed off old familiar senses; the word contracted and shrank into its outer and concrete significance. The ambrosial wine of the Ananda was forgotten in the physical offering; the image of the clarified butter recalled only the gross libation to mythological deities, lords of the fire and the cloud and the storm-blast, godheads void of any but a material energy and an external lustre. The letter lived on when the spirit was forgotten; the symbol, the body of the doctrine, remained, but the soul of knowledge had fled from its coverings.”²

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THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (20)

4. THE GREATNESS OF INDIAN ART

I. WHAT IS ART

“If Art’s service is but to imitate Nature, then burn all the picture galleries and let us have instead photographic studios. It is because Art reveals what Nature hides, that a small picture is worth more than all the jewels of the millionaires and the treasures of the princes.

If you only imitate visible Nature, you will perpetrate either a corpse, a dead sketch or a monstrosity; Truth lives in that which goes behind & beyond the visible & sensible.”¹

“Art holds the mirror up to Nature that Nature may see her own image beside that of Art and realise her own deformity and imperfections.”²

“...the nature of art is to strive after a nobler beauty and more sustained perfection than life can give, the nature of poetry is to soar on the wings of the inspiration to the highest intensities and keep winging, as far as may be, always near to them. A form which in the name of freedom remits and relaxes this effort, whatever its other merits and advantages, means a laxity of effort and is a dangerous downward concession.”³

II. THE OBJECT OF ART – INDIAN AND EUROPEAN

“All Art is interpretation. Creation is a misnomer; nothing in this world is created, all is manifested. All exists previously in the mind of the Knower. Art may interpret that which is already manifest or was manifest at one time, or it may interpret what will be manifest hereafter. It may even be used as one of the agencies in the manifestation. A particular type of face and figure may be manifested in the work of a popular artist and in a single generation the existing type of face and figure in the country may change and mould itself to the new conception. These things are there in the type in the causal world with which our superconscious selves are perpetually in touch; they manifest

in the psychical and become part of our thought. That thought we put out into the material world and there it takes shape and body, as movements, as institutions, as poetry, Art and Knowledge, as living men and women. **Man creates his world because he is the psychic instrument through whom God manifests that which He had previously arranged in Himself. In this sense Art can create the past, the present and the future. It can remanifest that which was and has passed away, it can fix for us that which is, it can prophesy that which will be.**

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Its normal sphere, however, is interpretation of a less pregnant and forceful kind. Here too, there are three things which it can interpret in the object it selects, the causal part or thing in itself; the psychical part or its passing imaginations, phases, emotions; or the physical part, the outward appearance, incident or movement as our eyes see them. Indian Art attaches itself to the two higher interpretations, European to the two lower. They meet in the middle term of Art, the imaginative and emotional; but each brings with it the habits of vision, the conventions, the mastering movement and tendency of the soul downward to earth or upward to heaven, born of their main preoccupation, so that even here, though they meet on common ground, they remain diverse and unreconciled.

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In dealing with the form the question between them is Shall I reproduce what the eye sees or shall I reproduce what the soul sees? The lower type of European Art is content with reproducing what the eye sees. This it calls realism and fidelity to Nature – narrowing Nature to the limited confines of the materially sensible. The reproduction, of course, is not a real reproduction, but only an approximation within the limitations imposed by the canvas, the brush and the paintbox. It is really as close an imitation as our instruments will allow, absolute fidelity being rarely possible. This style of Art had perhaps its utility, but now that we have photographs and can put colour into the photographs, its separate field is in danger of being taken from it.

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A higher European Art takes imitation of the form as its basis, but its nobler objective is not the imitation of form, but the imitation of emotion. The artist tries to see and recover on canvas not only the body, but so much of the feeling as the body can for the moment express. This may often be a great deal. In certain moments of powerful feeling or critical action a great deal of our psychical selves may come out in the eyes, the face, the gesture, the pose. This the artist imitates. He not only shows us an object or an incident, but he fixes on the canvas a moment in the soul-life of the object. The habitual mood also stamps itself to a great extent on the face and certain traits of character betray themselves in expression and feature. These too the imitative artist transfers to the canvas. When not exaggerated or theatrical, this kind of art can be strong, effective and dramatic. But it has serious limitations. So much of the inner truth as the outward form interprets, this Art interprets. Its interpretation is secondhand, its vision derived and unable to go beyond its authority.

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A still higher reach is attained by imaginative European Art. Imagination, according to the European idea, is creative, not interpretative. What is really meant is that the imaginative artist transfers something that belongs to himself into the object of his study, some fancy that has flashed across or some idea that has mastered his mind. Either he reads it into his subject by unconscious transference or he deliberately uses his subject as a mere excuse for putting his fancy or his idea into line and colour. The artist is interpreting himself, not his subject. This egoistic Art has often a very high value and some of the best European work has been done in this kind. More rarely his imaginative sympathy enables him to catch a glimpse of the thing itself hidden in the form. His imagination usually plays with it and prevents the vision from being true in all its parts, but he is able to do work of the highest attractiveness, vigour or artistic beauty.

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In all these kinds the European binds himself by the necessity of

reproducing the actual outward form imposed by material Nature. He is a bondsman to form and such do not attain to that spiritual freedom which is the first condition of the sight spiritual. When he tries to interpret the thing in itself, he degenerates usually into allegory. Recently the Impressionist school in Europe have tried to break the fetters of the form; they have insisted that what one really sees in an object is not the rounded, solid material form but something rarer and different. In reality, they are groping their way towards an attempt at seeing and interpreting something hidden in the object, something the soul sees before the eye can catch it. Ignorant of the way, they seldom rise beyond a striking and fantastic imagination, but sometimes an inspired eye catches the true vision.

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The Indian begins at the other end. He sees the thing itself either by sukshmadrishti, the soul-sight, or by dhyana, a spiritual union with the object studied in which the truth it expresses dawns on the mind by the process of revelation. This he transfers to canvas by letting his inspired and informed Will guide the pencil and the brush instead of using his intellect or merely technical means to find the best way of expression. He uses technique with power, but does not rely on it chiefly. The body he paints is the one which will in every part of it express the thing itself, not the actual material body which largely conceals it. When he descends into the psychical part and seeks to express imaginations, emotions, or passing phases, he carries his method with him. Not content with expressing as much of the feeling as the actual body reveals, he sees the emotion in its fullness by dhyana or soul-sight and forces the body into a mould fit for its absolute expression. He sees the soul and paints it or he sees the heart or mind and paints it. He sees and can, if he will, paint the body merely. But usually he does not will it.”⁴

III. THE THREE ELEMENTS OF ARTS

“To embellish life with beauty is only the most outward function of art and poetry, to make life more intimately beautiful and noble

and great and full of meaning is its higher office, but its highest comes when the poet becomes the seer and reveals to man his eternal self and the godheads of its manifestation.”⁵

A. Art for Art’s Sake – the Perfection of Expressive Form

“Art for Art’s sake? But what after all is meant by this slogan and what is the real issue behind it? Is it meant, as I think it was when the slogan first came into use, that the technique, the artistry is all in all? The contention would then be that it does not matter what you write or paint or sculpt or what music you make or about what you make it so long as it is beautiful writing, competent painting, good sculpture, fine music. It is very evidently true in a certain sense, – in this sense that whatever is perfectly expressed or represented or interpreted under the conditions of a given art proves itself by that very fact to be legitimate material for the artist’s labour. But that free admission cannot be confined only to all objects, however common or deemed to be vulgar – an apple, a kitchen pail, a donkey, a dish of carrots, – it can give a right of citizenship in the domain of art to a moral theme or thesis, a philosophic conclusion, a social experiment; even the Five Years’ Plan or the proceedings of a District Board or the success of a drainage scheme, an electric factory or a big hotel can be brought... into the artist’s province.”⁶ Or in other words, an artist’s creation should be judged by its success of craftsmanship and not by its contents.

B. Art for Beauty’s Sake

The above is true only up to a point. “For technique is a means of expression; one does not write merely to use beautiful words or paint for the sole sake of line and colour; there is something that one is trying through these means to express or to discover. What is that something? The first answer would be – it is the creation, it is the discovery of Beauty. Art is for that alone and can be judged only by its revelation or discovery of Beauty. Whatever is capable of being

manifested as Beauty, is the material of the artist. But there is not only physical beauty in the world – there is moral, intellectual, spiritual beauty also. Still one might say that Art for Art’s sake means that only what is aesthetically beautiful must be expressed and all that contradicts the aesthetic sense of beauty must be avoided, – Art has nothing to do with Life in itself, things in themselves, Good, Truth or the Divine for their own sake, but only in so far as they appeal to some aesthetic sense of beauty. And that would seem to be a sound basis for excluding the Five Years’ Plan, a moral sermon or a philosophical treatise. But here again, what after all is Beauty? How much is it in the thing itself and how much in the consciousness that perceives it? Is not the eye of the artist constantly catching some element of aesthetic value in the plain, the ugly, the sordid, the repellent and triumphantly conveying it through his material, – through the word, through line and colour, through the sculptured shape?”⁷

C. Art for Spirit’s Sake – the Expression of the Divine

“The highest aim of the aesthetic being is to find the Divine through beauty; the highest Art is that which by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form unseals the doors of the spirit.”⁸

Beyond the above two elements of Art, there is one thing more that can be said, and that makes a big difference. “In the Yogin’s vision of universal beauty all becomes beautiful, but all is not reduced to a single level. There are gradations, there is a hierarchy in this All-Beauty and we see that it depends on the ascending power (vibhuti) of consciousness and Ananda that expresses itself in the object. All is the Divine, but some things are more divine than others. In the artist’s vision too there are or can be gradations, a hierarchy of values. Shakespeare can get dramatic and therefore aesthetic values out of Dogberry and Malvolio, and he is as thorough a creative artist in his treatment of them as in his handling of Macbeth or Lear. But if we had only Dogberry or Malvolio to testify to Shakespeare’s genius, no Macbeth, no Lear, would he be so great a dramatic artist and creator

as he now is? It is in the varying possibilities of one subject or another that there lies an immense difference. Apelles' grapes deceived the birds that came to peck at them, but there was more aesthetic content in the Zeus of Phidias, a greater content of consciousness and therefore of Ananda to express and with it to fill in and intensify the essential principle of Beauty even though the essence of beauty might be realised perhaps with equal aesthetic perfection by either artist and in either theme.

And that is because just as technique is not all, so even Beauty is not all in Art. Art is not only technique or form of Beauty, not only the discovery or the expression of Beauty, – it is a self-expression of Consciousness under the conditions of aesthetic vision and a perfect execution. Or to put it otherwise there are not only aesthetic values but life-values, mind-values, soul-values, that enter into Art. The artist puts out into form not only the powers of his own consciousness but the powers of the Consciousness that has made the worlds and their objects. And if that Consciousness according to the Vedantic view is fundamentally equal everywhere, it is still in manifestation not an equal power in all things. There is more of the Divine expression in the Vibhuti than in the common man, *prākṣito janaḥ*; in some forms of life there are less potentialities for the self-expression of the Spirit than in others. And there are also gradations of consciousness which make a difference, if not in the aesthetic value or greatness of a work of art, yet in its contents value. Homer makes beauty out of man's outward life and action and stops there. Shakespeare rises one step farther and reveals to us a life-soul and life-forces and life-values to which Homer had no access. In Valmiki and Vyasa there is the constant presence of great Idea-Forces and Ideals supporting life and its movements which were beyond the scope of Homer and Shakespeare. And beyond the Ideals and Idea-Forces even there are other presences, more inner or inmost realities, a soul behind things and beings, the spirit and its powers, which could be the subject-matter of an art still more rich and deep and abundant in its interest than any of these could be. A poet finding these and giving them a voice with a genius equal to that of the poets of the past might not be greater than they

in a purely aesthetical valuation, but his art's contents-value, its consciousness-values could be deeper and higher and much fuller than in any achievement before him. There is something here that goes beyond any considerations of Art for Art's sake or Art for Beauty's sake; for while these stress usefully sometimes the indispensable first elements of artistic creation, they would limit too much the creation itself if they stood for the exclusion of the something More that compels Art to change always in its constant seeking for more and more that must be expressed of the concealed or the revealed Divine, of the individual and the universal or the transcendent Spirit.

If we take these three elements as making the whole of Art, perfection of expressive form, discovery of beauty, revelation of the soul and essence of things and the powers of creative consciousness and Ananda of which they are the vehicles, then we shall get perhaps a solution which includes the two sides of the controversy and reconciles their difference. Art for Art's sake certainly – Art as a perfect form and discovery of Beauty; but also Art for the soul's sake, the spirit's sake and the expression of all that the soul, the spirit wants to seize through the medium of beauty. In that self-expression there are grades and hierarchies – widenings and steps that lead to the summits. And not only to enlarge Art towards the widest wideness but to ascend with it to the heights that climb towards the Highest is and must be part both of our aesthetic and our spiritual endeavour.”⁹

IV. ART AND YOGA

“But does an artist feel at all any impulse to create once he takes up Yoga?”

Why should he not have the impulse? He can express his relation with the Divine in the way of his art, exactly as he would in any other. If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, Art is not very different from Yoga. But

most often the artist has only an indefinite feeling, he has not the knowledge. Still, I knew some who had it; they worked consciously at their art with the knowledge. In their creation they did not put forward their personality as the most important factor; they considered their work as an offering to the Divine, they tried to express by it their relation with the Divine.

This was the avowed function of Art in the Middle Ages. The “primitive” painters, the builders of cathedrals in Mediaeval Europe had no other conception of art. In India all her architecture, her sculpture, her painting have proceeded from this source and were inspired by this ideal. The songs of Mirabai and the music of Thyagaraja, the poetic literature built up by her devotees, saints and Rishis rank among the world’s greatest artistic possessions.”¹⁰

“But if one does Yoga can he rise to such heights as Shakespeare or Shelley? There has been no such instance.

Why not? The Mahabharata and Ramayana are certainly not inferior to anything created by Shakespeare or any other poet, and they are said to have been the work of men who were Rishis and had done Yogic *tapasya*. The Gita which, like the Upanishads, ranks at once among the greatest literary and the greatest spiritual works, was not written by one who had no experience of Yoga. And where is the inferiority to your Milton and Shelley in the famous poems written whether in India or Persia or elsewhere by men known to be saints, Sufis, devotees? And, then, do you know all the Yogis and their work? Among the poets and creators can you say who were or who were not in conscious touch with the Divine? There are some who are not officially Yogis, they are not *gurus* and have no disciples; the world does not know what they do; they are not anxious for fame and do not attract to themselves the attention of men; but they have the higher consciousness, are in touch with a Divine Power, and when they create they create from there. The best paintings in India and much of the best statuary and architecture were done by Buddhist monks who passed their lives in spiritual contemplation and practice; they did supreme artistic work, but did not care to leave their names

to posterity. The chief reason why Yogis are not usually known by their art is that they do not consider their art-expression as the most important part of their life and do not put so much time and energy into it as a mere artist. And what they do does not always reach the public. How many there are who have done great things and not published them to the world!"¹¹

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THE ONE ROOT FACT

“When the traditions of a nation die then that nation is dead and even if it persists as a great Power in the world, yet it is nothing but an aggregate of meaningless individuals determinedly pursuing their contemptible aims... History is a symbol, and what that symbol signifies is something infinitely more precious than a mere peddling adherence to a sequence of so-called ‘facts.’ There is only one root fact anywhere, and that is the Eternal One. Whatever helps to reveal Him is a fact, and whatever to hide Him is a lie even if all the fools in the world affirm it.”

– **Sri Krishnaprem**

(*Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, Dilip Kumar Roy,
Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 1975, page 134)