Book 1

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The Ram Temple Movement

A mass initiative for reinstatement of Hindutva in Secular India

Chapter I

The Ayodhya movement and reinstatement of Hindu spirit in Indian polity

The Ayodhya movement for building the Ram Temple, which re-railed the derailed Indian nation and nationalism and helped to recapture and reinstate the Indian identity in Indian polity – was perhaps the greatest mass movement that the people of India generated in the twentieth century. The background to the Ayodhya movement has been succinctly captured in the White Paper on the Ram Temple Movement brought out by the Bharatiya Janata Party. The BJP White Paper says that ''the movement had a religious and cultural origin, but it has profoundly influenced the political destiny of India because of the insensitivity of the current political leadership that is free India's political leadership, to the spiritual and cultural aspirations of the Indian nation'White Paper on the Ram Temple Movement published by the BJP p.7] Here in lies the clue to why the Ayodhya movement rose like a tornado in Indian polity. It was a movement waiting to happen given the humiliating conditions which secular polity, as practised by almost all political forces, had imposed on the people of India. It turned out to be a massive protest against the amnesia into which this ancient nation was being forced by the expediencies of electoral and day to day politics. Instead of eternal values of this ancient nation anchoring the day to day politics, the vagaries of power hungry politics heavily devalued and endeavoured to discredit its eternal principles and destabilised its mind and psyche. The

compulsive needs of secular politics as understood and articulated purely in electoral terms demanded a massive self-negation from the nation. The self-negation demanded amounted to disowning its past and disconnecting from its roots. A country whose soul, Maharishi Aurobindo said, was and continues to be 'Sanatana Dharma'– a non-conflicting and conflict-resolving philosophy for which the world on the throes of civilisational clashes borne out of intolerant and imperial religions awaits India – was slow poisoned to distance and disconnect itself from its soul and roots.

It is essentially the insensitivity of the secular India to the sensibilities of the cultural and non-conflicting religious values of ancient India and the manner in which the secular polity began demeaning and deriding the Hindu sentiments and Hindu cultural icons that laid the foundation for the alienation of the Hindu masses and classes alike from the state and polity of India. What started in electoral calculus as the protection of the minorities, turned by theory and practice of secular politics that became euphemism for vote-bank politics, promotion of the minorities and later got perverted into appeasement of minorities. It was not just limited to that, but extended to undermining the Hindu character and Hindu identity of India by characterising everything that connected India to its roots and soul as communal and anti-minorities and unsecular. It was not sufficient if a political party was pro-minority to be regarded and accepted as secular, it had to demonstrate its anti-Hindu character to prove its secular credentials. The direct result of this distorted and perverted secular politics, which was celebrated by equating this perversion with the constitutional concept of secularism and even modernism, was the marginalisation of the cultural majority of the nation under the guise of secularisation of the national life and polity.

The BJP White Paper summed up the hidden triggers behind this historic movement thus: "To understand how the Ayodhya movement and how it has struck deep chord in the Indian mind we must see how the Ayodhya issue was always a potentially political issue and eventually graduated into one; how the Indian leaders ignored history and wanted the people also to ignore it; how the provocative ocular effect of the invaders' monuments was underplayed rather than understood as to its potential effect;

how false unity was promoted instead of an understanding rooted in facts and resulting in assimilation; how the consequence was distorted secularism; how Rama and *Ramarajya* are our national heritage whose potentiality has been realised only now; how the evolution from Somnath was suspended after the death of Sardar Patel and how the Ayodhya is the recommencement from the point where the spirit of Somnath stood suspended." [Ibid p.7] The White Paper adds: "The Ayodhya movement was not just a plea for a temple for Sri Rama, that instead it reflected a far deeper quest for capturing national identity. The movement is firmly rooted in the inclusive and assimilative cultural heritage of India. It represents the nationalist thrust of the freedom movement. The post Independence political creed of the Congress and of most other political parties had come to regard everything that inspired this nation in the past as less than secular – in fact, communal and even anti-national. The movement for the restoration of the Temple at the birthplace of Sri Rama evolved as a corrective to this distortion. It developed into a massive protest against the derailment of all that inspired the freedom movement – the elevating chant of *Vandemataram* which Maharishi Banchim Chandra gave to this nation, the goal of *Ramarajya* held out by Mahatma Gandhi as the destination of the free India, the ideal of Spiritual Nationalism expounded by Swami Vivekananda, the Spirit of Sanatana Dharma which Sri Aurobindo described as the soul and nationalism of India and the mass devotion to the motherland built around the Ganpathi festival by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The Ayodhya movement symbolised the re-establishment of these roots of our nationhood which had dried up due to the post-independence polity and a spiritually bankrupt nation. Indeed, secularism became a perverted slogan – merely a means to catch votes and a slogan to shout down every nationalist' [Ibid p.7]. The immediate drives of the Ayodhya movement could not have been brought out better.

These immediate triggers for the Ayodhya explosion were the sustained and calibrated result of free India's intellectual distortions and perversions that denied the Indian antiquity and cultivated a sense of irreverence for the Indian past. These distortions originated in the colonial interpretation of the Indian history, traditions, values, religion and society. The secular India's

scholarship which was keen to de-link modern India from ancient India was keen to lap up and did lap up all biased and distorted colonial scholarship on India which was calculated to undermine India in the minds of Indians. A compulsive element that persuaded the secular scholarship to endeavour to de-link the modern India from the ancient Indian traditions was the unbelievable negationism in the secular Indian scholarship that had as its principal object the suppression of the near barbaric Islamic invasion in India for the purpose of instituting an India not only de-linked from the Past, but an India that will have no memory of the bitterness of the past. So the idea of avoiding bitterness became an ideal for which negationism became a permissible and even an unavoidable tool. And as it was an ideal to be achieved even forging facts and opinions in history for avoiding historical constructions and interpretations that might revive bitterness of the past was not only permissible but also mandatory in secular scholarship.''

It is necessary at this point to look back and capture how the masses, who have been peacefully agitating for the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya exploded on December 6, 1992. A foreword written by Shri L.K. Advani, who undertook the historic *Rath Yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya which triggered unbelievable and unprecedented mass participation of the people in the movement and also brought the issue into the centre of Indian politics, he said that apart from the natural urge of the Hindu society to have a temple erected for Sri Rama in his place of birth the other causes and urges which constituted the powerful drives of the movement. Advani wrote:

"But another powerful current arose among the people, and the confluence of the two has given the power to the Sri *Rama-janmabhumi* movement which we see today. The manner in which the state bent to the fundamentalists and terrorists, the manner in which self-styled leaders of minorities sought to revive the politics of separatism which had led to the partition of the country, and even more the manner in which Prime Ministers and others genuflected to them; and the double standards which came more and more to mar public discourse in India to the point that the word "Hindu"' became something to be ashamed about, to the point that nationalism became a dirty word – these ignited a great revulsion among the

people. As all this was being done in the name of "Secularism", it led the people to believe that what was being practised was not Secularism but a perversion. The people began to search for what true Secularism meant, they began to wonder how our country could at all survive if nationalism was to be anathema.''

Reconstructing the temple for Sri Rama became the symbol of this rising consciousness – ridding the country of the perversions to which it was being subjected in the name of Secularism, forging a strong and united country. The object of the movement thus became to put our country back on its feet, to purify our public life, our discourse.

This is how in 1989 the Bharatiya Janata Party formally decided to lend its shoulder to the cause – the Party was responding to the deepest urges of our people.

But even this tug of the people was what had led the Party to take up the cause, even though I had myself spelt out this perspective as I commenced the *Rathyatra,* my colleagues and I were surprised at the way our people responded. We were overwhelmed. It was only then that we saw how deep was their devotion to Sri Rama, how deeply they felt that they were not being listened to in their own country, how outraged they were at the politics of vote-bank and double talk, and talking down to them, of the preceding fifteen years.

The rest is history. Our governments refused to pay heed to the intense longing of the people with regard to Ram*a-janmabhumi*. And I regret to say that the courts heeded to our people no more. The government remained lost in calculations; our leaders continued to be obstructive, and to put their trust in being clever; our courts allowed themselves to remain entangled in legalisms. The anger which has been welling up across the country, and which would have found a smooth and peaceful outlet if the *Karseva* had been allowed on 2.77 acres of land adjoining the disputed structure, exploded on December 6. Disregarding the exhortations of the movement leaders, who had planned to shift the structure only after appropriate legislation, the *Karsevaks* pulled down the structure. For millions already the temple construction has already begun.

But the *Karsevaks* did more. They just did not erase a symbol of our subjugation. They just did not begin building a symbol of

resurgence. They showed us as if in a flash how far we have to travel. [Ibid p.2-3]

Yes, the Ayodhya movement symbolised a larger corrective which the Indian polity needed as an anti-dote to the large distortion and derailment which had taken place in free India because of the machinations of vote bank politics. But the message of the Ayodhya movement will be incomplete unless the imbalance in the relation between the state and the society as it was structured after freedom is analysed and understood.

A book titled 'Ayodhya and the Future of India', which was a profound intellectual work from the stable of the Centre for Policy Studies [CPS], a well-known Chennai-based social research organisation was based on the perceptions of persons from different schools of thought on the future of India after the Ayodhya turn to national polity. In a brilliant introduction to a book which presents lectures by six speakers from different schools of thought on Ayodhya and the future of India, Dr J.K. Bajaj, a director of the CPS and a theoretical physicist-turned-social scientist sets out the philosophy behind the destruction of the structure at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Describing the colonial remnants as unnatural humiliation which the children of a free nation did not deserve to suffer, Dr Bajaj says that the destruction at Ayodhya on December 6 seems somehow related to the undoing of that persistent sense of humiliation'. [Ayodhya and the Future of India. . [p.4] In pages 1 to 7 of his introduction Dr Bajaj describes in detail how humiliating and hurting colonial monuments and memorials which are of no great architectural significance and beauty are preserved by us with great effort. He goes on to say what negationism in free India's secular scholarship would not permit in public debate in India. Since it is a profound statement on the power of the forces of history which acquires more explosive power as it is negated and suppressed, it is worthwhile to be reproduced in entirety, particularly because the Indian debate has not given due weight to such views on the Ayodhya phenomenon. Of particular importance is the reference in the introduction to the noted historian Arnold Toynbee, who in the Azad Memorial Lecture delivered as early as 1963 foretold the nation about the provocative nature of the mosques built by Aurangazeb on sites sacred to the Hindus at Ayodhya, Mathura

and Varanasi.

"We preserve the memory of not only our erstwhile British masters, to whom we happen to be particularly attached, but also of other invaders and desperadoes of different hues and different times. We, thus, lovingly maintain and proudly display the Qutb-Minar complex in Delhi, built by early Islamic invaders from the ruins of numerous temples. History recognises those invaders and pretentious rulers of Delhi – the Slave Kings, the Khaljis and others – as barbarians. The nucleus of Qutb-Minar complex is formed by Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, founded by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1191 to commemorate the capture of Delhi and to celebrate as the name of the mosque implies, the 'Might of Islam'. An inscription on the east gate of this mosque states that it was built from the materials collected from the demolition of "twenty seven idolatrous shrines of unbelievers". And we have made this complex into a major land mark of Delhi.

It seems to us that we want to carry the whole burden of our historical defeats with us. We do not want to forget or erase any of it. We, therefore, have victory towers, triumphal arches, and statues of victors occupying prominent public places in most cities. We have tall church spires rising from holiest towns, especially in south India. And we have victors' mosques standing in most sacred spots of Indian collective memory. The public spaces of India have become unbearable to the good sense of ordinary Indians. They look weird to the good sense of even perspective foreigners. One such foreigner, Arnold Toynbee, tried to remind us of the weirdness of such cluttering up of public spaces with symbols of defeat in his now famous Azad Memorial Lecture.

"As I have been speaking, some vivid visual memories have been flashing past my mind's eye. One of these is a mental picture of the principal square in the Polish City of Warsaw sometime in the late nineteen-twenties. In the course of the first Russian occupation of Warsaw (1814-1915), the Russians had built an Eastern Orthodox Cathedral on this central spot in the city that had been the capital of once independent Roman Catholic Christian country, Poland. The Russians had done this to give the Poles a continuous ocular demonstration that the Russians were now their masters. After the re-establishment of Poland's independence in 1918, the Poles had

pulled the cathedral down. The demolition had been completed just before the date of my visit. I do not greatly blame the Polish Government for having pulled down that Russian Church. The purpose for which the Russians built it had not been religious, but political, and the purpose had also been intentionally offensive. On the other hand, I do greatly praise the Indian government for not having pulled down Aurangazeb's mosques: I am thinking particularly of the two that overlook the ghats at Benaras and the one that crowns Krishna's hill at Mathura.''

"Aurrangazeb's purpose in building those three mosques was the same intentionally offensive political purpose that moved the Russians to build their Orthodox cathedral in the city-centre at Warsaw. Those three mosques were intended to signify that an Islamic government was reigning supreme even over Hinduism's holiest of holy places. I must say that Aurangazeb had veritable genius for picking out provocative sites. Aurangazeb and Phillip-II Spain are a pair. They are incarnations of gloomily fanatical vein in Christian-Muslim-Jewish family of religions. Aurangazeb – poor wretched misguided man – spent a lifetime of hard labour in raising a massive monument to his own discredit. Perhaps, the Poles were really kinder in destroying the Russians' self-discrediting monuments in Warsaw than you have been in sparing Aurangazeb's mosques. Any way, it is Aurangazeb, not the Hindu holy ground on which his mosques are planted, that suffers from their conspicuous presence.....

"Aurangazeb's mosques are not outstandingly beautiful works of Indian Muslim architecture. But the standard of all Mughal works is high. I have noticed the loving care with which the Indian archaeological service looks after such world-famous masterpieces as Taj Mahal and other forts at Agra and herein Shahjehanabad. Not only the Islamic world, but the whole world ought to feel grateful to India for this. But the careful preservation of public monuments is not so meritorious when they are supremely beautiful as it is when they do not have this intrinsic appeal. The British rulers of India followed their Muslims predecessors' practice of perpetuating the memories of their fleeting presence by leaving monuments behind them. Unfortunately for the British, the style of their epoch in India was no longer the Moghul.. It

was the Victorian Gothic. If any of my countrymen still had a say in determining the policy of the Indian Ministry of Public Works, I suspect that they might press for the demolition of some of these Philistine reminder of the British phase in the history of India. But not so the Indian authorities. They are as far as I know, being as tender to the British monstrosities as they are to the Taj....." [Arnold Toynbee, One World and India ICCR, Delhi 1960, pp.59-61]

The important point Toynbee makes is that the Indian authorities are tender to the British monstrosities. But, says Dr Bajaj that ''we take this gentlemanly rebuke...... as an ode to our peculiar tolerance''. But it is actually a rebuke nevertheless. The historian does not want the remnants of such intolerance as the mosques of Aurangzeb obliterated without a purpose. There is a deeper meaning behind his suggestion that the British remove some of the reminders of the British rule of India was founded on the forces of history. It produces two effects, each countering and opposing the other, thus producing a centrifugal effect which can set the future on the boil, like the Ayodhya issue did. It reminds the Muslims that they were the rulers of this soil and cling to the intolerant political symbols such as the unused and abandoned mosques such as that in Ayodhya as symbols of Islam in India. It equally reminds the Hindus what the Islamic rule did to the Hindus and their temples in India. Like what Toynbee said the British authorities should be doing, namely ask for the removal of the reminders of the British rule in India, the Muslim leadership in India should have been asking for it, or the secular parties, leaders and scholars must have been keen to erase such centrifugal symbols as the mosques. But neither had the Muslim leadership had the foresight of Toynbee, nor had the secular thinkers and leaders in India had the awareness about the explosive effect of reminders in history. Instead both the seculars and the Muslims leaders began smuggling in secularism into an explosive symbol and began defending the indefensible, namely that the provocative and centrifugal symbol which has the potential to revive the intolerant Islamic past and disturb the present and the future for ever, was a symbol of secularism and minority rights in India!

Building on the power of the forces of history which Toynbee

had spelt out in his lecture Dr Bajaj goes on to say how the ruling elite of India had virtually assumed the role of the successors to the conquerors of India in total disregard of the sentiments of the people of India. Dr Bajaj says, "the various statues, memorials, triumphal arches and victory towers, and even rituals associated with the foreign state, came to be seen [in free India] as necessary for keeping the people reminded of the pedigree and majesty of the new dispensation". Dr Bajaj poignantly adds: "It was not an act of forgetfulness that the dead body of Mahatma Gandhi, the *Avatara,* who came to re-establish the meaning of Ahimsa and Swadeshi, was put on a gun-carriage and subjected to the alien ritual of salute by cannon fire". [Ibid p.11] Dr Bajaj also points out how the Marxist Government of Bengal put a red cap on the victory tower built in honour of Sir David Octholony, the victor of Nepal, and own it up a Shaheed Minar, the martyrs' memorial and asks, "Whose martyrs and for what causes?"[Ibid pp.11-12] He also refers to a story of about the former Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, as told by Mr Natwar Singh, a former diplomat who later turned to politics and was recently the foreign minister of India, when he was forced to give up his position as the foreign affairs minister. It was said, according to Dr Bajaj, that during the visit of Indira Gandhi to Kabul in Afghanistan in 1968 she asked to be taken to the grave of Babar. Says Bajaj, "The request put the hosts to quite some embarrassment: they had not cared to remember the man. But somehow the grave was located and spruced up for the Indian dignitary. Shrimati Gandhi visited the grave, paid her respects, and then according to the former diplomat [Natwar Singh] who had accompanied her on the tour, she was lost in deep and respectful reverie that lasted for a long-time." [Ibid p.12 foot note 7 with reference to Glimpses of History collections of the letters of Natwar Singh to Shrimati Gandhi at p.239-41] Thus, says Dr Bajaj, "It is not our pubic places alone but also our minds that are cluttered up with associations with the victors of the past."[Ibid p.12]

It is this perception that was being created and sustained as if the free Indian dispensation is a successor of the Mughul conquerors and Imperial colonialists that the Ayodhya movement rebelled against and demolished. Says Dr Bajaj, "And the events at Ayodhya seem to have demolished, not so much an old and

tottering structure, but this self-serving faith in our imperial inheritance."[Ibid p.12]

More importantly the Ayodhya events have proved that the people of India have recaptured their true spirit. The Indian secular dispensation has come to realise that their efforts to make the people of India forget their past or to force them to acquire such barbaric notions of their past and forefathers that they would consider it better to forget than to remember their past, has come to a naught. Says Dr Bajaj, "The events have indeed broken the reverie. They have come as a rude jolt to many who had begun to imagine that they were not in a position to do what the conquerors of the past had failed to accomplish. To make the people of India forget their intrinsic Indian-ness, their essential rooted-ness in the Indian civilisation, and turn them into obedient followers of the whims and fancies of their current masters. The Ayodhya events have shown that in spite of all tomtomming of the virtues of European modernity and unmitigated vices of the Indian past, the people of India have not really changed. They continue to keep their own counsel about what is worth preserving in the Indian past and what needs to be forgotten. ... Centuries of slavery under alien rulers have not extinguished their spirit, and even they can rise up and express their likes and dislikes in as forceful a manner as they did in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992."[Ibid p.12-13]

The most significant remark of Dr Bajaj is yet to come. "This realisation – that the people of India have not become really obedient, that they do not care for what the educated and the presently powerful think and believe, that all the maligning of the Indian past and the Indian ways indulged in by the articulate sections of Indians have not changed anything – was perhaps the most galling aspect of the Ayodhya events. It is no wonder that most of the political commentators and analysts reacted to the events with a sense of personal injury and instinctively began to hurl choicest abuses at those who had dared to disobey" that is to disobey their views and opinions. "But the more perspective of the observers also realised that the events signified the beginning of the end of a phase in Indian history. The republic, constituted as a successor regime to the British and the Mughals, was no longer viable." [Ibid p.13]

No other comment could have captured more comprehensively and profoundly the deepest quest of the Ayodhya movement and the paradigm shift that it was seeking to bring about in the Indian debate and in Indian polity and constitutionalism. As will be seen later in some detail the Ayodhya movement and the events that unfolded in Ayodhya so completely and comprehensively changed the rules of polity and the norms of debate in Indian discourse that it had had a cascading effect on electoral politics, national identity, the image and status of India in and outside of India, the emergence of India as a power to reckon with in the global arena and also in the constitutional and judicial appreciation of ancient and eternal India in the context of the modern Indian thinking and its linkages with the ancient India. In short, the Hindu consciousness – which Maharishi Aurobindo would equate to Sanatana Dharma and Swami Vivekananda would call as the 'spiritual tune' to which the hearts of the people of India beat and Sri Ramakrishna would acclaim as what ultimately will prevail in this ancient nation overcoming all other forces and thoughts – has manifested in the national will and endeavours. It has reinstated the Hindu spirit which was long suppressed by the invaders and colonialists and also by free India's indigenous dispensation, which was more a continuity than a change which the people of India had yearned for, back in our consciousness and institutions including polity.

Another significant dimension of the Ayodhya movement for erasing an explosive symbol of religious intolerance that swept across India during the Islamic rule, which was not often noticed in the Indian debate was that the Hindu resurgence which the movement symbolised was not an isolated development. It was accompanied by the rising consciousness at the global level about militant Islam. Even as the movement reached its highest crescendo here, the global awareness about fossilised elements in the Islamic world and their danger to the modern began manifesting. Early in the year 1993, almost close on the heals of the Ayodhya episode in December 1992, Samuel Huntington came out with his paper in the Foreign Affairs magazine on the potentiality of civilisational clashes emerging in the world among different civilisations, in particular between the West and Islam. Huntington had said that clashes would occur along the fault lines of Islamic nations with

other nations. While the global developments and the events in India generated by the Ayodhya movement were complementary to each other, the Indian debate did not factor in the global perception on the intolerant dimensions of Islam which the clash of civilisations theory had expounded. This was largely because of the pseudo-secular foundations of the Indian discourse. Fearing that connecting to the global debate would amount to recognising, and may be even validating, the foundations of the Ayodhya movement, the Indian debate, which was largely dominated by the seculars, mainly ignored the global debate on intolerant and extremist Islam which had begun, and marginally even took a position within in India against the evolving global opinion. This was of course consistent with the opposition to the Ayodhya movement which the pseudo-secular establishment India knew had raised far reaching civilisational issues linked to the cultural and civilisational identity of India and its personality as a nation.. Thus the opposition to the global debate on civilisational causes was consistent with the opposition to the Ayodhya movement in India. This opposition was of course as groundless as the opposition to the Ayodhya movement, but opposing without debating the grounds for opposing being part of the pseudo-secular intellectual model in India, the secular establishment found India a convenient cocoon to confine its debate, without participating in the global debate. In fact, the Indian non-participation in the debate was not in the interest of either the Indian nation or in the interest of the Indian Muslims or of even the moderate Muslims. The debate, which had begun between Western Universal thinkers who promoted westernisation as modernisation and the Islamic nations largely viewed in the West as anti-modern and semi-barbaric, needed an empathetic umpire between them, which India with its familiarity with Islam and being a deeply religious society with its sensitivity to religious sentiments could well have been. But, the Indian debate ignored the global debate and, therefore, global debate also ignored the Indian view. That the global debate on civilisational clashes did not factor in the Indian view, and consequently the India and Indian contribution was totally absent in the entire debate on civilisational clashes. This was because while every nation, largely through the State or through State-aided or State-recognised institutions

had participated in intellectual exercises that Huntington himself undertook between his Summer 1993 paper in the Foreign Affairs magazine and his final book 'The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order' which appeared in the year 1996, the Indian view was explicitly not factored in. This is what Samuel Huntington says in his preface to the book about how his book evolved by global participation.

"The ideas that eventually became the article and this book were publicly expressed in the Bradley lecture at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington in October 1992, and then set forth in the Occasional Paper prepared for the Olin Institute project on 'The Changing Security Environment and American National Interests', made possible by the Smith Richardson Foundation. Following the publication of the article, **I became involved in innumerable seminars and meetings focussed on 'the clash' with academic, government, business and other groups across the United States**. In addition **I was fortunate to be able to participate in discussions** on the article and its thesis **in many other countries, including** Argentina, Belgium, **China**, France, Germany, Great Britain, Korea, **Japan,** Luxembourg, Russia, **Saudi Arabia**, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Taiwan. **These discussions exposed me to all major civilisations except Hinduism**, and I benefited immensely from the insights and perspectives of the participants in these discussions." [Preface at p.14]

'These discussions exposed me to all major civilisations except Hinduism' are words that should shame the Indian intellectual establishment. Countries, which represented major civilisational streams of the world, including China, which has no non-governmental intellectualism and Saudi Arabia, which has no non-Islamic thinking, have participated on a globally evolving view on civilisational clashes and contributed their views and endeavoured to shape the debate by their participation and obviously by their persuasion. But the contribution of oldest and the most non-conflicting civilisations, namely the Hindu was totally absent. While every conflicting and conflict promoting civilisations has participated to promote the view that the world was maturing for civilisational clashes, the only civilisation which has the alternative view, namely the conflict resolution model, was an absentee in the global debate.

This is an extraordinary and unpardonable intellectual failure of India. This is where the pseudo secular character of the Indian establishment has been thoroughly exposed. The pseudo secular Indian government would not own up the Hindu civilisational view point to present to the global debate on civilisational clashes even as a conflict-resolution formula. The pseudo-secular Indian intellectual establishment would not present or represent the Hindu view point as that would taint them with undertaking a communal enterprise and sully their secular image! With the result the Hindu view point stood and stands orphaned between the government and the intellectual establishment of India. Those, who look for the Hindu civilisational view on any issue, would obviously look at India. But the pseudo-secular establishment of India would view the act of owning, presenting or representing the Hindu civilisational view point as an unsecular act and even a communal enterprise! The Indian government or the Indian intellectual establishment would be keen to be heard on secularism of the Indian variety. But the West or the world does not need lectures on secularism from the Indian establishment. They know enough about the kind of secularism which our scholars are keen to talk about, as it is their ware which our scholarship has imported. So all that our scholarship can do is to re-export what it had imported from the West. Obviously, the West has no use for the ideas repackaged and re-exported to them. With the result while India would not present the Hindu view point even as a conflict-resolution model as that would mean legitimising the Hindu conflict resolution model for the world, which may force the Indian establishment to adopt the same conflict resolution model for Indian conflicts too! QED: India and the Indian intellectual establishment virtually absconded from the debate on civilisational issues. The loss is as much to India as to the global debate itself as outside of the Hindu philosophic view point there is no non-secular conflict-resolution model available for civilisational clashes, which is totally outside the ambit of modernity and secular principles which are parties to promoting the civilisational clashes even according to Samuel Huntington. Obviously, modernity and secularism cannot resolve, but, only conflict with civilisations. Believe it some modern intellectuals countered Huntington's views by saying that Coca-Cola, Pepsi-

Cola and Discotheque would bring about common civilisational models for the world and keep the world free of clashes! This was the extent of superficiality in parts of the global debate on civilisational clashes. What is needed for resolving a civilisational conflict is a non-conflicting civilisational perspective Modernity and secularism, which are the very targets of the civilisations which are opposed to them, they cannot resolve, being parties to and promoters of 'the clash'.

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Chapter II

Background: The cultivated irreverence for an undeniable past

It is indeed a paradox. No one has ever denied, nor does any one deny even now, the undated antiquity of India or its unbelievable continuity. Yet, few Indian academics, intellectuals and leaders of free India have been willing to own and handle the Indian antiquity with comfort, far less with empathy and even less with reverence. In fact many of them have from-concealed-to-explicit discomfort about it if not total disdain for it. So, for lack of empathetic understanding for the Indian past, the Indian elite, particularly after India became free, began shying away from owning the antiquity of India. Hinduism and *Hindutva,* concepts which the constitutional majority in India is measured, are intimately linked to the antiquity of India. Yet both Hinduism and *Hindutva* are either dismissed as majoritarian or even as antithetic to minorities and therefore even contrary to the secular moorings of India. There is a historic background to this near anti-majoritarian approach in defining secularism in the Indian debate. And the anti-majoritarian psychology rationalises the irreverence for the Indian past which is majoritarian in substance. The logic proceeds thus: majoritarian concepts are communal and unsecular. Therefore, majoritarian ideas and concepts are anti-minority. Since secularism is the identity of India anything connected to the majority is not integral to the identity of India. So the Hindu identity is not national identity, but a sectarian identity. So the past of India is sectarian, communal and even anti-secular. This is the foundation for the cultivated

irreverence for the Indian past.

But this lack of empathy and reverence for Indian antiquity was not sourced in any endogenous development like the Protestant movement in Christianity against the Roman Catholic Church and within Christendom. But it was an exogenous intervention from colonial sources, efforts, scholarship and politics, accomplished by co-opting indigenous intellectual instrumentalities and personalities by the power of rule. It is not the Indians, but the colonialists who investigated and interpreted the Indian past for Indians. Their works became legitimate reference points for Indians to position themselves. The colonial scholars also wrote history books for them from their experiences and perspectives and taught the Indian children in schools. Again they made the Indians unlearn their original languages and learn English which supplanted their own. And they translated their sacred literature from their original languages into English. They made them read their translation as the original to understand their religion in the way the colonialists understood their faith and culture and also wanted their subjects too to understand them! Thus the transliterated intellectual foundation and preparation which instructed and shaped the elite India guided the destiny of free India. Barring few highly respected exceptions like Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi there was no substantive intellectual protest at the devaluation and desecration of the Indian mind and soul by the colonial interests. In fact the colonial effort was not seen as desecration and devaluation of the Indian mind. It was seen and accepted as the efforts of a superior civilisation to save a diminishing and disoriented civilisation struggling with ideas and life styles steeped in superstition, unsuited to modern times. So the establishment India had by and large accepted the colonial assessment of India about Indians, their culture, traditions, religions, society and economy. So irreverence of Indians for their undeniable antiquity was a carefully cultivated, articulated and instructed institution. This cultivated irreverence of Indians for their past became the basis for the acceptance of the English rule and their social, intellectual and even religious wares in India.

The paradox of not denying the antiquity of ancient India but equally not accepting and honouring or celebrating the modern

continuity of its antiquity was first due to colonial and western impact on India, particularly on and through free India's political and intellectual leadership. For instance, the first Prime Minister and the proclaimed heir of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, who was undoubtedly the tallest leader after Gandhi and was equally acclaimed for his intellectual prowess, symbolised this paradox. As far back as in the year 1928 he wrote to his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, who always equated *Swarajya* with *Ramrajya* and revered both, that he did not believe *Ramrajya* was great even in Rama's times nor did he want it back when India won freedom. He told the Mahatma that the latter was faulting the western civilisation on trivial grounds and warned him that western civilisation was bound to overtake India. [Letter of Pandit Nehru to Mahatma Gandhi dt. 27 Jan. 1928 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Delhi pp.487-He was convinced about the superiority of the western civilisation and particularly the achievements of the West, which meant, in socio-political terms, the achievements of the Geo-Christian model. He was equally convinced as perhaps a Max Weber was that the ancient Indian beliefs were the reason why Indian civilisation and even the Indian economy had remained backward. Thus the leader chosen to lead free India was the man who saw the Indian antiquity as a prescription for national failure and the West from whom we wanted freedom as the formula for success to be emulated! Yet Pandit Nehru could not deny that the modern continuity of ancient India's antiquity which was largely Hindu and Sanatana Dharma. But still he would strenuously argue that it would be 'misleading to refer to the Indian culture as Hindu culture' and would prefer to define it as a composite culture. [The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru p.74-75]

But what Toynbee implies as Indian rulers' tolerance is really the carefully cultivated and institutionalised conviction of the rulers and elites of India that the principle of negationism should not stop with suppression of the creed and ways of the barbaric invaders but should extend to accepting their ways and models on the basis that they are not invaders at all and they are as good as any one in this nation. If the invaders are to be reckoned as equal to those who were resident here even before, the residents should themselves be equated to the invaders. So manufacture theories that the Aryans

invaded like thousands of years before and took over India from the original inhabitants of India, the Dravidians; that India is after all habituated to invasions any way; that this ancient nation had been taken over from time to time by Aryans and the Greeks, by the Sakas and Hunas, by the Turks and Persians, by the Mongols and the Afghans, by the Mughals and the Colonisers; so it was ever only a geographic expression and not a nation belonging to any one in particular; that it was and will be like a boarding and lodging house and so on. So consequently manufacture philosophies and histories to justify how it has no culture of its own; that whatever its culture is, is a *kichadi* and the mix of the cultures of all those who invaded this country; so it is a composite culture, to give a more respectable nomenclature to the degraded idea of mixed-up and messed up cultures. Actually is the other way round. The Indian culture is not a composite culture, but an astoundingly assimilating one which digested all differences including ethnic and even racial differences into the mainstream culture, that is the ancient Indian culture founded on dharma.

Yet, with the tallest Indian leader post freedom who led India for 17 long years with unquestioned authority, diluting, if not denying, the Hindu identity of India after centuries of loss of freedom, a sense of disdain for the Hindu antiquity of India became pronounced in Indian polity, academics and intellectualism, thus accentuating and deepening the lack of empathetic intellectualism toward ancient India. This absence of empathetic intellectual understanding of the Indian antiquity was also partly forced by the religious politics that led to the partition of India and the nationalist response to it.

Another important factor that influenced free India's national polity and state policy was the extension into free India of the pre-partition political blunder of over commitment of the national space that the benevolent Hindu leadership had made to the Muslim League in a bid to avoid partition of the country. Thus the partition of India which was an apparently political game was intrinsically driven by the underlying theological stand off between the Hindu view of accepting all faiths as valid and the exclusive Islamic view of itself as the only valid faith as representing two nations in political terms. While Islam by its exclusiveness had

an intrinsic orientation to separation, Hinduism, by its intrinsic integrative and assimilative character, would lean against any kind of partition between peoples who had the same lineage. While the inclusive Hinduism would insist on keeping the nation united at any cost with Islam within it, the exclusive Islam would insist on having a severed nation at any cost with Hinduism being out of it. In its anxiety to keep majority Islamist populated areas within the undivided nation, the Hindu leadership of India went to the farthest extent to concede everything and more that the Islamic leadership had demanded. Yet, it could not avoid partition and prevent exclusivist Islam carving out the majority Islamist populated areas from the undivided nation. But, the story of the compromises effected to save the country from being partitioned by Islamic politics did not end with partition, but continued even after partition and distorted the national politics in India post-partition. Thus, as we shall see later, the distortions in the pre-partition politics and the Hindu-Muslim interface also impacted and distorted the relations between the two communities in secular India. And it did not stop at that, but resulted in distorting and confusing the identity of the Indian people as a whole.

Another perceivable reason for the lack of empathy for ancient India in the Indian academic and intellectual work is that academic and intellectual institutions and personages were largely state-dependent. So the state policy became the core of the academic convictions in India. The lack of independent scholarship, independent of the state and politics, is yet another, critical reason for the academia and intellectuals becoming the mirror-reflection of the state and its policies. Thus, the intellectualism of the state became the intellectualism of the nation itself, consistent with the state-commanded Indian economic model.

Unbelievable sense of guilt and self-flagellation

One of the principal causes for the confusion in Indian intellectualism was the absence of source materials for the Indian civilisation which the western intellectualism would approve of. Indians have never been good recorders of history. History being a product of conflicts and clashes the Hindu civilisation which was founded on conflict avoidance formula had not the need for

recording history like the conflict prone civilisations. Because of this relative disadvantage in the Indian civilisation in the west-centric process of evaluation of a civilisation, the records maintained or created by the invaders and colonisers became the easy source information for understanding and acknowledging the antiquity of this ancient nation. One of the disastrous and perhaps even distortions of this process of allowing the intellectual and military invaders to assess the Indian civilisation was the Aryan-Dravidian theory expounded by Max Muller in the year which brought in an intellectual civil war against and within itself. This theory which was expounded by Max Muller in the year 1948 alienated the soul of India, namely the entire spiritual and philosophic foundation classed as Aryan from the body of India, and from the Indian discourse and at once distanced the nation from its highest point of pride. After this had done the greatest bodily and mental harm to this ancient nation and confused its identity for over a century, its credibility is so questioned by meticulous scholarship which has virtually demolished its foundations, that, recently the BBC came out with an admission that the Aryan invasion theory is no more credible. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history5shtml].

Swami Vivekananda had warned this nation as early as the close of the 18th century, "Do not believe such silly things as there was a race of mankind in South India called Dravidians entirely differing from another race in Northern India called the Aryans. This is entirely unfounded. Not knowing where the bright Aryans came from, of late, there was an attempt made to prove, he laughed and said, "Aryans lived on the Swiss lakes". Yet, the theory trotted out by F. Max Muller in 1848 tracing the history of Hinduism to the invasion of indigenous people by Aryans around 1500 BC has obsessed India since. It is now well-known that the scholarly work of Max Muller, once considered independent, was bought by the East India Company, and was thus a colonial view. Even as Swami Vivekananda dismissed Max Muller's theory as silly, he lauded Muller's work on Indian scriptures as the modern Sayanacharya.

Max Muller's theory dominated the Indian academic and intellectual debate and politics of the 20th century and wrought havoc in the national psyche since then. It divided and disturbed

the national mind; even threatened to sever Southern India politically from the Rest. Any dissent to this view was and is even now castigated and isolated, as a sort of intellectual terrorism rules the Indian debate. But sustained and strenuous work by dedicated scholars has decimated this silly theory over the last hundred years. Yet billions of pages of instruction in schools and colleges have, since Max Muller expounded this view, enduringly poisoned and damaged the Indian psyche. And now comes the disclosure of the BBC almost amounting to a confession from a source linked to the very perpetrators of this intellectual crime, the ex-colonisers, that the theory, which Swami Vivekananda dismissed as silly, may be silly after all!

The BBC Website startlingly disclosed that "there is now ample evidence to show that Max Muller and those who followed him were wrong". Answering "why the theory is not longer accepted", the BBC says that "the Aryan invasion theory was based on archaeological, linguistic and ethnological evidence' and later researches have either discredited this evidence or provided new evidence that combined with the earlier evidence makes other explanations likely". More important, the BBC admits that "modern historians of the area no longer believe that such invasions had such great influence on Indian history". Even more important, it says that "it is generally accepted that the Indian history shows a continuity of progress from the earliest times to today. More, the changes brought to India by other cultures are no longer thought to be a major ingredient of the development of Hinduism".

The confession is an honest one. For the BBC does not only agree with Swami Vivekananda it also admits the 'dangers' of the theory. It says that the theory denies the Indian origin of India's predominant culture; gives credit for the Indian culture to the invaders from elsewhere. It teaches that the most revered Hindu scripture are not actually Indian' and devalues India's culture' by portraying it as less ancient than it actually is. It goes further and says that the theory was not just wrong, but included unacceptably racist ideas. It suggested or asserted that Indian culture was not a culture in its own right but a synthesis of elements from other cultures; that Hinduism was not authentically Indian in origin, but the result of cultural imperialism; that Indian culture was static

and only changed under outside influence; that the Dravidians were a nobody and got their faith from the Aryan invaders; that the indigenous people could acquire new ideas only from invaders or other races; that race was a biological, not a social, concept and thus rationalised ranking people in a hierarchy and the caste system; that the North Indian people were descended from invaders from Europe, and so socially closer to the British, thus rationalising colonialist presence; that the British were reforming India like the Aryans did thousands of years back, thus justifying the role and the status of the Raj. Finally, it says that "it downgraded the intellectual status of India and its people by giving falsely late date to the elements of Indian science and culture".

This 'confession' of wrong done to India and high praise for India's autogenous antiquity from an unlikely source approves of not just what Swami Vivekananda said over a century ago, but validates what the secular scholarship in India calls as the 'Saffron' view. This endangers the 'secular' scholarship whose credibility is gravely questioned. How will they continue to assert that India is more a *kichadi*, than a continuity of undated antiquity? How will they go on asserting that there is nothing Indian about India; that there was never anything called India at all; that there is today an India courtesy the invaders the Aryans, Turks, Moghuls or the British; that thanks to the British we are a nation......... But they have a solid reason to feel assured that it will take decades for this truth to overcome the billions of pages of falsehood printed and circulated so far. For the grains of truth to emerge from this mountain of falsehood will take a life's time.

But, the colonial scholarship is not alone at fault in this desecration process. The paradigm which drove the colonial politico-religious-commercial process was sourced in the intuitions and experiences totally alien to the host civilisation in India. If one has to understand the principal drive of the colonisation process which was a mix of religion and mercantilism, one has to compare the standards which the alien and host civilisations had set for themselves. But what is more damaging to the Indian psyche is the unbelievable sense of guilt that the Indian scholarship suffers from in handling the Indian past. Every country has a past, almost an impossible past to handle. The whole of Christendom has to handle

its barbaric medieval crimes, violence and crusades and wars and burning of women witches hundreds of thousands. Islam has to explain its barbaric wars and Jihads. The modern German has to handle the holocaust. Russia and China have to explain the mass murders promoted by the communist state and party. Take the extent of death and destruction caused by the western geo-Christian civilisation in America alone. A whole civilisation in North America was destroyed by Geo-Christian religious and colonial mercantile thrust not in medieval times, in medieval to modern times. The North American original, non-European population was estimated at 79 + million [American Indian Holocaust and Survival – a population history since 1492 by Russell Thornton University of Oklahoma Press p.36]. There are other estimates which place the population as high as 112.5 millions. [Ibid. p.24] At that time the population of the whole of Europe was between 60 and 70 millions. Evidence points to the wanton and deliberate destruction of the natives by killer epidemics brought from Europe and Africa and also by wars and genocide besides destruction of ways of life leading to infertility. [Ibid pp.46-56] It is not just human population that was destroyed, even animal population was exterminated. The buffalo population of America in aboriginal times was estimated at 60 millions which came down to 40 millions in 1800 to less than 1000, yes 1000 in 1895! But that does not make an American eternally guilty and ashamed. A Samuel Huntington writes a book 'Who Are We?' and proudly proclaims that WASP meaning the American identity is '**W**hite-**A**nglo-**S**axon- **P**rotestant'. There is no sense of remorse or guilt in the modern American about the complete elimination of a whole civilisation whose population was more than the population of today's India-Pakistan-and Bangladesh put together in 1492. Had they been allowed to grow they could perhaps have become as large as the Indian subcontinent in population and more. But they were completely destroyed, simply because they belonged to faiths which the invaders could not accept. The invaders of yesterday are today the rulers wiping out the indigenous people totally. It is they who claim themselves as the WASP ruling the US. It is a proud western geo-Christian civilisation announcing its power. But the Hindu-Indian civilisation has not blood stain in its hands. It has had its measure and share of things to ponder about and

introspect but there is nothing about which is should feel ashamed or guilty. Yet the modern Indian intellectualism, which is nothing but west-centric and west-driven has been so shaped and led that it continuously and unceasingly makes the whole nation feel a sense of guilt and shame about its past. So much so there is unbelievable amount of cultivated self-flagellation and distaste for the ancient and traditional India that it has seriously hurt and damaged the mind and personality of India, and also the soul of India.

A victorious Ashoka's pacifist ethics and a nation on defence

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Ashoka the great guides Indian mind and intellectualism. Not because of the great Kailnga war he won, but because of the vow he took not to wage wars at all. So it is not the aggressive Ashoka, who won the Kalinga war who is modern India's national icon, but the pacifist Ashoka who gave up the war. Since the pacifist Ashoka's image suited the idea of non-violence that largely guided the Indian freedom movement, it is not the aggressive Ashoka but the pacifist Ashoka, who has emerged as the illustration figuratively and psychologically for free India. This needs some deeper analysis.

Two wars – Kurukshetra and Kalinga – are extremely critical developments in the history of India. The main actors in the Kurukshetra war are Krishna and Arjuna and in the Kalinga War it is Ashoka. Ashoka emerged the hero of India not because of the Kalinga war that he waged but for his vow not to wage any war thereafter. Despite his decision not to take weapon in his hands Ashoka compares not with Krishna who also vowed not to take arms in his hands, but with Arjuna. The reason is this: all that Arjuna perceived and apprehended before the war, Ashoka experienced after the war. Arjuna wailed before the Kurukshetra war, and Ashoka wailed after the Kalinga war. The reasons why Ashoka refused to fight after the Kalinga War were precisely the reasons for which Arjuna refused to fight the Kurukshetra war. None of Arjuna's arguments, questions, apprehensions, feelings, which he vehemently and repeatedly employs, to urge Sri Krishna to exempt him from the war, could be dismissed. For the sake of a kingdom, you want me to commit all these sin' Arjuna asked Krishna. And that was precisely the question that hit Ashoka after the Kalinga

War: "Did I do all this for just a kingdom There was no difference between Ashoka and Arjuna in their psychology and state of mind as Ashoka had completed the war and Arjuna had not started the war. The difference was, while Ashoka was praised and glorified for his decision not to wage the war, it is a moot question whether he could have taken a similar decision not to wage war had he lost the Kalinga war. Either Ashoka would not have resorted to the vow of no war or even if he did no one would have taken him seriously. It was because the victorious Ashoka took the vow, that vow acquired merit in history. An Ashoka defeated could not have become an example by his vow. So as a victor in the war, Ashoka won acclaim by his decision to forgo war for ever. He won personal acclaim by winning the war and universal acclaim later by laying down his arms. He could win the admiration of the world in his times by emerging victorious in the war and at all times later by his decision to give up wars. While in his times he was a victor and his decision not go for wars or victories, thereafter, was taken as a victor's decision, the impact of his decision on the psyche of this nation was quite different. The Indian nation never thought that Ashoka's decision, not to wage war, could be taken only by a victor in a war, and actually a mighty victor like Ashoka.

Thus, the reasons for which Ashoka decided not to wage wars were precisely the reasons Arjuna cited for refraining from the war. But the reasons cited by Arjuna in the first Chapter of Bhagwat Gita were titled as Arjuna Vishada Yoga, namely Arjuna in distress. He was certainly not in an enlightened state. He was confused. Fortunately, Krishna was by Arjuna's side to clear the confusions in his mind. Arjuna's questions in the first chapter did not reflect his clarity. They were products of his confusion. But Sri Krishna could not and did not forthwith clear his mind. He had to carry him through 18 long chapters of lectures to clear his mind. Despite raising all noble points against the war, Arjuna told Krishna in the second chapter that "I am confused. So, I surrender to you. Accept me as your disciple and tell me what I should do". In Gita, the surrender of Arjuna was complete even before Krishna started the lectures to Arjuna. But never did even once Krishna think of telling him immediately "Come on Arjuna, I tell you, you decide whether to take the weapon and the war." The reasonis simple,

a confused mind cannot be ordered from within or outside. So, Krishna had to remove the cobwebs in Arjuna's mind; clear his mind and as result of his clarity will come the conviction and the courage to fight the war, and not allow him to decide when he was confused..

There is more to observe in the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. It is in the last chapter, 18th Chapter, not in the first that Sri Krishna granted Arjuna freedom of action to do what he wanted. The reason why Krishna did not give in the first chapter the freedom he gave to Arjuna in the last chapter is obvious. A confused Arjuna did not qualify for freedom in the first chapter. He had to be evolved to get that freedom. The process of evolution in Arjuna is also very instructive. How Krishna makes him evolve—he first attacks his lower ego—"People will call you impotent. If you are running away from war, you will incur infamy." In the second chapter he appeals to his lower instincts, calls him a coward and a eunuch.. Then he slowly upgrades him. He teaches him different yogas. He teaches him detachment. He keeps upgrading him steadily. He brings him to a state of self inquiry and finally grants him freedom of action. It is in the 63rd *Sloka* in the last chapter, Krishna says, "Now you do whatever you feel like doing, I having imparted to you the critical education." That is Sri Krishna had to remove all confusions in the mind of Arjuna before he could give him freedom of action. It means that only a clear mind, not a confused one, can exercise freedom. That is why Sri Krishna granted freedom to Arjuna in the 18th chapter, when his mind had become free of all confusion, not in the first when he was full of confusion. It is significant that even though Arjuna had surrendered to Sri Krishna in the first chapter and in the last Sri Krishna did not issue a command to him to wage the war, but, He gave him the freedom to decide whether to do it or not. Emanating from this is that the principle that the idea of freedom is based on the clarity of mind and quality of the person desiring to be free. Applied to a large population the idea of freedom is not based on the number of people who desire it, but on the quality of people who deserve it.

Comparing Arjuna and Ashoka, Ashoka did not have the benefit of a Krishna by his side. Krishna cleared the cobwebs in Arjuna's mind, lent conviction to him and made him fight the

battle. Ashoka is a contrast. Many wrongly interpret Ashoka as a follower of Buddha. He was not a follower of Buddha. Ashoka in a sense only copied Buddha, but did not follow him. Buddha left the Throne. He left the kingdom. He ceased to be a king. And so the *dharma* and *karma* of the ruler did not attach to him. But Ashoka wanted to be the Emperor as well as a Buddha. While he had the *dharma* and the *karma* to wage war as the King, he vowed not to wage war. This became an ideal for the nation as time went by, as being an emperor and a victor his conduct had had high persuasion. But he nevertheless confused between his role as the disciple of Buddha and as the Emperor of Maghada. Thus and there started the intellectual confusion and it intensified as time passed. So the confusion of the Indian society is directly inspired by the Ashokan Ethics. The intellectual confusion in India is because of Ashoka. The symbol of the Indian state is Ashoka chakra. Yet Ashoka was the only king in India who declared a state religion - never before, never after did any king declared a state religion. Chhatrapati Shivaji ruled as a Hindu King and declared that the nation, not the state was Hindu. Hinduism was not the state religion in Shivaji's kingdom. Ashoka ruled in the name of a faith, even though consistent with the traditions of India he granted complete freedom of faith and also supported all religous institutions. Still Ashoka is the symbol of secular India. How is it that secular India did not object to his symbol? The reason is evident he was the least objectionable person. The most acceptable symbol would not become the respectable symbol in India. It is the least objectionable symbol which has been accepted. This is the intellectual confusion in India.

The victorious Ashoka's ethics, wrongly applied to a nation on defence, has thoroughly confused the intellectual debate in the Indian nation. The nation's intellectual leadership was not conscious when it decided to copy the victorious Ashoka's ethical foundation for the India that Ashoka could do it only because he was a victor. But an India which lost its freedom to invaders and lost on the war front could not afford to look up to Ashoka the renouncer of wars, while it could still celebrate Ashoka the victor in Kalinga War. So the Ashoka psyche which has confused the nation needs to be cleared. India has to win wars to renounce them like Ashoka. It is a victor's rule, not the rule of a nation on defence.

Only the one who has won the war can give it up. A nation that needs victory will have to follow Krishna, not Ashoka who is an example of how a victor should behave. The Hindu India needs to follow the Ashoka who won the Kalinga war. Not the Ashoka who gave up war altogether on arguments that suited Arjuna for escaping the war. The Hindu India needs to follow Krishna who cleared Arjuna's confusion, not Ashoka after he won the Kalinga war, got into personal emotional conflict and took a personal vow which has been turned into an illustration for a civilisation totally inappropriately. So the Ashoka who won the war and the Krishna who removed Arjuna's confusion are the icons for Indian intellectualism. The logic is simple. Pacifism is the rule of the victor, not of the one who needs to emerge as a victor.

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Chapter III

The concept of nation-state

What the world knows as nation state is an Intra Euro-Christian construct of the last two centuries ?

A question is often raised particularly by the leftwing scholars and some secular historians whether *Bharat* or India was ever a nation or a socio-political entity. In fact, the left and secular scholars take pride in declaring that we were never one nation and we are even now a nation of different peoples. This leads us to the question as to what is the concept of nation as is being understood today and when did it evolve. It does not need a seer to say that the entire debate and discourse on nation, nationalism and nation-state today is founded on the historic events and experiences of the last two centuries that have shaped up today's Europe and the West. It is necessary to understand the experience of the West and compare the experience of India with the Western experiences to judge whether the nation-state debate which is west-centric and founded on the idioms and paradigms of the West has any application to the evolution of India as a geo-political unit at all.

A brilliant discussion on the topic of how the idea of nation-state evolved in the West and what were the experiences of the West out of which the nations of the West evolved is found in the book 'Secular Agenda' by Arun Shourie [Secular Agenda Harper Collins Publishers, India p.1-8]. On what constitutes nationalism Arun Shourie cites Eric J. Hobsbawm, one of the foremost scholars on nationalism. After a research of the Western history Hobsbawm concludes that not many more than a dozen states—"can plausibly claim that their citizens coincide in any real sense with a single

ethnic or linguistic group". [p.1] ['Nations and Nationalisms since 1780 Programme, Myth, Reality' E.J. Hobsbawm 2Ed. Cambridge University Press] Eric Hobsbawm says that the "the modern sense of the word [nation] is not older than the eighteenth century, give or take the odd predecessor". [Ibid p.3]

Thus the benchmark of the western concept of nation on which we are assessing the undated Indian civilisation is, first, only a couple of hundred years old and as we shall see later, an intra geo-Christian construct and an evolution tearing out of the oppressive control by the artificial, and centralised Christian theological control of diverse nation. There is a world of difference between how the theological collective Christendom which aspired to be the universal moral state through the Christian restructure of the Roman State evolved into nation-states, as compared to the way the geo-Cultural entity of what was known from ancient times as *Bharatvarsha* evolved as a geo-political phenomenon. It is on the basis of the totally different experience of the geo-Christian West that the Indian evolution is being judged and derided as not a nation nor a state nor a nation-state in the sense in which these terms are understood today on norms which have been the development of the last two hundred years. So this subject needs an acute analysis taking the comparative historic and philosophic position of the concept of state and nation and also the principles of statecraft which governed the idea of state in the West and the principles on which the state in India had functioned in the known history and traditions of India

That the concept of nationalism as at present understood is a modern idea is evident from the authorities digested in the Encyclopaedia of Britannica. The encyclopaedia describes the concept of nationalism as a modern movement. Nationalism may be defined as a state of mind in which the individual feels that every one owes his supreme secular loyalty to the nation-state. Nationalism is a modern movement. Throughout history men have been attached to their native soil, to the traditions of their parents, and to the established territorial authorities; but it was not until the end of 18th century that nationalism began to be a generally recognised sentiment moulding public and private life and one of the great, if not the greatest, single determining factors of modern history. Because

of its dynamic vitality and its all pervading character, nationalism is often thought to be very old; sometimes it is mistakenly regarded as a permanent factor in political behaviour. Actually, the American and French revolutions may be regarded as its first powerful manifestations. [Encyclopaedia 15Ed. Vol. 12. p.851]

Two aspects emerge from this description of what constitutes nationalism. First, it is a modern idea. Second, it is actually the 18th century which had its source in the American and French revolutions. As is evident from the supporting premises of the discussions, the Encyclopaedia speaks from the Western perspective. The Bibliography for the concept of nationalism described by the Encyclopaedia confirms its western orientation; it is confined to the Western authorities and, therefore, western experiences. This is evident from further readings on the topic in the Encyclopaedia. Tracing the development of nationalism into the concept of nation-state the Encyclopaedia says: "Nationalism translated into the world of politics, implies the identification of the state or nation with the people — or at least the desirability of determining the extent of the state according to ethnographic principles. In the age of nationalism, but only in the age of nationalism, the principle was generally recognised that each nationality should form a state – its state – and that the state should include all members of that nationality. Formerly, states, or the territories under one administration were not delineated by nationality. Men did not give their loyalty to nation-state, but to other, different forms of political organisation: city-state, feudal fief and its lord, dynastic state, religious group, or the sect. Nation-state was non-existent during the greater part of history, and for a very long time it was not regarded as ideal. In the first 15 centuries of the Christian Era, the ideal was the universal world-state, not loyalty to any separate political entity. The Roman Empire had set the great example, which survived not only the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages, but also in the concept of *res publica christiana* (Christian republic or community) and in its later secularised form of united world civilisation and in world policy." [Ibid p.851]

The discussion brings out three distinct features of the experience of the West. First the West, particularly Europe, endeavoured to create a universal world Christian state. This

endeavour lasted till about 1500 when the schism in the Roman Catholic Church put an end to that process. In the termination of the endeavour to establish a global universal Christian state was sourced the idea of the evolution of the concept of nation-state. Theoretically at least, had the Roman Catholic Church not disintegrated and its temporal authority not been subordinated by the process of secularisation of Europe, the movement toward nationalism and the evolution of nation-states would have not taken place. The evolution of the modern nation-state in Europe which was preceded by the collapse of the medieval ideal of a universal world state Christianity is best captured in Henry Kissinger's book 'Diplomacy'. 'What historians describe today as the European balance-of-power system emerged in the seventeenth century from the final collapse of the medieval aspiration to universality – a concept of world order that represented a blending of the traditions of the Roma Empire and the Catholic Church. The world was considered as mirroring the Heavens. Just as one God ruled in Heaven, so one emperor would rule over the secular world, and one pope over the Universal Church.'[p.56] Kissinger captures thus the idea of the universal state. The Kissinger perspective is very important to understand how the centralised political authority which did not have the control of the central religious authority could not achieve a hegemonic state and also thwarted the emergence of nations and nation-states in Europe.

"In this spirit", says Kissinger, "the feudal states of Germany and Northern Italy were regrouped under the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor. Into the seventeenth century, this empire had the potential to dominate Europe. France, whose frontier was far West of Rhine River, and Great Britain were peripheral states with respect to it. Had the Holy Roman Emperor ever succeeded in establishing central control over all the territories technically under his jurisdiction, the relations of the Western European states to it might have been similar to those of China's neighbours to the Middle Kingdom, with France comparable to Vietnam or Korea, and Great Britain to Japan." [Kissinger p.56-57]

Saying that for most part of the medieval period, the Holy Roman Emperor failed to achieve central control and the most important reason, according to Kissinger, "for such failure was that

the Holy Roman Empire had separated the control of the church from the control of the government'.. Since unlike Pharaoh or Caesar the Holy Roman Emperor did not possess divine qualities", says Kissinger, "everywhere outside Western Europe, even in regions governed by Eastern Church, religion and government were unified in the sense that the key appointments to each were subject to the central government; religious authorities had neither the means nor the authority to assert the autonomous position demanded by Western Christianity as a matter of right". [Ibid p.57]

Tracing how it led to secularisation of the state, Kissinger adds, "in Western Europe, the potential and from time to time, actual conflict between the pope and emperor established the conditions for eventual constitutionalism and separation of powers which are the basis of the modern democracy. It enabled the various feudal rulers to enhance their autonomy by exacting a price from the contending parties. This, in turn, led to a fractioned Europe – a patch work of duchies, counties, cities, and bishoprics. Though in theory all feudal lords owed fealty to the emperor, in practice they did what they pleased. Various dynasties claimed imperial crown, and central authority almost disappeared. The emperors maintained the old vision of universal rule without any possibility of realising it. France, Great Britain, and Spain did not accept the central authority of the Holy Roman Empire, though they remained part of the Universal Church." [Ibid p.57]

How was the dream of a universal state which thwarted and delayed the emergence of nation-states in Europe sustained? Kissinger says that not until the Habsburg dynasty had through prudent marriages' acquired the Spanish Empire, and its vast resources and laid near-permanent claim to the imperial crown in the fifteenth century, did it become possible for the Holy Roman Emperor to aspire to translate his universal claims into a political system'[Ibid p.57]. But the construct of the states in Europe was not based on the will or wish of the people; as will be seen, it was based on the summit statecraft founded on marriages and concubinages between kings and emperors.

At this point it is now relevant to refer to what Arun Shourie has to say in his Secular Agenda on the evolution of the nation-states in Europe, from the Indian perspective.

Arun Shourie debunks the construction of the left and secular as to what constitutes a nation. Critiquing those, who say India is just a 'geographic expression', Arun Shourie points out that the term 'geographic expression' is Metternich's expression and says that the reference was not to India, but to Germany! The author then goes on to cite the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences to drive home how only in 1781 some three hundred separate and feuding states and principalities were welded into 'Germany' [Shourie p.2]. The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences points out that in the 18th century there might have been 'stirrings of national consciousness' or pleas 'for cultural nationalism', but little nationalism of a strictly 'political' sort. 'No monarch based his national or foreign policies on principles of nationality' [Ibid p.3]. The masses divided their loyalty' to the immediate locality and the remote king or the emperor' they were taught to obey. The upper classes despised their national language as vulgar and adopted the current fashion of using French and posing as enlightened cosmopolites. No national school, armies professional and mercenaries, rather than 'national'. '. "In Germany", says the Encyclopaedia "no one in the 18th century expressed any desire for political nationalism." German intellectuals, nobles and peasants seemed quite content to leave the fatherland parcelled out among some three hundred separate and politically independent states and to suffer domestic conflicts of Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs and the shift of the interest of the latter, the nominal leaders of Germany, from the home scene to the alien scenes of Hungary, Italy and Belgium. Very few Germans talked about the desirability, much less the possibility of, of unifying the hodgepodge of German Kingdoms, duchies, counties, and free cities in to a compact national state and inculcating all its inhabitants a new national loyalty which could transcend their traditional local loyalties. Yet, says the Encyclopaedia, 'in this Germany of the 18th century certain individuals taught the utility and practicability of cultural nationalism'. Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences p.242 [Ibid p.4] No one would today deride Germany as geographic expression, as not a nation, as never intended as a nation or as an artificial construct. Says Arun Shourie: "That geographic expression is a country and reunification is hailed by our intellectuals as the erasing away of an artificial partition" [Ibid p.4]. But in our case it is forging artificial

unity as we are according to the left and secular intellectuals only a geographic expression!

Does race make a nation? No says, why actually, proves Shourie. Citing Hobsbawm, he says that "those who founded the USA and Canada were ethnically no different from King George and his subjects. Nor were those who founded the Latin American states racially different from those in Spain and Portugal' from where they came. As for the 'Kings and Queens' of England who are symbols of oneness of England as a country, would be surprised to know from Anderson and Hobsbawm that there has not been an 'English' dynasty ruling in London since the eleventh century (if then), that Prince Albert, Victoria's consort wrote to the King of Prussia as a German, and that it was only an anti-German sentiment which swept England during the First World War which forced the British Royalty to change the venerable dynastic name of Guelph for the less German-sounding Windsor." [Ibid p.4] So much for the English nation as a racial or ethnic one! Shourie adds, "These countries which we are talking as one compared to our own are the artefacts that resulted from the activities of Kings and Courts – from the raids of plunder and from dowries received rather than from any feeling among the people that they were one nation and, therefore, ought to be one state" [Ibid p.5]. He quotes Benedict Anderson [Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism p.27] to establish how the emergence of nations and states in Europe had nothing to do with the feeling of the people to live as a nation. Anderson says: "In the realms where polygamy was religiously sanctioned, complex system of tiered concubinage were essential to the integration of the realm. In fact, royal lineages often derived their prestige, aside from the aura of divinity from, shall we say, miscegenation." [Ibid p.5] Anderson, says Arun Shourie, cites 'a curious document' which listed the ancestors of the Archduke of Austria whose assassination was to plunge all of Europe into the 1914-18 War. The man's ancestors, Anderson notes, included 1486 Germans, 124 French, 196 Italians, 89 Spaniards, 52 Poles, 47 Danes, 20 Englishmen/women, as well as four other nationalities! [Ibid p.5] So it is clear that Europe's obsessive pre-occupation with aggressive and hegemonic Christianity and the centralised Christian Church seriously interfered with the

evolution of the culturally or linguistically and otherwise driven nations and nation-states.

Is a nation one the people of which have a common religion? Arun Shourie asks. [Ibid p.5]. It would also mean that common religion would constitute a nation. The whole of Christianity should constitute a nation. Not only it would not, in history it did not. This was precisely the attempt of the Roman Empire and the effort of the Roman Catholic Church to produce a Universal Moral state. Later it was precisely the endeavour of the Soviet model, the secular version of the Christian effort, namely to bring under one state the entire communist societies. Both have failed. Now currently this model of beating different and diverse societies and peoples into one political or quasi-political unit – like by religion first through the Christian faith and Church, and later through socialist ideology and the proletarian dictatorships – through formation of regional trading blocks for economic purposes like the European Union. These are all transitory organisations and reorganisations which will keep forming and breaking depending on the needs of the times. Thus the size and the purpose of the state keep changing. Even such a powerful mediator between people such as religion could not keep the people who owed allegiance to the same book and prophet could not hold the people together under the same state. Islamic and Christian faiths in fact call upon their faithfuls to setup theological and theocratic states, the Dar-ul-Islam in Islamic faith and the Kingdom of God in Christianity. Yet the two religions, despite all their endeavours in the last several centuries, have not been able to set up a faith based state co-terminus with the geographic reach and comprehensiveness of the religion and its faithful following. In fact, the very concept of nation-state which evolved in Christendom and Islamic Umma in the last few centuries negates the view that religion can be the basis for a nation. There are over 48 Roman Catholic Christian nations today, despite only a single Christianity, a single Roman Church, single Bible and single Christ. Likewise, there are over 47 Islamic nations, notwithstanding a single Islam, a single Islamic Umma, a single Quran and a single Prophet. So religion cannot be the basis for the formation and functioning of a state. Even if the faith is a global faith the local diversities will force a break with the larger

religious identity even though that identity is enforced regardless of the other diversities. Arun Shourie cites the example of different tribes of Africa each having a religion of their own, clutter together to form a nation-state. [Ibid p.5] "On the other side of the scale," says Shourie, "we have the Universal Religions – Christianity and Islam. Do the adherents of either of them form one nation, he asks. Christian states have been fighting Christian states since they adopted Christianity," he says. "The Umma of Islam are killing each other to our day – the West Paksitanis butchering the East Pakistanis, Punjabis killing the Mohajirs, Iranis and Iraqis killing each other without respite for eight years, the Afghans – all of one religion – going on killing each to day." "Yet for our intellectuals" mocks Shourie, "they are 'one' as they have one religion, and as we do not, are not!" [Ibid p.5]

Is a nation one whose people have one language? queries Shourie [Ibid p.6] Shourie cites, from Hobsbawm's work, the endless list of nations whose language had no reach beyond a miniscule minority, yet forming and sustaining nation-states as linguistic states. The modern Hebrew language is virtually invented. [Ibid] Philippines is a land of hundred tongues but not a single language'[IbidOnly two and half percent of the state spoke Italian when, like Germany and around the same time, Italy was unified". Hobsbawm says, "In practice there were only three criteria which allowed a people to be firmly classed as a nation, always provided it was sufficiently long to pass the threshold. The first was its historic association with a current state or one with a fairly lengthy and recent past. Hence there was little doubt about the existence of an English or French nation-people, a (Great) Russian people or the Poles, and little dispute about a Spanish nation with a well-understood national characteristics. For, given the identification of nation with state, it was natural for foreigners to assume that the only people in a country were those belonging to the state-people, a habit which still irritates the Scots". [Hobsbawm p.37] What the author implies is that while the state has a linguistic character, the nation need not have lingual character. How does a nation accept to be governed by a state identified with a language? Here is the answer. "The second criterion was the existence of a long-established cultural elite, possessing a written national literary and administrative

vernacular. This was the basis of the Italian and German claims to nationhood, although the respective peoples had no single state with which they could identify. In both cases, national identification was in consequence strongly linguistic, even though in neither case was the national language spoke for every day purposes by more than a small minority – for Italy it has been estimated at 2½ percent at the time of unification – while the rest spoke various and often mutually incomprehensible idiom." [Ibid p.38]

The Holy Roman Empire which, according to Kissinger, could have been the most powerful state in Europe emerged through personal relations of the kings and emperors. Kissinger says that ' In the first half of the seventeenth century Emperor Charles-V revived the imperial authority to a point which raised the prospect of a Central European Empire, composed of what is today Germany, Austria, Northern Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Eastern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands – a grouping so potentially dominant as to prevent the emergence of anything resembling the European balance of power." [Kissinger p.57] The weakening of the Papacy in the reformation period too did not help the situation according to Kissinger. "When on the decline in the sixteenth century the Papacy proved equally a bane to the idea of empire", just as, when it was strong, it had thwarted the prospect of a hegemonic European empire, and had been a thorn on the side of the Holy Roman Emperor and a formidable rival." [Ibid p.58] While the emperors saw themselves and wanted to be seen as the agents of God, in the sixteenth century, Kissinger adds, "the emperor came to be perceived in the Protestant lands less as an agent of God than as a Viennese warlord tied to a decadent pope." [Ibid p.58] "The Reformation" says Kissinger, "gave rebellious princes a new freedom of action, in both the religious and political realms. Their break with Rome was a break religious universality; their struggle with the Habsburg emperor demonstrated that the princes no longer saw fealty to the empire as a religious duty." [Ibid p.58]

"With the concept of unity collapsing", says Kissinger, "the emerging states of Europe needed some principle, to justify their heresy and regulate their relations." He adds: "They found it in the concept of *raison d'etat* and the balance of power. Each depended on the other. *Raison d'etat* asserted that the well being of the state

justified what ever means were employed to further it; national interest supplanted the medieval notion of universal morality. The balance of power replaced the nostalgia for universal monarchy with the consolation that each state, in pursuing its own selfish interests, would somehow contribute to the safety and progress of all others." [Ibid p.58]

Significantly, it was France, a catholic nation, which did the best to undermine and break up the Holy Roman Empire [the Habsburg Empire]. More than that, according to Kissinger, it is a prince of the Catholic Church, Cardinal de Richelieu, First Minister of France from 1624 to 1642 who was the principal agent of the French policy of *Raison de tat.* It was because France was the country which stood to lose the most by reinvigoration of the Holy Roman Empire. So France recognised that the progressive weakening of the Holy Roman Empire (and even more its disintegration) would enhance France's security. So much was the damage done by Cardinal Richelieu that upon learning of his death, Pope Urban VIII is alleged to have said. "If there is a God, Cardinal de Richelieu will have much to answer for. If not ....., well, he has had a successful life". Kissinger says, "few statesmen can claim a greater impact on history. Richelieu was the father of modern state system. He promulgated the concept of *raison d'etat* and practised it relentless for the benefit of his own country. Upon his auspices *raison d'etat* replaced the medieval concept of universal moral values as the operating principle of French policy." [Ibid p.58] Kissinger thereafter goes on to detail how Richelieu virtually worked to bring down the Habsburg Empire and with that the Central European state and opened up the installation of the nation-states of Europe in the 18th century.

The instructive part of the European experiences detailed here is that the rendezvous of the West with a religion married to the state, particularly the Roman State, first suppressed the tribal regimes of the West and later prevented the re-emergence of tribal principalities by superimposing the idea of a universal state co-terminus with a Universal Church. This is an unprecedented experience and incomparably different from the experience of India as a civilisation. The universal state which the Christendom attempted till Cardinal Richelieu dynamited the whole process,

which was even otherwise unachievable, was not modelled after the Greek-Roman structure but founded on the glue of the Christian faith. Neither the Greek-Roman idea of state nor the universal state which the Christendom attempted had any ingredient comparable to the modern situation. In fact violent revolutions – the French and the American for instance – were needed to break with the ill-effects of the model of empire building which was promoted in Christendom. Never in the mythology or the history of India, save in the exceptional case of Emperor Ashoka, was there ever a mix up of governance with any denominational faith. With religion having been eliminated as the drive of nation or state or of nation-state building efforts in India, the question that arises is whether there was the concept of a state which is compatible with the modern concept of state as it evolved in the West.

The clearest and the unassailable proposition and the factual position on the ground in the West for over 1500 years after Constantine that emerges from this discourse is that there was nothing called a nation or nation-state in the West till Cardinal Richelieu founded the French nation on principles which could hold together a people on a basis which could be regarded as a binding principle of nation-building. But even in this process what happened was that it was a state built nation rather than a nation-built state. The West had only the model of City State in the Roman idea. Wherever the Roman power manifested became part of the Roman State, not that the areas and the people over which the Roman suzerainty prevailed were part of the Roman nation. It was never even the claim of the Roman Emperors. They were not citizens, nor even countrymen. So, the western experience should be properly appreciated before making the West the benchmark for assessing the existence of a nation in India or a nation-state. The Indian paradigm and experience should be independently analysed and appreciated before a conclusion could be drawn. This must be borne in mind when the evolution of nation and nation-state and the state-craft is understood in our civilisation as Rajdharma' evolved in India. This takes us to another, and a very relevant issue: are nation and state one and the same?

❑

Chapter IV

Nation and State: Are they one and the same?

At this point, before proceeding further on the comparative understanding of the concept of state and nation, that is in Indian idiom between the *Rashtra* and *Rajya,* in the Indian and in the Western traditions, the issue whether there could be a nation *[Rastra]* without a *[Rajya]* state or with more than one state or is nation and state co-terminus with each other and exhaust each other needs to be addressed as that is very critical to appreciating the Indian experience of existence as a nation without a co-terminus state, making it a nation-state.

Can a nation exist without a state at all for generations? Can a nation exist just in consciousness of a people without physically manifesting in a territory or in an administrative set up for thousands of years? If it could then nation is more a sense of consciousness than a physical construct represented in a nation-state. The simplest and the proven example of a nation, that is Rashtra, without state, namely *Rajya,* was the Jewish nation which was eclipsed for nearly 2000 years and was in existence only at a conceptual level. The Jewish nation was a concept which survived for almost 20 centuries in the mind and intent of the Jewish people, without a state and even without a country, actually without even a piece of land! The Jewish people were strewn all over the world in about 108 nations, and in almost all countries other than India they were persecuted and even butchered. Had the Jewish not kept alive the idea of a Jewish nation, they would never have attained one. Even

if the Jewish people had had a state, but had given up the idea of a Jewish nation, there would be a state in which Jews lived, but no Jewish State. This is what the Encyclopaedia of Britannica has to say on the creation of Israel.

"Following the United Nations partition of Palestine, Israel emerged on May 15, 1948. It was the first Jewish state to be established in nearly 2000 years. **Its creation represented a fulfilment of the historic national ideal of Jewish people stemming from the traditional religious belief in God's promise of the land of Israel to the people of Israel**. The ideal found practical expression in a desire to forge the national destiny without dependence on the goodwill of others. The establishment of Israel as an internationally recognised member of the family of nations signified a decisive step in modern Jewish history." [Encyclopaedia 15 Ed. Vol. 9 p.1959]

The religious belief of the Jewish people is set out in 12th Chapter of Genesis in Deut 7: 6-8 in the New Jewish Vision:

"For you are the people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on the earth the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people. It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord has set His heart on you and chose you – indeed you are the smallest of peoples; but it was the Lord loved you and kept the oath He made with your forefathers that the Lord freed you with a mighty hand from the house of bondage, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

How did the Israelites realise their vision of returning to their land, Israel? This is what the Encyclopaedia has to say on this:

"Closely related to the concept of Israel as the chosen, or Covenant, people is the role of the land of Israel. In patriarchal stories, settlement in Canaan is an integral part of the fulfilment from divine side, of the Covenant. The goal of the Israelites escaping from Egypt is the same land and entry into is understood in the same fashion. The return from the Babylon Exile, too, is seen in the same light. As there was the choice of the people, so was the choice of a land – and for much the same reason. It was to provide a setting in which the community could come into being as it carried out the divine commandments. This choice of the land contrasts with the predominant ideas of other peoples in the ancient world, in which the deity or divinities are usually

bound to a particular parcel of the ground outside of which they lost their effectiveness or reality. Though some concepts may have crept into Israelite thought during the period of the kings [from Saul to Jehoiachin] the crisis of the Babylonian Exile was met by a renewal of the affirmation that the God of Israel was, as the Lord of all earth, free from territorial restraint, although He had chosen a particular territory for his chosen people. Here again the two fold nature of the Jewish thought is apparent, and both sides are to be affirmed or the view is distorted. Following the two revolts against Rome (66-73 CE and 132-135 CE) the Jews of the ever-widening dispersion continued, as they had before these disasters, to cherish the land. The coming together of these two gave rise to Zionism. [Encyclopaedia 15 Ed. Vol. 10 p.288]

It is evident from the theological and religious foundation of Israel that the concept of a Jewish nation was only in the consciousness of the people and the desire to return to Israel was also founded in keeping that consciousness alive. The act and fact of return was only with a view to fix the Jewish nation to the geography the Jews had mentally revered. Thus, the Jewish history is standing illustration of how a nation can and does live in the consciousness of the people and it can live as long for 2000 years and the creation of Israel is principally the realisation of the longing of the Jewish people founded in religious and theological beliefs. So a nation is an institutionalised consciousness that craves to actualise and manifest and re-manifest if wars or politics drives it underground.. In its manifested form the concept of nation becomes a country.

The case of Israel may be viewed as a religious belief which the people of the faith consistently reminded themselves about and kept the Jewish consciousness alive. But more recently, and trans-religiously the question whether nation and state are the same or different came up in Federal Republic of Germany in a public opinion survey in the year 1972. In dealing with this question Eric Hobsbawm [Ibid p.188-189] says that, "that (national) consciousness as it emerged in the nineteenth century Europe, was situated somewhere in the quadrilateral described by the points People-State-Nation-Government. In theory these four elements coincided. In Hitler's phrase (where the word 'Volk' stands for

both 'people' and 'nation' Germany consisted of ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer, i.e. one people/nation, one state and one government. In practice the ideas of state and government tended to be determined by political criteria typical of the period since the era of great eighteenth century-revolutions, but the idea of 'people' and 'nation' largely by pre-political criteria which were helpful in the creation of the imagined and imaginary community. Politics constantly tended to takeover and remould such pre-political elements for its own purposes. The organic connection between the two was taken for granted. But this is no longer possible in the historical or old-established large nation states". On the survey in West Germany, Hobsbawm says that "this is admittedly an extreme case since Germany had passed from the, in theory, most complete pan-German political unity under Hitler to a situation where at least two states co-existed which claim to be all or part of the German nation. However, it is just this situation which allows us to detect the uncertainties and ambiguities in the minds of most citizens, as they think about the nation."

In the Survey Hobsbawm says, "83 percent Germans thought they knew about capitalism, 78 percent were in no doubt about socialism, but only 71 percent ventured an opinion on 'the state', and 34 percent had not the idea of how to define or describe 'the nation'. 90 percent Germans who had completed secondary education felt they were informed about all four terms but only 54 percent of (non-apprenticed, i.e. unskilled) Germans with only primary education felt they knew what the state was, and 47 percent felt they knew about the nation. The uncertainty sprang precisely from the breakdown of the congruence between 'people', 'nation' and 'state'.

Analysing the Survey further, Hobsbawm says, "When asked 'are nation and state the same, or are we talking about two different things?' 43 percent of West Germans – 81 percent among the most educated – gave the obvious answer that they were not the same, since two Germans states co-existed. However 35 percent believed that nation and state were inseparable, and so, logically enough, 31 percent of workers – 39 percent of those under 40 years – concluded that German Democratic Republic now formed a different nation, because it was a different state. Let us note also, that the group

with the strongest conviction of the identity of the state and the nation – 42 percent — consisted of skilled workers; the group with the strongest conviction that Germany consisted of one nation divided into two states were Social Democratic voters. 52 percent of them held this view as against 36 percent of the Christian Democratic voters'. 'One might say' Hobsbawm concludes, 'that a century after the unification of Germany, the traditional nineteenth century concept of nation survived most strongly in the working class. What this suggests is that idea of 'the nation', once extracted, like mollusc, from the apparently hard shell of the 'nation-state' emerges in a distinctly wobbly shape"...... "What East and West Germans were uncertain about, with good reason, was the political and other implications of 'Germanness'. And that it is far clear that the establishment of single Federal Republic of Germany has removed these uncertainties entirely."

Thus, it is not always that nation and state are co-extensive. There could be nations which have no states at some point in their existence. In fact in the case of Israel for nearly two millenniums there was no Hebrew state though there was a Hebrew nation in the heart and mind of the Hebrew people despite that they were strewn all over the world. During the long suspension extending over about 60 generations, the Hebrew nation was just an aspiration kept alive in their minds. Likewise Germany as a nation was united in the minds of most Germans but the states became two following the Second World War. So nation and state need not always be co-extensive. There could be nations without correspondingly comprehensive state. Take the case of India. It has a unique sense of nationhood. It was invaded and brought under foreign domination and most part of the earlier period it was free but not politically united. But it found its political unity when it was defeated. Every time it thought of freedom it thought of freeing the whole of its geography. So the innate and inherent unity as a nation was clear in its conduct even when it had no freedom. The uniqueness of India as a nation without being a nation-state is a very instructive and a contrast to the experience of the Christendom.

□

Chapter V

The nation in India existed long before nation-state was founded in Europe

The antiquity of India as a nation, that is, *Bharatvarsha:*

It is evident from the discourse on the evolution of nation-state in Christendom that it was a geo-Christian evolution and is a recent modern idea which humanity and polity never knew even in the 17th century. So the argument that no nation-state existed in India before the British came or before the Islamic invasion is a ridiculous contention as the idea of nation-state which evolved only in the 18th century existed nowhere. The question to ask in the context of ancient civilisations like India is whether there has been a continuity of cultural, religious, social and political traditions in India from ancient times. Undeniable Indian civilisation has a continuity and durability which seems to have been denied to other civilisations which had been its contemporaries. For example there is no Greek-Roman civilisation today, nor is there an Egyptian or Babylonian civilisation. The Persian civilisation is no more. These civilisations have been reduced to artefacts, dead ones, even though the countries and peoples who once reared and adhered to them are alive. But, in the case of India as in the case of China, the civilisation which thrived here five thousand years ago, is still vibrant and constitutes the longest continuity known to human race. It was no coincidence that the Indian-Hindu civilisation has continued to flow despite hurdles and efforts that have snuffed

out other civilisations and wiped them off the face of the earth.

In his address on landing from the West after his triumphant visit to the West, Swami Vivekananda said: "Civilisations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and in modern times, great ideas have emanated from strong and great races. In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by advancing tides of national life: but mark you, my friends it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and with the march of the embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each idea had to wade through the blood of millions of our fellow beings. Each word of power had to be followed by groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This is in main what other nations have taught. Here activity prevailed when Greek did not exist, when Rome was not thought of, when the very fathers of the modern Europeans lived in forests and painted themselves in blue. Even earlier, when history has no record, and then tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it. We of all nations in the world have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head and therefore we live." [Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol. III pp.105-106]. Swami Vivekananda continued: "There was a time when at the sound of the big Greek battalions the earth trembled. Vanished off from the face of the earth with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. "There was a time", said Vivekananda, "Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; the earth trembled at the name of Rome". "But "today" the Swami said, "Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves its web where the Caesars ruled". [Ibid p.106] "There have been other nations equally glorious which have come and gone living a few hours of exultant and of exuberant dominance and of a wicked national life and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters." [Ibid] Thus while powerful nations and civilisations have come and gone, there is an unbelievable eternality associated with the Indian civilisation. But it is not simple survival. It has flourished. It had flourished in literature and arts, music and sculpture, trade

and commerce, politics and economics. It was the most powerful drive of the world economy as late as 1750, when a large part of its geography and people were under control by Islamic forces. It could never have achieved distinction in diverse fields including as a successful economy unless it had had a stable social political and cultural life.

Thus *Bharatvarsha* or India was a nation before any nation was conceived anywhere; before any nation-state was structured in Christendom to resist the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church.

Those who see the absence of a continued and uninterrupted pan-Indian state with central authority in Indian history tend to discount India as a nation itself. This is a grave mistake. It requires a profound understanding of the Indian tradition and Indian mind as to why the Indian people did not create a pan-Indian state always, although there are clear endeavours by some powerful emperors like Chandragupta, Ashoka, Harsha and even Shivaji to create pan-Indian state. Actually, everyone of them endeavoured to create a political state co-terminus with the entire *Bharatvarsha* only because it was a geo-cultural entity capable of being politically united. It needs a deeper understanding of the Indian psychology and model of living particularly as to the role of the state and its relation with the other components of human life in India. The traditions of Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the different Puranas some of which predate the birth of Christ, and even the very origin of many civilisations tell a different story about the Indian life. While the general tendency is to dismiss them as mythological, not historical, it could not be denied that those who wrote them particularly as to the idea of state or king or the relation between the people and the state could not have been merely imagining particularly when they talk about the geography of the larger India called *Bharatvarsha* or the rivers and mountains, and who ruled them at what point in time, and also the concept of state and the responsibility of kings and the different instrumentalities of the state and other highly temporal issues.

The word *Rashtra* occurs even in Rig Veda. Rig Veda also praises Varuna as the Lord of the *Rashtras*. In Atharava Veda also *Rashtra* figures: the earth is called the Mother and invoked to

impart to the *Rashtra* strength and energy. Agnipurana holds that *Rashtra* is the most important of all elements of the state. [History of Dharmasastras (Government Oriental Series Class B No. 6) Vol. III. p.132-33]. According to Puranic geography, there are seven 'Dvipas' namely Jambu, Plaksha, Salmali, Kusa, Krauncha, Saka and Pushkara [Vishnu Purna] and each Dvipa is divided into Varshas. Jambudvipa has nine Varhsas of which *Bharatvarsha* is the first. Vishnu Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Markandeya Purana and other Puranas assert that *Bharatvarsha* as a land of action *[Karmabhumi].* This is patriotism of a sort but not of the kind we see in western countries. *Bharatvarsha* itself has comprised numerous countries from the most ancient times. The names of the countries and the tribes and the people inhabiting them were the same according to Panini. [Ibid p.134]

The different Puranas describe and celebrate *Bharatvarsha* in physical, demographic and spiritual terms. As an illustration the Brahmanda Purana, which is dated by scholars as earlier to 7th to 10th century [the assessed date of Narada Purana] and is regarded as one of the oldest Puranas can be taken to understand how the ancients comprehended India. It contains a description of *Bharatvarsha* in verses 4 onwards in chapter 16 [Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series, published by Motilal Banarasidas Publication, Brahmanda Purana Part I p.130] In chapter 14 [Ibid p.134-141], the Brahmanda Purana describes the Continents and Subcontinents of the world. In chapter 15 [Ibid p.141-149], it describes the length and extent of the Earth and also Jambudvipa. In chapter 16, it gives a description of *Bharat(a)*. The Purana says: "This is a mysterious subcontinent in the middle of the universe where the fruits of *Karma* are enjoyed whether auspicious or inauspicious. This subcontinent that is to the north of the ocean and to the south of Himavan [Himalayas] is called *Bharata* and its subjects are *Bharati* [pertaining to *Bharat*] it is from here, the Purana claims, that heaven and salvation are attained and people go to the middle and ultimate end. Nowhere on this Earth, the Purana says, has the holy rite been enjoined on the human beings. [This, the editors of the book claim, as the special feature of India and due to this special importance, *Bharat(a)* is called Karmabhumi. – Ibid p.150 foot note 2] The Purana says that the subcontinent is

divided into 9 divisions and the 9th division is an island surrounded by sea. The Purana claims that the subcontinent [of *Bharat(a)*] extends from north-south, from the source of the river Ganga to cape Comorin, a thousand *yojana* (1 *yojana* = 12 kms) The obliquely (i.e., the breadth) on the northern part is nine thousand *yojanas*. All around in the bordering regions the subcontinent is colonised by Mlecchas (barbarous tribes). The Purana says, Kiratas live on the Eastern border lands and the Yavanas in the Western border lands. This description makes *Bharat* extend up to Egypt on the West and on the East up to Java and Malaysia. Within *Bharat*, says the Purana, the Bramhanas, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas live in the central areas and the Shudras are scattered in different parts. They are all well settled maitaining themselves by means of performances of sacrifices, wielding weapons, and carrying on trading activities. Says the Purana, mutual dealings among those different castes continue (indefinitely), based on virtue, wealth, and love in regard to the their holy rites. The conception of the different stages of life as well as that of panchamas [outcastes] is duly maintained here among these people who have the tendency and endeavour to attain heaven and Moksha [liberation]. It is clear from this description that the people who lived *Bharat(a)* were having intimate social intercourse in terms of virtue, wealth and more importantly, love! That is they were one functional society with different divisions of work to perform. The ninth division which is an island, says the Purana, is said to extend obliquely. He, who conquers it completely is called *Samrat* [Emperor]. It is evident from this that the concept of state was dynamic as it depended on the expanse of the empire. If the King conquered the 9th division mentioned in Brahmanda Purana which, given its description as oblique in shape, is probably Sri Lanka, that would make him the Emperor or *Samrat*. Is that why Ashoka was called *Samrat* as he had brought Sri Lanka under his authority?

The *Samrat* or *Chakravartin* is the federal head or constituted the federal *Bharatvarsha*. If a *Samrat* did not exist the members of the federation would be autonomous units. When a *Samrat* or *Chakravartin* emerges they also affiliate to become part of the federal structure. This is what emerges from a survey of the ancient literature. So the description *Bharat* as a geographic, cultural, social

and political entity is clear from Brahmanda Purana. The most critical element in this discourse is that the reach of the State may not be coextensive with the expanse of *Bharatvarsha*. A person who rules over the entire *Bharatvarsha*, that is, a *Chakravartin* may not always exist. But the *Bharatvarsha* was culturally and socially harmonious enough to be under one federal state, that of the *Chakravartin*. In ancient India the modern sentiment of nationalism had hardly taken root. Writers speak of *rajya* [state] and of 'rastra' [territory] and element of '*rajya*'.... The state has been at all times a co-ordinating agency, but as its boundaries were extremely variable in ancient India, the modern sentiment of nationality, my country, right or wrong hardly ever arose in India. [History of Dharmsastra Vol. III p.136]. But in the whole of Hindu India, there was no doubt a certain unity of religion, philosophy, literary forms and conventions of arts and forms of worship and reverence for holy places.' [Ibid p.136] "There was no doubt a great emotional regard for *Bharatvarsha* or *Aryavarta* as a unit for many centuries among all writers from a religious point of view, though not from a political point of view. Therefore, the one modern element of nationhood, namely being under the same Government, was wanting. But it must be noted that from very ancient times there was always the inspiration among kings and the people to bring the whole of *Bharatvarsha* "under one Umbrella." [Ibid p.137]

It is because of this inherent unity as a harmonious thought and people that when conquerors came to India they attempted to conquer the whole of India. Because they also knew it was *Bharatvarsha*, a harmonious whole. Also when the Indian efforts to fight back commenced with Vijayanagar, or Maratha or Sikh efforts, they also had the ultimate ambition to free the whole of India. "Shivaji exerted himself to bring the whole of India under Hindu control" [The History and Culture of the Indian People, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Vol. titled 'The Mughal Empire' p.275] He believed that Hindustan is essentially the land of the Hindus [Ibid p.276].

The Origin of State in India: The Puranic evidence

Taking the Puranas as a source of knowledge and conceptual thinking of the people of those times, if not of facts as they were

described in them, it is clear that there were deep and profound discussions about the state and its responsibility, the role of the state and the society and their inter se relation etc. The Mahabharata describes how conceptually no state was needed at one point in the understanding of the Indian life. The profound discussions between Bhishma who was on death bed and Yudhisthira bring out the theory or conception, if not the fact, of the origin of state or kingship. The Pandavas were advised by Sri Krishna to seek the advice of Bhishma, who was irretrievably wounded in the Mahabharata war by Arjuna and was awaiting certain death, about Rajadharma or the ethics of State Craft as Bhishma was the last surviving authority on ethics of state craft. One of the questions which Yudhisthira asked Bhishma was on the origin of the very concept of state or kingship. In the History of Dharmasastra by Dr Pandurang Vaman Kane the substance of the discussions between Bhishma and Yudhisthira is captured. [History of Dharmasastras Vol. III. p.33]

"We may examine the theories of the origin of kingship in the Mahabharata. The Santiparva deals with this subject in two places in Chapters 59 and 67. In Chapters 59 Yudhisthira asks the great warrior and statesman Bhisma how the title 'king' arose and how one man, who has fundamentally the same physical and mental equipment as other men, rules over all men. These are not really two questions but only two aspects of the same question. Then Bhisma starts saying that there was originally a state of perfection (Krtyuga) in which there was no king, no kingdom, no punishment, and no chastiser. Gradually moha (delusion and aberration of mind) spread among people and then greed, sexual desire and passions arose and Vedas and dharma perished. The Gods did not receive the offering and went to Brahma who composed a vast treatise as stated above [In page 4 of the History of Dharmasastra, Dr Kane says "in order to provide against the complete destruction of dharma, Brahma composed a work of one hundred thousand chapters on dharma, artha, kama and moksa] that dealt with the four goals of existence for the benefit of the world and that was the cream of the learning." Then Dr Kane goes on to explain how the lineage of kings occurred by trial and error, and how oaths were administered to kings by gods and sages as it was thought that promise to the

sages implied promise to the people in general. Chapter 67, Dr Kane says, gives different, 'shorter version', perhaps by some 'prior work or teacher'. "It begins by saying that the most desirable thing for a state is to crown a king, that in a kingless country there is no dharma, no security of life or of property and, therefore, the Gods appointed kings for protecting the people. Then it proceeds to say that the people assembled and made compacts (samayan) amongst themselves that who ever would commit libel or assault or adultery and break the compacts made by the people should be abandoned." [Ibid p.34]

A culture-defined nation as the core; with transitory state at the periphery

It is evident from the conceptual understanding in Hindu civilisation, whether it was a concept in actual practice or not, that state was an evolution based on a need that arose, and is limited to purposes for which a state was needed. Since the state was for defined purposes as the people generally lived according to the concept of dharma which largely disciplined and regulated their lives, the state emerged when the institution of dharma declined. The state in India was not the source of the rule of law or dharma. But the state was evolved to fill the void created by erosion in dharmic values. It is a paradox that while Karl Marx theorises from revolution to Proletarian dictatorship and state to the state evaporating to reach a state of statelessness, Bhishma describes the Indian experience as the very reverse of what is popularly regarded as the Marxian Utopia of statelessness. So in the Indian mind, whether moulded by experience of what Bhishma had expounded or by the concept that Bhishma had commended, had always separated the idea of nation and the state. The state was never regarded as a durable institution, while the idea of nation was regarded as an eternal and culturally one and immutable.

The nation in India: Its antiquity and continuity

So the idea of nation in India was synonymous with the idea of a spiritual phenomenon or entity. It is this spiritual identity of India that manifested in the geo-cultural and later geo-political consciousness that evolved with the idea of a state as Bhishma

had expounded. So the nation in India, the geo-cultural and geo-political *Bharatvarsha*, was the first of its kind in the world. The Greek-Roman model was not a geo-cultural evolution from Dharma-instituted statelessness to a limited idea of state as has been the Indian conception. So the antiquity of the Indian evolution as a state can be imagined but cannot be measured or dated. A small survey of the vast ancient Indian literature will satisfy any cursory reader that the concept of nation or a geo-political entity which approximates to the idea of the nation-state of the present times existed in ancient India.

The Puranas describe *Bharatvarsha* as the abode by taking birth in which only people can seek salvation. It was not just a belief in India as testified to by the Puranas, but a belief that popularly prevailed in China too. When an Indian delegation met Mao Zedong in the 1950s he asked them whether they knew what the faith of an ordinary Chinese about India was and answered the question himself when he found no answer was forthcoming from the delegation. He told them that the average Chinese believes that he had to take birth in India if he desired to attain Moksha!

India as a timeless nation in the perspective of the builders of India of modern times

If this is how the ancient Indian and sacred texts captured and presented Bharatvarsh as a timeless continuity, how did the builders of India of the modern times view India? Just three illustrations, the concept and conviction of three great leaders of modern India would be sufficient to grasp the modern India's understanding of traditional or ancient India.

Mahatma Gandhi recognises and celebrates this inherent and innate unity and harmony of India and the Indian civilisation in Hind-Swaraj.

"The English have taught us that were not one nation and that it will take centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was also because we were one nation that they were able to make one kingdom. Subsequently, they divided us. I do not wish to suggest

that because we were one nation, we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock carts. They learned one another's languages and there was no aloofness between them." Having indicated the theoretical basis for our unity the Mahatma gives practical illustrations of what the unity manifested in. He says, "What do you think could have been the intention of those farseeing ancestors of ours who established Sethubandana [Rameshwar] in the South, Jagannath in the East, Haridwar in the North as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they are no fools. They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that those whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganges in their own homes. But they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus they established holy places in various parts of India and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world." [pp.42-43 'Hindswaraj or Indian Home Rule' by M.K. Gandhi, published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad – 380014]

Swami Vivekananda celebrated in high emotional terms the essential and substantive Hindu identity of India.

"Formerly I thought that as every Hindu thinks that this is the *Karmabhumi*. Today, I stand here and say, with the conviction of truth, that if there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be blessed *Punyabhumi* to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for *Karma*, the land to which every soul wending its way God ward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, and above all the land of introspection and of spirituality it is India...... The debt which the world owes to our Motherland is immense. Taking country by country there is not one race on this earth to which the world owes as much as to the 'patient Hindu', the 'mild Hindu'. The 'mild Hindu' is sometimes used as an expression of concealed a wonderful truth, it is the term 'mild Hindu', who has always been the blessed child of God." [Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda [Vol. III. p.105]

"India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the *Tirtha*". [Ibid Vol. II. p.152]

"We all hear so much about the degeneration of India. There was a time when I also believed in it. But today standing on the vantage-ground of experience, with eyes cleared of obstructive predispositions and above all, of the highly coloured pictures of other countries toned down to their proper shade and light by actual contact, I confess, in all humility, that I was wrong. Thou blessed land of the Aryas, thou was never degraded. Sceptres have been broken and thrown away, the ball of power has passed from hand to hand, but in India courts and kings always touched only a few; the vast mass of people from the highest to the lowest, has been left to pursue its own inevitable course, the current of national life flowing at times slow and half-conscious, at others strong and awakened. I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries, with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and there she is walking with her majestic steps – my motherland – to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power on earth or in heaven can check – then regeneration of man the brute into man the God." [Ibid Vol. IV p.314]

"This national ship, my country men, my friends, my children – this national ship has been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the waters of life........Say not one word against this society. I love it for its past greatness. I love you all because you are children of Gods, and because you are the children of the glorious forefathers [Ibid Vol. III p.227]

"O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri and Damayanti; ..... forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not thou art born as sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers; Thou brave one be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim,

'I am Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say 'the ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the pariah Indian, is my brother'. Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's Gods and Goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred Varanasi of my old age'. Say, brother: 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good' and repeat and pray every night, 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness to me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness and Make me a man." [Ibid Vol. IV p.478-479]

"The nation in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces." A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune." [Ibid Vol. III p.371]

Maharishi Aurobindo elevates the whole issue of Indian identity to a height no civilisation can hope to reach in its understanding and celebration of a cultural and civilisational entity.

"India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, the Godhead for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence." ['Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India', published by Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry p.8] In his famous Uttarapara Speech Maharishi Aurobindo captured India and her mission of Sanatana Dharma. Speaking of the Adesh, the divine message, he had received in the solitary confinement in Alipur prison, Maharishi Aurobindo told the audience: The second message came and said "Something has been shown to you [Aurobindo] in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the *Rishis*, saints and *Avatars,* and it is now going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to set forth my word. This is Sanatana Dharma, this is the eternal

religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. .... When you go forth, speak to your nation always by this word, that it is for Sanatana Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am therefore giving them freedom of service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend itself, it is Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists." That is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you today....... That word is not finished. I spoke once before with this force in me and I said that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say it is Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it, it moves, with it, it grows. When Sanatana Dharma declines, this nation declines, and if Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is, nationalism. This is the message I have to speak to you." [Ibid p.109-110]

□

Chapter VI

The paradigm difference between the Indian [Hindu] view and the Western [Abrahamic] – in war and in peace

The first thing to understand to comprehend India

But to comprehend India in the context of the present day world, the first requirement is to understand the paradigm difference that exists between the Indian view and the Western view of life. There is a seemingly unbridgeable gap that transforms into a paradigm difference between the perspectives of the Hindu civilisation and the perspectives of the Abrahamic religious values which moulded the Western world and also a large part of the Islamic attitude to the non-Islamic world. The difference between the two traditions, the Hindu tradition and the Abrahamic, is particularly about how one collective of humans should live and relate to other collective in religious and civilisational terms. The issue is how does the Hindu civilisation view the non-Hindu faiths and cultures and how do the Abrahamic civilisational units view the non-Abrahamic first and next among them how do each of them view the other. The essential motto of Hindu civilisation can be captured in the values it has commended to its adherents.

A civilisation that prayed for the whole mankind, even all living beings

One of the oldest values of the Hindu civilisation is: 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam', namely, 'the creation, not just world, is a family'.

That means there is mutuality and interdependence within the creation, like in a family. Another ancient motto of the Hindus has been: "*Sarve Bhavantu sukhinaha Sarve Santu Niramayaha*" meaning, "Let everyone be happy, and everyone be free from all ills". Quoting this Vedic saying, Guruji Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghachalak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, therefore rightly asserted, "It is not the modern thinkers who are the first to think of world unity and universal welfare. Long, long ago, in fact long before the modern age had set in the seers and savants of this land delved into this vital question. The ideal of human unity, of a world free from all traces of conflict and misery had stirred our hearts from time immemorial." The oldest known sacred literature, the Rig Veda says "*Ano bhadraha kritavo yantu vishvataha*", which means "Let noble thoughts come from everywhere". Thousands of years earlier the Vedas proclaimed "*Deivihi Svatirastunaha; Swastir Manushebhyaha; Oordhwam Jighatu Bheshajam; Sanno Astu Dwipate Sanchathushpate; Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti hi*", which means "Let us Gods give us well being; Let Gods turn the atmosphere into medicine; let the two legged humans and the four legged beings be happy". So the Hindu concept of well-being was not limited to seeking happiness for the adherents of the Hindu pantheon of faiths, not even limited to human beings, but extends to the entire creation, including the vegetation, the two legged and the four legged living beings.[Shanti Panchaha mantra] Thus the Hindu Sanatana Dharma integrated and assimilated the entire creation as part of an indivisible whole. The brotherhood concepts of the Abrahamic faiths were confined to the fellow religious beings and the others, not part of the fraternity of the faith, are regarded as Heathens/Pagans or Kufirs. In contrast, the unique aspect of the Hindu spiritual vision unexplored by other known spiritual experiences and organisations in the world is that it postulated no enemy outside, and it endeavoured to integrate the entire creation including the humans and the nature taken together into one single family, as Swami Vivekananda declared before the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1993 – and exactly 108 years later to the date, Islamic Terror hit the US in the year 2001. This is what the Hindu Monk told the religious leaders assembled in Chicago.

   "Sisters and Brothers of America..... [At this moment came the

three minute standing ovation from the audience of 7,000] It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. **I thank you in name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.”**

"My thanks also to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration.”

"I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.”

"I will quote to you brethren a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest childhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.”

"The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: Whosoever comes to me, though whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.”

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and it's horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful Earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society

would be far more advanced than it is now."

"But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

It is obvious from the message of universal brotherhood on the premise of acceptance of all faiths and particularly other faiths as true, that the Abrahamic religous differentiation of those belonging to this faith or that is the reason for the religious bigotry that has ravaged the world for centuries. So Vivekananda points to how the Hindu civilisation protected and preserved for posterity the Zoroastrian faith and culture and the Parsi race and how it protected the Jews who were hounded by the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian powers all over the globe. In fact the Israeli Consulate in India had brought out a booklet in which it had said that while the Jews strewn all over the world in over 108 countries were persecuted in almost all of them, only in one country, India, they were protected and treated as part of the locals without in any interference in their affairs. In fact, the King of Kochi gave them the plot of land adjoining his own personal temple for them to build a Synagogue and also gave them a principality to have their self-rule according to their own customs and traditions so that they were not assimilated into local customs and thus are able to preserve their faith and culture. It is the Dutch who, authorised by the command of the Church to hound out the Jewish people, invaded and attacked the Jewish principality in Kerala! It was the same case with the Parsis who were driven out of their motherland by the invading Islamic forces and landed as refugees in Kutch seeking shelter and care. The local king offered them protection, gave them land for their fire temple, for their agriculture and for their stay. That small community has lived for over a thousand years in this country undisturbed and unmolested and prospered. It has set up the largest industrial group in India, and produced the best doctors and the best lawyers and other professionals. Dadabhai Naoroji one of the tallest leaders of the Indian freedom movement from the Parsi community told the British who offered the Parsis communal representation in the legislature, that such

measures were a conspiracy to divide the Hindus and the Parsis and refused to accept the offer. Like in the case of the Parsis, the Shia Mulims who were persecuted by their Sunni co-religious forces took refuge in Gujarat. They too were protected and they prospered and even carried the message of Islam to Indonesia. So what Swami Vivekananda proclaimed in Chicago was not theoretical verse on universal brotherhood but acceptance of other faiths as valid and sacred as the faith of the locals. It was the conviction which manifested in the conduct of the ordinary Hindus. It was not a theoretical position but a practical proposition.

While the Hindu civilisation guides its faiths and people view other faiths and cultures as equally valid and also constitutes the manifestation of the Divine, the individual Abrahamic faiths claim sole legitimacy and generally regard others as false faiths and even as 'evils' and 'devils'. Herein lies their intolerance to others' faiths and cultures and ways of life and worship. Religious intolerance or tolerance is a product of how one views others' faiths. It is not so much about what a faith preaches about itself but about how it preaches its followers about others. The simple rule is this: if a faith tells its followers that other faiths are equally valid for other as it is valid for its own followers, then it preaches peace; if it tells its adherents that others' faiths are false, evil and devil, it preaches intolerance, violence and promotes clashes. This is what manifested in the past as religious wars and is now threatening the world with civilisational clashes. It is in this background the capacity of different civilisations to be civil and cultured in its relation with other civilisations is to be measured. The measure of harmonious relation between two civilisations is the measure of their capacity to mutually accept each others' validity. Religious tolerance is a word of war times, not of peace times. It is acceptance of other faiths as valid when peace prevails that will promote religious tolerance when war emerges between people of different faiths. In the ancient past when wars were the dominant instrument to settle the differences between faiths and cultures, the tolerance of the people of one faith to other cultures and faiths was directly proportionate to their capacity to accept others' faiths as equally valid for others as their own faith is to them. That is to say, the civility of a civilisation was the measure of its capacity to accept

other faiths in times of peace and tolerate other faiths in times of war. Therefore, the war ethics of different faiths and civilisations is a clear indication of its capacity to tolerate other faiths.

Not peace, war is the test of a civilisation's approach to humans and other civilisations.

Thus, nothing is more explicitly indicative of the civility and nobility of an ancient civilisation than the war ethics which it had followed or the lack of it. Particularly at a time in the history of all civilisations when wars were mere expressions of barbaric qualities in human collectives, if a civilisation had high ethical standards for wars and had by consensus enforced them, then it has to be something very different from the civilisations prevailing elsewhere. There are two aspects to this discussion. What is the traditional theological and philosophical position on wars and war ethics in the Hindu civilisation as compared to the relative position of the Abrahamic civilisation, particularly Islamic and Christian position? Second, what was the actual conduct of the Hindu civilisation as compared to the Abrahamic on the battle fields?

Comparative war ethics as the real test for evaluating different civilisations.

There are two reasons why the comparative war ethics of the Hindu civilisation and the Abrahamic and the Hellenistic civilisations need to be compared. The first is that it is a historically proven position that states and empires were built by wars intended to conquer territories. This was how the Greek-Roman civilisations extended their territories and built empires and brought large areas of the world under their domination. Later powered by faith the Islamic and Christian forces employed wars as means to build empires and extend their dominion both religous and temporal. Aggressive, acquisitive and greedy war ethics is fundamental to building empires. While the other civilisations adopted this as the fundamental norm for building states and empires, the Hindu civilisation followed a very high level of war ethics which was founded on the thinking that wars for acquisition of territories and conquering other states is not ethical or in the Indian idiom, *Dharmic.* In fact, the other civilisations had adopted as

a normal warfare model barbaric war techniques which the Hindu civilisations and the written texts of Hindu thinkers abhorred. This is one of the principal reasons for the Hindu civilisation not building empires and states on a sustained basis. In fact, another aspect of the Hindu war ethics is that the purpose of the war was never to spread the culture or faith of the victorious kings. In fact, the victorious kings are forbidden to impose their laws, morals, cultures and faiths on the conquered territories and peoples. In fact, they are mandated to worship at the temples, wear the dress and adopt the local culture of the defeated people. It was the other way round in the other civilisations particularly the Abrahamic and Hellenistic civilisations. This is the principal reason why the other civilisations could build empires as their war models were founded on greed and acquisitive goals and they were free to adopt barbaric techniques to win wars which the Hindu texts had mandated the Hindu rulers from adopting.

Eric Hobsbawm in his work on "Nationalism" says that one of the three criteria which allowed a people to be classified as a nation is a proven capacity to conquest. [Hobsbawm p.37-38] He says: "The third criterion, it must unfortunately be said, was a proven capacity to conquest. There is nothing like being an imperial people to make a population conscious of its collective existence as Friedrich List well knew. Besides, for the nineteenth century conquest provided the Darvinian proof of evolutionary success as social species." [Ibid p.38] So the concept of nation or nation-State which evolved in and within Christendom was founded essentially by conquest as the principal means. The theology and philosophy of the West not only did not prevent conquest, but advocated and encouraged conquests. In contrast the Hindu texts discouraged and prevented conquests even though the conquests within the Hindu geography would not have meant more than merely changing the ruler, and sometimes even not that if the defeated King was agreeable to continue. The Hindu texts – including the comparatively most aggressive Hindu war text, the Arthasastra – almost unanimously forbid, as will be seen, the victor from interfering with the affairs, culture and traditions of the vanquished people. So there was and could be no religious or cultural ambition or agenda to conquer, and the direct contrast is the Abrahamic war model which encourages

wars for religious conquests.

Again, even otherwise, since wars for conquest even in the sense of personal power and aggrandisement, was not spoken of in acceptable terms and was in fact morally forbidden, the Hindu civilisation, even though it constituted a cultural and social nation with much greater sense of unity and common characteristics, as will be seen, than any nation-state in the world, did not, as it need not, become a single administrative entity or a state. Given the war norms for formation of states and nation-states in the West, namely the capacity for conquest, had such norms been allowed or adopted in the Hindu civilisation the *Bharatvarsha* which was undoubtedly a single geo-cultural and geo-spiritual entity would have shaped as a geo-political entity or nation-state also on a continuous and durable basis. But, as will be seen later, the endeavour of all kings in *Bharatvarsha* had always been to conquer and bring the entire *Bharatvarsha* under one umbrella but in due compliance with the ethical norms of war. This established that *Bharatvarsha* was always a nation, but the principles which were undeniably followed in the state craft and war model by the different kings or states in the whole of *Bharatvarsha* would not allow conquest of the kind with which the Christendom and Islamic models are familiar and a single supreme emerging and functioning all the times in *Bharatvarsha*. So despite being a geo-cultural and geo-spiritual entity, and having a people that thought of the entire *Bharatvarsha* and worshipped the nook and corner of it and every river and mountain in it and every saint and seer in its forests and mountains, and despite its people moving from one end of the *Bharatvarsha* to the other end without any kind of limitation as to their cultural or spiritual right, no umbrella state was formed as there was no need to form such a state, since what the state was needed to do the idea of *dharma* which was commonly understood and abided by all could do and did. This aspect of the Hindu phenomenon has not been understood by the secular and intellectual establishment in India in making comparative assessment of India as a nation with the western nation-states.

The second reason is that because the ethics of war is the best test of the worst dimensions of a civilisation, if a civilisation had had culture of war ethics, it is undoubtedly a superior civilisation. In

the past on the norms of wars adopted by a civilisation depended, its survival, subordination and success in the last two thousand years. Wars brought out the most violent element in a civilisation; it brought out the decadent aspect of human behaviour and the baser instincts of a civilisation. If a civilisation, particularly an ancient one, had conceived and adopted higher war ethics, in some respects even higher than the modern day war conventions then its conduct in the ordinary course of life ought to be nobler than even the modern concepts of nobility. If ancient civilisation could be civilised in its war ethics then it needs no proof as to its compatibility with modern world. This is also relevant in the context of clash of civilisations which now dominates global debate. The present day clash between the extremist and violent Islamic forces and the West perceived to be largely Christian is not a new phenomenon. It is in substance the re-emergence of the religious and civilisational strife which led to wars and also governed the war norms. Industrialisation and later globalisation had made the world wonder at one point that the old ways of violent religious and civilisational clashes were gone for ever. But, the recent events have firmly ruled out that the old world is a dead world, but is very much part of the present, and may even drive the future world. So what was, until a decade ago, regarded as a bygone phenomenon, namely religious and cultural violence at a national and global level is now very much a reality which the world knows it has to face. This is not something which affects only war times and warriors. In the sense of civilisational clashes, all wars are civilisational and as Tsun Tsu said in his Art of War, peace time is preparation for civilisational wars. So it is the thought that drives the wars that is important and not the wars themselves. So the theological predispositions of the different religious groups in peacetimes are critical for a comparative appreciation of the propensity of the different religious and civilisational groups to war and violence.

The high ethics of warfare in Hindu civilisation.
A virtue that proved to be a weakness against civilisations which adopted barbaric war ethics against Hindu India .

Combat is an area where – as we shall see now because of the totally different set of principles, highly venerable principles of war

ethics it had followed and internalised in its conduct – the Hindu civilisation lost heavily to Islamic and Christian civilisations and lost the lead it had built up over centuries and fell backward in politics, economics and influence. The purpose of wars outside the Indian civilisation had been distinctly different from the purpose of the war in Abrahamic civilisations. Precisely what the Hindu civilisation prohibits wars for, namely, that the victors should not interfere with the religious beliefs of the losers, the Abrahamic promote the wars for, namely to spread their religions. In fact Hindu civilisation at all times in its known theoretical and practical position eschewed religious motive for war. In fact, it prohibited the use of war to spread the religion of the victor to the people of the loser. In fact, the Hindu theoretical position was that the victorious King should honour the faith and traditions of the people of the loser's kingdom. But, the theoretical position in the Islamic and Christian civilisations is the other way round, namely, that wars are necessary to promote religion.

The war ethics of other civilisations – 'unrelieved barbarism', says Encyclopaedia of Britannia

A neutral literature, the Encyclopaedia of Britannica, succinctly captures the essence of war in ancient times. "In early history, war appears to have been a matter of almost unrelieved barbarity. Practically no restraints were observed in methods of war; there was little discrimination between combatant and non-combatant; and torture, slavery, death, and confiscation of property awaited conquered forces and population." [15th Ed. Vol. 19 'Warfare, Laws of' p.538] So the war was never confined to combatants and anything, property, temple or other assets and anybody, women and children, belonging to the enemy were the targets. The Encyclopaedia goes further: "Yet the identifiable features of the present law can be traced back to the ancient times in different parts of the world. As a rule however the mitigating features of law represented only an ideal and so the law was actually applied only during wars between kindred peoples or like civilisations. Such were the conditions that persisted through ancient times into Middle Ages, until, prompted by religion and ideas of chivalry on the one hand and by the increase of rationalist and humanist sentiment on the

other, a substantial body of law had come into being by the late middle ages. Such laws governed certain aspects of war, at least among fellow religionists. Most noteworthy of these early laws was the insistence that prisoners, if they were Christians captured by Christians, could not longer be enslaved". So even the mitigating features which emerged and which were confined to mere agreed restraint against enslavement of the prisoners of war. And this too was restricted to only Christian prisoners of war captured by Christians! It was more a clannish restraint founded on religious identity. So it was at best an intra-Christian, not a universal, concept.

The concept and gradations of states or kingdoms in ancient India, And the concept of war defined by principles of *dharma*

In contrast, the Hindu position on wars is based on an entirely different philosophy and outlook. But before we go into the theory of Hindu warfare, it is necessary to dispel – for the limited purpose of establishing that the Hindu civilisation not only contemplated far ahead of the Christian and Islamic civilisations, but also in practice a pan Hindu and pan-Indian state – the impression that the Hindus had no concept of nation or state. This is necessary because unless the fact of the Hindu concept of state is established wars within the Hindu civilisation would be regarded and even dismissed as merely a inter-Hindu tribal clashes. The idea of a super state federating or affiliating under it a large number of smaller states was known to Hindu civilisation. The idea of suzerainty extending over many kingdoms was known in times even Rig Veda and had been fully developed before the composition of Aitareya and Saptaha Bramhanas. The first one mentions the names of 12 emperors of ancient India and the latter 13. Amarakosa states that a king before whom all feudatories humble themselves is called a *Chakravartin.* The word *'Chakravartin'* is derived by Kshirasvamin - one who wields lordship over a circle of kings or who makes the circle (i.e., kingdom) abide by his orders. The word *'Chakravartin'*, though not as old as 'Sarvabhauma', is as old as Upanisads. Maitri Upansad mentions 15 Chakravartins! Kautilya defines the land of the Chakravartin as the territory on the earth spreading towards the north from the sea to the Himalayas which is thousand yojanas when measured as a crow flies. The same idea occurs in

Kavyamimamsa of Rajasekhara. Shanti Parva in Maharbharata speaks of a ruler who brings the whole earth under one umbrella. This ideal of Chakravartin was set before them by all ambitious and energetic Indian rulers from ancient times. The result was that constant wars took place. A galaxy of historical emperors Chandragupta, Ashoka, Pusyamitra, Bhavanaga, Pravarasena vakataka, Samudragupta, Harsha emulated such mythical heroes and emperors as Mandhata and Bharata and practically realised this ideal. [History of Dharmashastra by Dr Pandurang Vaman Kane, Bandarkar Oriental Research Institutute, Pune pp.65-67] Thus wars were unavoidable in ancient times.

The wars – their commencement, conduct and conclusion – were based on high principles, and there could be high ethical underpinning to wars because the concept of a geographical, cultural and political India founded on the principle *'Dharma'* existed and functioned in what was known as *Bharatvarsha* from ancient times. Matsya Purana first gives the dimensions of *Bharatvarsha* from South to North [Kanyakumari to the sources of the Ganga] as one thousand yojanas equivalent to 1600 kms [when measured upwards across the boundaries] and that on all its borders Mlecchas and that Yavanas and Kiratas dwell to its east and west and that the king who conquers the whole of *Bharatvarsh* is *Samrat*. [Ibid p.67] The same description is found in Brahmanda Purana almost in the same words in chapter 16. The date of Brahmanda Purana is estimated to be earlier to 700-1000 AD. [Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology. Vol. 22. Motilal Banarasidas. p.lxxxi]] Sukaranitisara (I.183-87) grades kingdoms starting from 'Samanta' which has an income of 1-3 lakhs of karsas collected without oppressing the people, at the lowest level to Rajan, to Maharaja, to Swarat, to Virat, to Sarvabhauma who wields suzerainty over the whole of the earth, meaning *Bharatvarsha*, and has income of 11-50 crores equally qualitatively good revenue not collected by oppression. [History of Dharmashastra p.68]

The Indian concept of sovereignty never amounted to acquiring control over vassal kings.

But – unlike in the Greek-Roman tradition or in the Abrahamic civilisational thrust or in Hellenistic mix of both – sovereignty in ancient India consisted not necessarily or invariably in acquiring

control over vassal kings in all their affairs. Generally, the supreme ruler did not hanker after territory as much as having his superior prowess acknowledged. [Ibid p.68] In this sense the ancient Indian State, at the pan-Indian level – that is what was then known as Bharatvarsha – was a loose, but clearly acknowledged cultural and political identity rather than a nation-state in the modern sense of the term. In this sense the position of the comparatively looser Holy Roman Empire even though in intimate religious association with Roman Catholic Church dispensation may be drawn as an approximate parallel for Bharatvarsh without, of course, the binding authority of the Roman Catholic Church, in the case of the Holy Roman Empire.. According to Henry Kissinger, who, in his book on Diplomacy traced the development of the political Europe from the medieval times, says that even with the over all supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church as the umbrella the Holy Roman Empire could not achieve central control as a result of which the different states could turn independent over a period. Likewise, the Chakravartin in ancient India was not a central authority, but an acknowledged superior king, an Emperor. The descriptions of Digvijaya in Mahabharata show that there was no aggrandisement by acquiring fresh territory but all that was desired was to make several kings submit and pay tribute or offer presents. Arjuna says in Sabhaparva that he would bring tributes from all kings and the conquered kings are generally represented as submitting and making presents to the conqueror [ibid p.68] The Allahabad Pillar inscriptions identically says that the kings and tribal chieftains of fully gratified Samudragupta's commands by paying tribute and obeying commands. [Ibid p.68]

In Ancient Indian civilisational conquests had been classified into three types:

'Dharmavijaya' [ethical victory]
'Lobhavijaya' [lustful victory] and
'Asuravijaya' [barbaric victory]

The ancient and historic conquests in Hindu civilisation were essentially Dharmavijaya

In ancient Indian civilisation, on the accepted principles of war morality and war ethics, a king could not wage a war against another simply because he had a large army. Shantiparva in

Mahabharata insists that conquest should be according to *dharma.* Empire did not mean imposition of the language or the Government system of the conqueror on the conquered country. The conqueror's duty as understood in the ancient Indian works was quite different. [Ibid 69] There are three kinds of invaders according to Kautilya. First, Dharmavijayin that is one who is satisfied with mere submission or obeisance; Second, Lobhavijayin, who is satisfied with gain in land and money; and Third, Asuravijayin, who is not satisfied with land and money only, but robs the defeated king of his son, wife and life. This is considered barbaric, something which was abhorred and detested in ancient India. Nitivyakyamrta, an ancient Indian exposition of rules of justice, defines the three categories of conquests almost in the same words. This shows that in the first two kinds of conquests the conquered States retained their own institutions, organisations and Governments undisturbed by conquests. Ashoka speaks of his conquest being Dharmavijaya. Likewise the Pallava King Sivaskandavarman [of Kanchi] who performed Agnistoma, Vajapeya and Asvamedha Yagnas, and Pravarasena II and Samudragupta's conquests are all noted as dharmavijaya. [Ibid p.69] The historic data of kings who performed Asvamedha Yagna and other sacrifices are given in History of Dhamrashastra [Vol. III p.70-71]. Even the second kind of conquests is not spoken of highly in the Indian tradition. The last one, Asuravijaya was completely unacceptable. That is why the Indian tradition including the Puranas are full of battle against Asuras who aspired for or achieved Asuravijaya. The Hindu civilisation could make this distinction between different categories of victory or conquests based on the ethics of war fare which it had commended. Since wars were fought on the basis of strict norms the result of the wars, the conquests, were not different. So even as the wars were ethical the conquests could only be ethical.

**Ethical restraint on wars: Yagnas substituted for wars:
Actual wars to obtain suzerainty, unnecessary, or limited.**

In ancient Indian position, a King could wage war with another king only if the other king misbehaved with his people or for similar justifiable reason. He cannot wage war merely to conquer. If a King was prompted by ambition to rule over others even then he

could not wage a war. Instead he had to conduct a Yagna, called 'Ashwamedha Yagna' and invite all the kings – not just friends, but also foes against whom he may have to wage wars to establish his supremacy if the Yagna model fails to achieve. If his perceived enemies attend the Yagna, they are deemed to have accepted his supremacy and so there was no need and in fact no question of war with them arises. The mode of invitation is to send out a horse to invite the kings. Any king who allows the horse to pass through his kingdom accepts the invitation and also his suzerainty. If he stops the horse he calls for a battle. When the battle ensues, and the other king is defeated, the victor has first to go to the place of worship of the defeated king and worship, whether he believed in that worship or not! Next, he has to offer to the defeated king to become the king again. This is because he is the king whom the people of the kingdom have accepted and feel safe and assured that he would protect their culture and traditions. If he does not accept the offer the victor cannot appoint his brother in law, and has to nominate some one who will preserve the culture and traditions of the people of the country. This is what the Indian position is about conquests, wars and the treatment of the conquered country.

Kautilya's Arthashastra where ends justified the means never became legitimate and in fact delegitimised in the first half of 7th century itself.

A striking aspect of the Hindu civilisation is that Kautilya's commendations on Rajdharma and war, justifying means through ends did not make great impact on the Indian psyche and slowly it ceased to be a popular and acceptable work. Kautilya seems to be the follower of the dictum of Brahaspati, who held that there was a difference between the code for the ordinary and that for the King. A strong state being absolutely necessary for the administration country, Kautilya commends that all kinds of sinister methods for liquidating the enemy such as 'intrigues, unscrupulous use of poison, desperadoes and prostitutes, magic and charms. His motto seems to have been that the ends justified the means. This earned for him the hatred of scholars like Bana. [The History of Dharmashastra [Vol. I Part I p.231]. Dr P.V. Kane says [Ibid p. 174]: "In the Kadambari Bana (first half of the 7th century) we have a

striking reference to Kautilya's work as cruel work because it most contains advice that is 'very wicked'. This shows how Kautilya's work had already become unpopular in North India (before the first half of the 7th century) on account of its vigorous advocacy that ends justified the means. This explains to some extent the paucity of manuscripts of the Arthasastra in the whole of India, particularly in North India, from where only a fragment of the manuscript of the work has been recovered. The Matsyapurana (7.63) contains a story in which the speaker (Indra) who is supposed to have interfaced with the womb of Diti that contained 49 foetuses and then made them Maruts, is made to say that he committed a wicked deed following the precepts of Arthasastra. This is probably a reference to the Kautilya by the author of the Matsya-Purana in the present state of our knowledge. If this be accepted then Arthashastra would have to be pushed back at least some centuries before 250-300 AD, the probable date of Matsya."

The duties of conquerors towards the vanquished:
The Victor to reinstall the conquered or his kin to preserve the traditions of the vanquished country.

Though Kautilya recommends all sorts of tricks and treachery for securing victory in wars the Mahabharata holds up a high ideal. In Bhishmaparva of Mahabharata, it is said that 'conquerors do not secure victory so much by their army and prowess as by truthfulness, freedom from cruelty and observance of dharma and energetic actions. Shantiparva states that it is better to die rather than obtain victory by wicked actions. The Mahabharata lists certain rules of war agreed between the combating sides – such as one should fight only with some one similarly equipped, one should not kill a soldier who is already in combat with another, or who has turned his back from fight or is without armour. Similar position is commended by authorities like Apasthamba, Gautama, Yajnavalkya, Manu, Sankha, Bhaudayana, Brhat-Parasara, Sukra, Ramayana, Mahabharata (in Shantiparva, Dronaparva, Karnaparva), Sauptika and so on. Some of these will bear comparison with the conventions of Geneva and The Hague conferences. [The History of Dharmashastras Vol. III p.209] The forbidden actions in war are: not killing any one who has lost his horse, charioteer, or weapons, turns

away from battle, sits down, climbs a tree in flight etc.[Gautama]; not fight with treacherous weapons, or with barbed or poisoned weapons, weapons with points of blazing fire; not fight one who runs away and climbs a tree, or folds his hands, or is sleeping, or is naked or disarmed, or is seriously wounded, or whose weapons are broken, or is merely an onlooker or is not taking part in the battle, or is in fear or has turned to flee; not kill or fight one who is taking water or meals, or taking off his shoes, nor kill a woman or female elephant, nor a charioteer, nor should one who is not a king kill a king [Vriddha-Harita]. Bhaudayana and Shantiparva in Mahabharata forbid use of poisoned or barbed arrows. Shanti Parva stipulates that the wounded soldier should be treated with medicine and should be allowed to go when he is healed. These rules, though ideal and not probably followed in every case, are more humane as compared to modern warfare. [Ibid p.210] In ancient times, non-combatants are not molested to which Megasthenes bears testimony when he says "tillers of soil even when the battle is raging in the neighbourhood are undisturbed by any sense of danger, for the combatants allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested". The rule in Gadayuddha [maze fight] was that no blow was to be struck below the naval, a rule which Bhima violated when he struck Duryodhana with his maze in his thigh. At the end of Mahabharata war, Duryodhana recounts all bad deeds of Krishna and the Pandavas to which Krishna responds with the numerous breaches of war morality such as slaying of Abhimanyu by many engaging at the same time. But these are breaches of the ethics, the ethics being acknowledged to be legitimate.

What about the treatment of the conquered kings, and his country and the peoples? Even Kautilya – who is wrongly regarded as the Indian equivalent of Machiavelli – says that the conqueror should not covet the territory, wealth, son, and wife of the slain in the battle; that he should reinstall the son of the deceased king on the throne of his father; that the emperor who kills or imprisons the kings that submit, and covets their lands, wealth, sons, or wives provokes the circle of States and makes rise against himself. Yagnavalkya stipulates that it is the duty of the conqueror to protect the conquiered country in the same way as his own country and the conqueror is to respect the customs of the conquered country, its

laws and the uses of the families in the country. Visnudharmasutra enjoins upon the conqueror not to uproot the usages of the conquered country, to establish in its capital some kinsman (of the slain king) and not to destroy the royal family unless it be of low birth. Manu is identical in his views. Shantiparva in Mahabharata and Katyayana commend that even when the vanquished king is at fault, the conqueror should not ruin the country for the fault of the vanquished since he did not start his wrong doings with the consent of this subjects. [Rajnitipaksha draws from this conclusion that the ministers with whose consent the war was started may be harassed by the conqueror.] Sukranitisara requires the conqueror to support the well-behaved son and the queen of the vanquished king or to give a fourth of the conquered kingdom to him and only 1/32 part of it to one who is not endowed with good qualities and the conqueror may appropriate the whole treasury of the conquered. [Ibid p.72] This is what Agni Purana says on the duties of the victorious king: "The victorious king should honour the defeated king and treat him as his own son. He should not fight with him again. The wives of the defeated king would not belong anyone else (but to the defeated king). The wives of the defeated king should be protected by the conquering king. The victorious king should honour the customs and manner of the conquered country." [Ancient Indian Tradition and mythology Vol. 28 p.614]

The advice to re-install the vanquished kings was generally followed by ancient conquerors and emperors. Rudravarman (150AD) was known as the establisher of kings who had lost their territories. Samudragupta was famed for having re-established several royal families that had lost their kingdoms. Likewise the historic treatment of war widows and women of the hostile kingdom were generally in conformity with the traditions captured in the ancient literature. Chhatrapati Shivaji, who had to fight unconventional, guerrilla warfare against the Islamic rule which was annihilating Hinduism, maintained highest standards in treatment of the women of the defeated kingdoms, and also in respecting the religious sentiments of the people. Like wise Prithviraj Chauhan treated Mohammed Ghori in the same way the Hindu traditions commanded him to treat defeated kings. So the war ethics of the Hindu civilisation demonstrated the highest human values which

are not attained even today. In a world where winning war by any means particularly for a God or religion was considered not only justifiable but also mandatory, the Hindu civilisation generally never deviated from its war ethics. Even modern global war conventions fall short of the standards which the Hindu civilisation had set for itself and practised, even when it faced Islamic and later colonial forces.

This is the rule of war, enshrined in the principle of Raj dharma' or statecraft which is integral to the higher principle of dharma which is the unlegislated normative principle of life governing all in this ancient land. Such normative state craft abiding by the principle of dharma is inconceivable in the alien culture. So wars and victory and defeat in the alien model and the host model here are two different paradigms. This model made wars rare and therefore the Kings normally did not have a regular army except for defence and law and order purposes. It is only those who develop the ambition to emerge as the Chakravartin, the Emperor, who assemble regular army. So any alien appraisal of the Indian statecraft and wars cannot understand the normative standards by which they were   governed. It requires an acculturation process for an alien culture to understand the host culture here. Those who came to conquer India had no war model based on dharma. That was why a Mohammed Ghori who was defeated several times was not killed by the victor, Prithviraj Chauhan. The host civilisation applied its normative standards even in war to the aliens who had no normative standards even in religion! For them victory was the target, how it was achieved never mattered. It is not in the matter of war.

The noble war ethics of Hindu India as a contrast to the aggressive cultures and faiths, acknowledged by western scholars.

Even well-known critiques of India have acknowledged this unique dimension of the Indian civilisation. In the introduction to his work 'The Wonder that was India, A.L. Basham says – after severely indicting India, which was admittedly 'a cultural unit', for the 'internecine wars', 'cunning and unscrupulous' state craft of its rulers, 'flood, famine, and plague' that killed 'millions of people', 'inequality of birth' with 'religious sanction' where the lot of the

humble was generally hard "Yet, our overall impression is that in no other part of the world were the relations of man and man and of man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilisation were slaves so few in number and no other ancient law book are their rights so well protected as in the Arthashastra.

That was how the ancient Indian model had devised normative standards of ruling within a kingdom and also for relations or wars with other kings. This kind of normative standard is unthinkable by the standards of the alien invaders of India. That was why repeatedly the norm bound Indian kings were at a disadvantage in wars with the aliens not bound by any norm in their target to achieve victory for their faith and god as victory for their faiths by whatever method was the only norm. Savarkar called the observance of normative dharma in dealings with the aliens and alien enemies who had no normative standards as 'satguna vikruti', that is, perverted nobility. Yet, the fact remains that the paradigm which operates here is totally divergent and incomprehensible for the West in the context of the paradigm which operates in the West. In fact there is very little appreciation or understanding in the West about the foundation of the Indian thinking on issues of state and its relation with the people, other states and the larger world.

❑

The theological position of war in the Abrahamic civilisation
Example: The Quranic war vs The Puranic War

Besides a disadvantage in building empires, the nobler war ethics of Hindu civilisation handicaps its efforts to handle the barbaric war methods of Islamic invaders.

It is necessary at this point to compare the theological and practical position of the Abrahamic [Islamic and Christian] civilisations on the war ethics and religous rules regarding other faiths and peoples. The choice of these two Abrahamic civilisations as a contrast to the Hindu civilisation is natural because the Hindu civilisation confronted, struggled, fought and interfaced the Islamic and the trade-mixed colonial version of the Christian civilisation. The general impression that the Hindu civilisation lost was based on a superficial analysis of history. The history of the world anywhere is the story of the victor. The old saying that the hunter's story prevails, while that part of the story as pertains to the hunted lions remains untold is true of benevolent civilisations which lost and got extinguished against aggressive thoughts and their adherents. Will Durant described the Islamic invasion of India as the bloodiest in history. Why should Islam invade India? It does not need a seer to answer this question. The reason for invasion was religious, not political, although religion provided the trigger and vigour for political leadership to organise armies founded

on faith. It is religion which transformed the game of war from professional principles to conscript principles. Greek army led by Alexander was a professional army, but the religious armies led by the Islamic and Christian faithfuls were not professional armies, but were founded on conscript principles. So the entire concept of warfare had changed with the introduction of religious beliefs to drive the moves and conquest by armies. It is Islam and Christianity which brought into wars the powerful element of acquiring lands and peoples for God, that too, jealous Gods which explicitly would not and did not tolerate other Gods.

A mere comparison of the war ethics of the aggressive Abrahamic civilisations and the benevolent Hindu civilisation is adequate to bring out how and why the Hindu civilisation lost out, particularly, to the Islamic forces because of the higher war ethics which Hindu civilisation displayed consistent with its own understanding of the philosophy of war proved to be a great disadvantage in handling the brutal and barbaric war methods employed by the Islamic invaders in India. This is because the dimension of the Islamic concept of war was justified by the Quranic concept of war which clearly mandated war as one of the methods of spreading the Islamic religion and for the purpose the people of the defeated kingdoms could be compelled to accept Islam by different means. In contrast the higher Hindu war ethics clearly forbid the victor from imposing his faith or language or culture on the people of the vanquished Kingdom and on the contrary the higher Hindu ethics command the victor to preserve the culture and faith of the people of the vanquished kingdom. As Hindu India interfaced with Islamic war models more than with any other army conscripted by religion, a comparison of the Islamic Quranic concept of war with the Hindu Puranic concept of war expounded earlier will bring out the huge difference between the two. The Quranic warfare matches not with the ethical warfare Dharmavijaya or even war for greed, the Lobhavijaya, but with Asuravijaya, namely the barbaric warfare. The Hindu warfare against Islam was influenced by the concept of Dharmavijaya. So the wars between Islamic forces and the Hindu kings were fought on two different ethical norms. This will call for an understanding of the Islamic concept of warfare as sanctioned in the sacred texts

of Islam, namely the Quran and the Hadis.

The first of the five pillars of Islam is the profession of the faith: "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet" upon which depends the membership of the community" [Encyclopaedia 3Ed. Vol. 9 p.918]. In this lies, the intolerant element in Islam like in Christianity. Added to this intolerant ingredient is the structure of Islam as an organised Umma, the community which is not just Islamic, but essentially Arabic in concept and form. Is not just the personal commitment to religion that makes on a Muslim, but his surrender to be part of the Ummah, the community of Islamic people. The history of emergence of the Muslim Umma is important. See how a modern Muslim, in fact a military mind – a Pakistani Brigadier S.K. Mallik, obviously a Hindu convert – understands the history of Muslim Umma in Islam. "The Muslim migration to Medina brought in its wake events and decisions of far-reaching significance and consequence for them. While in Mecca they had neither proclaimed an Umma nor were they granted the permission to take recourse to warMedina a divine revelation proclaimed them as 'Ummah' and granted to them permission to take up arms against the oppressors. The permission was soon converted into divine command making war a religious obligation for the faithful. The mission assigned to the New State emphasised its moderation, balance, practicality and universality. "Thus we have made of you an Ummah justly balanced" declared the Book (Quran) "that ye might be witness over the nations, and the Apostle a witness over yourselves". In a subsequent revelation, the Holy Quran ruled "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoying what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah." These proclamations laid the foundations of the new political, social, economic and military philosophies of the New State and formed the basis of its policy" [The Quranic Concept of War by Brigadier S.K. Mallik, Himalayan Books, New Delhi] In the preface to the same book – to which a foreword has been written by General Zia-ul-Haq who led Pakistan for a whole decade and thoroughly Islamised the remaining un-Islamised remnants of Pakistan – Allah Baksh Brohi has written: "It is true that in modern society the maintenance of international order and peace in the international community of mankind proceeds on the premises of sovereign

equality of 'nation-states' whose number at present is 151. And this number is reached by taking notice of the territorial aspect of the structure of a modern nation-state. The idea of Ummah of Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam is incapable of being realised within the framework of territorial states much less made an enduring basis of viewing the world as having polarised between the world of Islam and the world of war. Islam in my understanding does not subscribe to the concept of territorial state and it would be recalled that Iqbal in his lectures on 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam' went as far as to suggest that, Muslim states to begin with, be treated as territorial states and that only as an *interim measure* since these are later on to be incorporated into a commonwealth of Muslim states. Each one of these states has first to acquire strength and stability before it is able to prepare the ground on which the unified state of Islam can be found on the historical scene." Two things are evident in this approach. One, the Muslim Umma is the real entity, the nation-state is not. Therefore, even the individual Muslim state is only a passing phase. One can imagine the legitimacy of the state and its laws in Islamic world in this approach. Second, the world will be polarised into two: the world Islam and the world of War, that is, the world with which Islam will be at war. This book and preface were written in 1986. This is not an exceptional or extreme view. See how more well-known authorities understand this aspect of Islam.

Quran described the Muslim community as "the best community produced for mankind whose function is to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. So opponents within the community are to be fought with armed force if persuasion does not work and deliberate trouble makers within the community are to be exemplary punishment. So Islam commends war within Islam also. Because of the mission for the community to enjoin the good and to forbid the evil so that there is no mischief or corruption on earth, the doctrine of *jihad*, in view of the constitution of the community as the power base, is the logical outcome [Encyclopaedia Vol. 9 p.914] "For the early community it was a religious concept. The object of *jihad* is not the conversion of individuals to Islam, but rather the gaining of control over the collective affairs of societies to run them in accordance with the principles of Islam." [Ibid p.914] This is not

only diametrically contrary to the Hindu civilisational position on wars that the faith and tradition of the vanquished in the war should not be interfered with by the victor who should actually help to preserve it, but the very reverse of the Hindu position. What the Hindu civilisation prohibits is the very intent and object of *jihad!* The Encyclopaedia adds: "Individual conversions may occur as a by-product of this process when power structure passes into the hands of the Muslim community. In strict Muslim doctrine conversions 'by force' are forbidden, because after the revelation of the Quran 'the good and the evil have become distinct' so that one may follow whichever one may prefer (Quran) and it is also strictly prohibited to wage wars for the sake of acquiring worldly glory, power and rule. With the establishment of Muslim empire, however, the doctrine of *jihad* was modified by the leaders of the community. Their main concern had become the consolidation of the empire and its administration and thus they interpreted in a defensive rather than in an expansive sense."

Since Islam like Christianity as we shall see later claimed to be the true faith and the only true faith and other faiths as false and satanic "the rise of Islam and an organised Muslim community raised the problem of relation with other communities and religious groups". [Encyclopaedia 3 Ed. Vol. 9 p.924]. But the Islamic attitude to the Abrahamic faiths as compared to the non-Abrahamic faiths was dualistic. "The older monotheistic communities, the Jews and the Christians, who possessed a revealed scripture, were given the status of the People of the Book (ahl Al-Kitab) and their religious and cultural autonomy was recognised." [Ibid p.924] But it was a different Islamic rule for the non-Abrahamic faiths. "But pagans were given only two alternatives: either to accept Islam or to die". But it was not just an issue of the pagans, that is, non-Abrahamic people, accepting Islam. The demand of Islam was, and continues to be far more imperial. "Islam is in its origin an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim, is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's world view alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, part of the Arab story. The convert has to run away from everything that is his.

The disturbance for societies is immense and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the running away has to be done again and again. (The converted) People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of the converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be set on the boil." [V.S. Naipaul in the Prologue to his book 'Beyond Belief' p.1] So conversion to Islam was not a change of religion by the convert but it was, and even now is, far more comprehensive rejection by the convert to Islam of his past and present, his parents and siblings, his community and neighbourhood. But this was the story at the time of the Prophet; but it evolved inevitably as a consequence of the inherent character and structure of the Islamic belief. Before Prophet's death, most Arab tribes had opted for Islam but had apparently not accepted the idea of a centralised community. Thus immediately after Muhammad's death, some tribes, even though they did not renounce Islam as a personal religion, refused to pay the Zakat tax to the central political authority that was setup at Medina.(Other tribes had set up their own Prophets, and one of them, Musaylimah, already had become a claimant to the prophet-hood during Muhammad's lifetime.) All these tribes eventually were reduced to submission. From this early experience, the orthodox concluded (1) that rebels within a Muslim state must be brought back to submission through *jihad,* a conclusion that appears to be corroborated by the Quran, and (2) that a non-repentant apostate must be put to death. [Encyclopaedia Vol. 9 p.924] This is not a medieval digression or distortion, but very much the legitimate view, in fact the mainline view, within Islam. Whereas the orthodox still holds both these views, the modern Muslims accept only the first, rejecting the second on the ground of the Quranic declaration. There is no compulsion in the matter of religion. The modernists accuse the orthodox of confusing political policy with matters of personal faith. [Ibid]

But what the modernists seem to ignore in this discourse is that there is nothing personal about Islamic faith. In fact out of the four sources of Islamic doctrine, namely the 'Quran', the 'Sunnah' ['traditions'], the 'Ijma' [the consensus of the community] and the 'Ijitihad' [the individual thought], the last one which opened up individual freedom within the religion actually replaced and

substituted by the third one, the Ijma in the 2nd century after the Prophet, that is AD 8th century. Ijitihad, meaning 'to endeavour' or 'to exert oneself', that is, individual opinion, as a source of interpretation of Islamic doctrine 'to find solution to a new problem' was virtually given up in the 2nd century after the Prophet. 'In the early period of Islam, because Ijitihad took the form of individual opinion ('ra'y') there was a wealth of conflicting and chaotic opinions. In the second century Ijitihad was replaced by 'qiyas' (reasoning by strict analogy) a formal procedure of induction based on the texts of the Quran and the Hadith. The transformation of Ijma into a conservative mechanism and the acceptance of the definitive body of Hadith virtually closed 'the gate of Ijitihad'. [Ibid p.913]

Thus these developments within Islam had had their deep impact on non-Islamic world as Islam like its other cousins in the Abrahamic world, not only laid down rules for its adherents, but also for the adherents of other faiths, as to how it will handle them. The main problem of the Abrahamic faiths is their world view which actually limits the word to their view. This actually means that each of the Abrahamic thoughts conflicts with the other in regard to their world view, and they also conflict with the views of other faiths and cultures of the world. How does the Islamic faith approach the other faiths and peoples?

"As for the Jews and Christians, the Prophet's original intention was probably to regard them as of equal civil status with the Muslims. The 'Charter of Medina' promulgated by him soon after his arrival in Medina declares the Jews in that town to be a community at par with the Muslims. His political experiences with the Jews, whom he repeatedly found betraying the facts for a joint defence of Medina against Meccan foes, however led to the gradual adoption of severe policy of expulsion of and execution of Jewish males at Medina. The Jews of Khybar were required to pay a "poll tax" the *jiziah*. From this precedent the orthodox concluded that the Jews and Christians must pay *jiziah* to the Muslim state." [Encyclopaedia 3 Ed. Vol. 9 p.926]

So the Sunnah or the traditions of the Prophet has become the precedent to regard the Jews and even the Christians as foes. This is notwithstanding that Islam had accepted the Jews and Christians to be the People of the Book and the Prophet himself had earlier

declared the Jews to be equal to Muslims. The latter Sunna of the Prophet against the Jews has repealed his earlier Sunna in their favour. So even the other people of Book, namely Christians and Jews, had become unacceptable to Islam by the latter traditions of the Prophet. How about the other religionists?

"With the conquest of Iran and India the principle of "People of the Book" was extended to the Zoroastrians and Hindus, but this recognition was essentially political. The invitation issued by the Quran to the Christians and Jews – "O People of the Book! Let us come together on a principle that is common between us – that we shall not worship any one besides God and shall associate any one with him ..." – was inapplicable to Hinduism and Zoroastrianism.

Dharma vested property rights in people, King entitled to only share of produce.

A modern constitutional law principle, the concept of 'eminent domain' authorises the state to acquire the property of any subject but it has to pay a fair compensation. This is based on the underlying principle that everything belonged to the king and he could assume possession but he has to pay compensation. But in the Hindu Dharmashastra the position is entirely different. The principle of eminent domain is not applicable in India. The view that everything belongs to the king is so highly qualified that in practice it was not the ruling principle. The question whether the king was the owner of all land in his kingdom has been discussed from very ancient times [History of Dharmashastra Vol. II part II p.865]. Jaimini *Rishi* states that the earth is common to all, to the sovereign as well as to the cultivators and users of the land. Sabara holds that the users of the land also have rights equal to that of the king. The ownership in the several villages and fields on the entire earth or in a province belongs to the holders of the land alone, while the kings are only entitled to collect taxes. The state is not the owner of the lands but is only entitled to levy taxes from the holders of the land. [Ibid p.866] From Manu onwards the law givers appear to hold the view that so far as the lands already brought under cultivation is concerned the cultivators hold the ownership and king is entitled only taxes and in an emergency he can demand more taxes. The field belongs, according to Manu, to

those who develop the land [Ibid p.867]. Some powerful and good kings had to purchase land for making gifts [Ibid p.868]. All transfers of land require the consent of the villagers [Ibid p.497]. The village administration was self-contained and the Central Government was not to interfere except in matters of land revenue. The village communities were miniature states. Yajur Veda prescribes that the king should respect the traditions of the village and allow them to pursue the course of action which they have pursued from ancient times [Ibid p.158].This kind of internal autonomy was a great restraint on building a powerful super-state. This autonomy was not violable, as no king in India could violate the Dharmashastras without incurring loss of legitimacy. In that sense a dharmarashtra prevailed all over *Bharatavarsha,* even though different states may have existed to supervise and monitor the execution of the rules of dharma.

□

Debate about Hinduism as contrasted with Abrahamic religions: Hinduism includes Paganism

Because of the pre-partition distortions extending into free India and because of lack of empathetic intellectualism about ancient India, the Indian debate about Hinduism and Hindutva — and generally about the identity and personality of the people of this ancient land that is intimately linked to their antiquity — lacks clarity, direction and comprehension at one end and even turns hostile at the other end. This is also partly because the critical difference between the pre-Abrahamic history of the world of faiths and cultures and the changes that took place with the arrival of the Abrahamic faiths is not factored into the appraisal of this ancient nation and its antiquities without which the comprehension of the Hindu civilisational moorings is difficult. Because the current Indian debate is not backward integrated with the history that created the interface between the Hindu peoples and the Hindu civilisation and the Abrahamic faiths and politics, there is considerable confusion which makes the debate incoherent and unclear. Despite the fact that theological considerations have a compulsive influence over the Abrahamic civilisations, since there is no theological and philosophical orientation to the debate between the Hindu faiths and the Abrahamic, and national and geo-political compulsions in the mode of interfacing the Hindu civilisation and the Indian peoples with the Abrahamic faiths and peoples, what was the lack

of clarity to start with has become a chaotic confusion which dogs the Indian debate on the issue even now.

In fact, unwarranted intellectual confusion prevails in the India of modern times in conceptualising, understanding and articulating the concept of Hinduism and *Hindutva*. What originated as theological and philosophical confusion has, in recent times, particularly in the 20th century transcended the confines of religion and philosophy and penetrated national and geo-politics and national and global state craft. This confusion in Hindu India about understanding the true nature and character of the intrusive theological models of Abrahamic faiths originated in the perceptions peculiar to the non-conflicting and non-intrusive nature of the different Hindu faiths. So the present confusion is an extension of the medieval times and from even before when the Abrahamic faiths began their mission in India, which was ordained by their faiths and prophets, to conquer the people of other faiths for their faiths. This mission, by the script they believe, was a mandate to save the people of the world from their sins and therefore a divine mission, legitimate and inevitable to secure the world from sins by establishing the rule of their faith. Hindu faiths, given their foundations, could not comprehend the theological premises of the Abrahamic faiths. In fact they have come across and they have among themselves faiths which claimed superiority over the faiths and gods of others, but they could not conceive of or come to terms with the idea of a faith which would negate the religious faith and beliefs of others totally and fundamentally and regard them as false faiths. So unless the theological foundations of the Abrahamic faiths are completely understood, the Hindu faiths cannot hope to handle the Abrahamic faiths. To grasp the theological foundations of the Abrahamic faiths it is necessary to comprehend the theological evolution over centuries and particularly in the context of the local faiths and beliefs systems they trampled and destroyed.

Also to understand why religions and cultures clash it is necessary to understand the difference between religious faiths as they naturally existed in pre-Christian and pre-Islamic times and the Abrahamic faiths. The Abrahamic faiths are monotheistic faiths, while the pre-Abrahamic faiths are polytheistic faiths. Understanding the difference between the Monotheistic and

Polytheistic faiths is of fundamental importance in the context of finding the rules for religious harmony and where the danger the of religious clashes lie. Before the differences between the two belief systems are understood, it is necessary to survey the belief systems which prevailed in the pre-Christian world.

Till the arrival of the Abrahamic theologies the people of different faiths any where in the world generally never interfered with the faiths other one another. In fact wars over whether ones God is right or the other's God was never a subject of war or violence. There could have been other causes of violence and conflicts as humans cannot live without conflicts. Each traditional faith was self-contained and self-sufficient for its followers. In fact, every faith was a local faith. It was the local faith which was classed by Christianity as Pagan and considered fit to be eliminated. Originally, the word 'Pagan' was applied to those who worshiped the God of the pagans, which in Latin means 'locality'.['Paganism' by Vivianne Crowley, published by Thorsons An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers p.3] Pagan was also used in another sense by Christians – to mean 'country-dweller'. 'Heathen', of German origin is also used by those who worship north European Gods. Heathen means people of the heath who worship the Gods of the land. In the West, the terms Native Spirituality, Celtic Spirituality, European Traditional Religion, the Elder Faith, and the Old Religion are also used to describe the Pagan Religions.[Ibid] Paganism is not an extinct specie in spite of two millennia of effort of Christianity to stamp it out of existence. Paganism is one of the fastest growing spiritual movements in the West today [Ibid] Each faith was evolving and improving according to its experiences and light. No faith regarded other faiths as devil or evil and there was a broad understanding that the faith of each people was good for them.

A brief reference to the principles of Paganism most of which correspond to the Hindu view of spiritual growth may be instructive in the context of the massive revival of paganism in the West almost corresponding to the reinstatement of *Hindutva* that is under way in India. Paganism is the worship of the ancient pre-Christian Gods of the ancestors of the local people and of their lands. [Ibid pp.1-2] The Pagans strangely worship their 'ancient' Gods in 'dusty' images because "they are not forgotten archaeological artefacts but living

energies of great power". [Ibid p.4] "They have endured in the group memory of humanity, the collective consciousness, which is the store house of all our religious longing and experience. Pagan religion is based on teachings handed down through myth and saga over thousands of years. Paganism has never died. Instead our ancient Pagans have been seen as merely myth or fairy stories which have no relevance today. However, the fact that we cherish and pass on these myths shows that they have relevance. The myths have survived because they speak to us in the language of dream, symbol and allegory. They tease the conscious mind because we do not fully understand them; yet we know beneath their symbolism are undying truths. They are important because they contain the spiritual wisdom of not one individual, but of many people over great periods of time." [Ibid p.4] Paganism is harmony with the 'Divine forces of Heaven and Earth' [Ibid p.5]. "Paganism is all around us – in the landscape moulded by generations before, into the sacred hill and the standing stone, into the sacred burial ground and holy mountain, places where generations have walked, honouring their Gods. It is a religion preserved in song and dance and seasonal custom...... not remembering that these are the remnants of the religious celebrations of our ancestors the Celts, the Germani and the other tribes who make up our western inheritance". [Ibid p.5] "Some worshippers of Pagan Gods describe themselves simply as Pagans, Heathens, Goddess worshippers, or members of Old Religion. Some call themselves as Wiccan, a form of honouring Great Mother Goddess." [Ibid p.6] "Mother worship appears to be a key part of the Pagan worships. As we enter the new millennium, we are seeing a rebirth of ancient spiritual traditions. People all over the world are rejecting newer religions and returning to the wisdom of their ancestors." [Ibid p.6] Surprisingly, *Bhagwan* Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa said something very similar, in the context of Hinduism. He said:

"The Hindu religion alone is the Sanatana Dharma. The various creeds that you hear of now-a-days have come into existence through the Will of God and will disappear again through His Will. They will not last for ever. Therefore I say I bow down at the feet of even modern devotees. The Hindu religion has always existed and will always exist."

This is not an optimistic proclamation of a Hindu chauvinist, but the expressed vision of one of the greatest spiritual avatars and seers of all times, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. This is what Sri Ramakrishna told the devotees who had invited him to the 'Annakuta' [literally meaning 'hill of food' that is cooked and offered to *Kali ma*] the Burrahbazar area in Calcutta. This was on October 20, 1884. Sri Ramakrishna said this in a Pagan ritual, namely, the mother worship. *Bhagwan* Sri Ramakrishna's sayings in Bengali recorded by his disciple Mahendranath have been translated into English by Swami Nikhilananda in the year 1942 and contained in the book 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'. [The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, printed and published by Ramakrishna Math Madras in 1996. p.642]

The core of the Pagan beliefs is divisible into three kinds. First, the Divine has made itself manifest through many Deities in different places and at different times. No one Deity can express the totality of the Divine. This can be called Polytheism – the Gods are many. Second, the Divine is present in Nature and in each one of us. This can be called Pantheism – the Divine is everywhere. Third, Goddess and God: The Divine is represented as both female [Goddess] and male [God] while understanding that it is beyond the limitations of gender. [Ibid p.8] Each one of these descriptions fits the Hindu philosophy. The exterior of Hinduism is polytheism, worship of many Gods while believing that all Gods are but manifestations of the same Divine. The heart of Hinduism is Pantheism or Advaita, that is, the Divine is everywhere and in us. The Hinduism transcending the gender is the worship of God in male as well female form, and finally as *Ardhanareeswara,* the confluence of man and woman in the same manifestation.

Paganism does not teach that there is only one right way to worship the Divine or that teachings of one racial group are superior to another. We do not seek to export our religions and foist them on others through force, bribery or fear. Polytheism means that we can respect the Gods of others and recognise in them another beauteous manifestation of the Divine force. The various Pagan Polytheisms are therefore religions of tolerance. [Ibid p.9] Paganism believes in change with time. "The law of change means that our religious forms and visions must evolve as society evolves and

changes. New situations create new spiritual needs. The Pagan traditions are religions whose teachings are engraved on tablets of stone." [Ibid p.10] Pantheism believes that the Divine is within the air we breathe, the water we drink, the human, animal and plant life around us [Ibid 11]. Paganism sees the oppression of Nature has been mirrored by other forms of oppression, notably that of spirituality, philosophy, and society of the feminine. The newer religions of the past two millennia are based on a fundamental error: that the Divine can be depicted as solely a male. This is a nonsensical belief if only we can stop to think about it. The Divine has manifested over the ages as both Goddess and God to help us to understand its manifold complexity. If we worship only one half of the Divine, then understanding will be lost. We disfranchise half of our fellows. [Ibid 13] The past millennium in the West has been dominated by a Christian ethos which has had very negative attitude to sex, particularly in relation to women. In paganism, however, the body is considered the temple of the Divine spark within us [Ibid]. The body need not be a distraction from spirituality [Ibid p.14]. On life and death, Paganism believes that 'since Nature is a manifestation of the Divine and life on Earth is a pleasure and a gift, then we can be in union with the Divine in this life as well as the one beyond. Most Pagan traditions teach reincarnation: our life on Earth is one of many and the purpose of life is to learn and evolve. Some Pagans have ideas similar to Hindus about *karma:* our lives are affected by the implications of our past actions [Ibid p.17]. The most important aspect according to the book is the worship of the Goddess. A detailed description of the Goddess worship is given in pages 27-35 and surprisingly, but rightly, at p.27 Kali is listed as one of the Goddesses.

In a sense at the basic level Hinduism is a Pagan religion. As Paganism allows for evolution Hinduism too allows for evolution. Since Paganism is belief in many Gods there is generally no fight over Gods. This is the greatest of virtue of Polytheism. The highest merit of Polytheism is its capacity to integrate Gods. If Gods can work together, religions can work together. It is actually monotheistic religions, namely the Abrahamic religions which introduced barbarism and violence against other religions and their adherents. Says the Encyclopaedia of Britannica: Monotheism

is the belief in the existence of one 'one God', or as stated in other terms, 'that God is one'. As such it is distinguished from polytheism, the belief in the existence of a number of Gods, and atheism the denial of belief in any God or Gods at all. The God of monotheism is one real god that is believed to exist or in any case that is acknowledged as such. His essence and character are believed to be unique and fundamentally different from all other beings that can be considered more or less comparable; e.g., gods of other religions. The religious term monotheism is not identical with the philosophic terms 'monism', referring to the view that the universe has its origin in one basic principle (e.g., mind, matter) and that its structure is one unitary whole in accordance with this principle; that is, that there is only one kind of reality, whereas, for monotheism, there are two basically different realities: God and Universe. [Encyclopaedia 15Ed Vol. 12 p.381]

The God of monotheism, as exemplified by the great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – is a personal God. In this respect the one God of monotheism is contrasted with the conception of the divine in pantheism, which may also affirm one god or a divine unity. The god of pantheism is impersonal, rather a divine fluid that permeates the whole world including the man himself, so that Hinduism can say: "tat twam asi", literally "that is you", where "that" refers to the single supreme reality or principle [Ibid p.381]. In monotheistic religions the belief system, the value system, and action system, are all three determined in a significant way by the conception of God as one unique and personal being. Negatively considered, the monotheistic conviction results in the rejection of all other belief systems as false religions, and this rejection partly explains the exceptionally aggressive or intolerant stance of the monotheistic religions in the history of the world. The conception of all other religion as "idolatry" (i.e., as rendering absolute devotion or to what is less than divine) has often served to justify the destructive and fanatical action of the religion that is considered to be the only true one [Ibid p.381] For the exclusive monotheism, only one god exists; other gods either simply do not exist at all, or, at most, they are false gods or demons; i.e., beings that are acknowledged to exist but that cannot be compared in power or any other way with the

one god and the only true god.. This position is in the main that of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. While in the Old Testament, the other gods in most cases were still characterised as false gods, in later Judaism, and in Christianity as it developed theologically and philosophically the conception emerged of God as the only one and only and other gods were considered not to exist at all [Ibid pp.381-382]. In Judaism, the 'God was a jealous god' who forbade his believers to worship other gods. In later times – beginning in the 6th century BC and continuing into the early centuries of the Christian Era – Judaic monotheism developed in the same direction as did Christianity and also later Islam under the influence of Greek philosophy and became monotheistic in the strict sense of the word, affirming the one God for all men everywhere. [Ibid p.383] Except that in Christianity instead of One Unitarian God as in Judaism and in Islam, there is the Holy Trinity of the God the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit. But the general theological consensus in Christianity is that the three persons are essentially one. [Ibid p.383] No religion has interpreted monotheism in a more consequential and literal way than Islam. According to Islamic doctrine, the Christian dogma of Trinitarian god is a form of tritheism – of a three god belief. There is no issue upon which this religion is so intransigent as the one on monotheism. The first of the so-called Five Pillars of Faith of Islam states clearly and unambiguously that "there is no God but Allah" and in accordance with this principle, the religion knows no greater sin than *'shirk'* ("partnership"), the attribution of partners to Allah; that is to say polytheism, or anything that may look like it – e.g., the notion of a divine trinity. The Quran declares: "Say: He, Allah, is one. Allah, the eternal. Neither has he begotten, nor is he begotten. And no one is his equal."

There is a wide gulf between the belief systems of the Hindu and Pagan faiths and the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths. It is essential to understand the fundamental incompatibility of monotheistic faiths with other faiths before a discussion on the concept of *Hindutva,* which is a product of a society that lives by polytheistic philosophy and is spiritually united by monistic and qualified monistic principles of Advaita and Visishtadvaita. It is the monotheism that introduced centrifugal element in religion. The human has seen more violence since their arrival than through

its entire life since its creation. An Alexander invaded and waded through difference peoples and civilisations and conquered their land and rule, but never did it occur to him that the faith of the local people was devilish and they should be made to give up theirs in preference to the victors'. It is with the advent of the Abrahamic school of faiths that religion became an issue between peoples of different faiths. This released massive avalanche of trans-national and even trans-continental violence in olden and in medieval times. It was after the Abrahamic schools of faith and philosophy made their presence that massive violence in the name of God, which was by admission a jealous God, became legitimate. So the advent of the Abrahamic faiths, particularly Christianity and Islam in that order, and particularly after they began their conquests, changed the rules of interface between faiths, peoples and civilisations.

❑

Chapter IX

Hinduism, Dharma, Hindu Dharma and Hindutva
An unnamed phenomenon acquires a name by compulsion

It is in this context and background that we have to discuss the trials and travails of the Hindu civilisation, culture and faiths. Originally, the Hindu phenomenon, whether it was the civilisation, religion or culture living in India, was known to the whole world but it had no name. With the advent of the Abrahamic thrust, that nameless phenomenon was forced to adopt a name and thus an inclusive thought has been made to distinguish itself from exclusive faiths. Thus a catastrophic confusion began to engulf the people of this ancient land to position the Hindu civilisation and themselves in the modern world. This dilemma is expounded by one of the greatest sages of our times the Mahaswami of Kanchipuram who left his mortal body in the year 1994 who once said that the name "Hinduism is really the name somebody has presented us with". The real grandeur of this faith, said the Sage, "consists in its being nameless". He explains: "The need for names for an article arises only when there are many of that type so that each could, in someway, be distinguished from the others. But if there is only one article and there is none else of that type, why need a name for it?" All other religions, the Sage pointed out, were known by the names of their respective founders. These religions therefore did not exist before the rise of these great personages. Specific dates

are assigned to every such religion. It naturally follows that ours is a religion which existed before all these other faiths were born. Thus it should have existed when it was the only religion in the world, administering to the spiritual needs of the humanity as a whole. This then explains our religion not having a name, as there was no second religion from which this name could distinguish it. It was merely the Dharma – a word synonymous with Religion [Hindu Dharma by His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Svamigal, published by Sri Kamakoti Research Centre pp.3-4]

In his lectures, the Upton lectures, in 1926 at Manchester College, Oxford which came out as a book titled 'The Hindu View of Life', Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the philosopher-statesman, who later became the President of India dismissed the West-centric approach to understanding the intellectual and spiritual foundations of the world and pointed to the fact that half the world moves on the intellectual and moral foundations supplied by Hinduism. He said: "The dictum that, if we leave aside the blind forces of nature, nothing moves in the world which is not Greek in its origin, has become a common place with us. But it is not altogether true. Half the world moves on independent foundations which Hinduism supplied. China and Japan, Tibet and Siam, Burma and Ceylon look to India as their spiritual home. The civilisation itself has not been a short-lived one. Its historic record dates back for over four thousand years, and even then it had reached a stage of civilisation which has continued its unbroken, though at times slow and almost static course, until the present day. It has stood the stress and strain of more than four or five millenniums of spiritual thought and experience. Though peoples of different races and cultures have been pouring into India from the dawn of history, Hinduism has been able to maintain its supremacy, and even proselytising creeds backed by political power have not been able to coerce the large majority of Indians to their views. The Hindu culture possesses some vitality which seems to be denied to more forceful currents."

Dr Radhakrishnan went on to point out: "The term Hindu had originally a territorial and not credal significance. It implied residence in a well-defined geographic area. Aboriginal tribes, savage and half civilised people, the cultured Dravidians and Vedic

Aryans were all Hindus as they were sons of the same mother." This aspect of the speech should be viewed from the fact that when Dr Radhakrishnan was speaking the colonial scholars had convinced the Hindu thinking and thinkers that India was invaded by Aryans from outside India and over ran the Harappan civilisation and had institutionalised without any proof whatsoever that there was a racial divide between the Aryans and Dravidians. This view, as we shall see later, has today lost credibility and the overwhelming counter view has completely disproved the Aryan invasion theory. But in 1926 when Dr Radhakrishnan delivered his lecture he could not but structure his thoughts consistent with the prevailing notions of Aryan-Dravidian divide theorised by the colonial scholars. Dr Radhakrishnan quoted the Kurma Purana, an ancient literature of India, to capture the religious and other diversities of India and pointed out: "The Hindu thinkers reckoned with the striking fact that the men and women dwelling in India belonged to different communities, worshipped different Gods and practised different rites." In the background of the diversities which mark the Indian scene, the philosopher-statesman asks "How was the Hindu society built upon material so diverse, so little susceptible in many cases to assimilation, and scattered across a huge continent measuring two thousand miles from north to south, and eighteen hundred miles from east to west?" and answers: "It cannot be denied that in a few centuries the spirit of cultural unity spread through a large parcel of land and racial stocks of varying levels of culture became steeped in a common atmosphere. The differences among the sects of the Hindus are more or less on the surface and the Hindus as such remain a distinct cultural unit with a common history, a common literature and a common civilisation." Mr Vincent Smith observes, "India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political superiority. The unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners and sect". In this task of welding together heterogeneous elements and enabling them to live in peace and order, Hinduism has had to adopt her own measures with little or no historic wisdom to guide and support her."

It is explicit from Dr Radhakrishnan's exposition that the

diversity which marks the Hindu civilisation and includes people who are animists and pagans and who are idol worshippers and vedic ritualists, as well as people who have transcended forms of worship is the formula for religious harmony, a harmonising formula which the Abrahamic faiths could not countenance because of their intolerance of other faiths rooted in their monotheistic convictions. Thus, religious clashes are inherent in the very exclusive approach of the Abrahamic faiths as compared to the inclusive and transcending approach of the Hindu faiths. This must be borne in mind when comprehending why the rise of *Hindutva*, a non-conflicting social phenomenon inspired by an equally non-conflicting and inclusive religious idea, is becoming an issue in this ancient country.

The antiquity and continuity of Hindu phenomenon

In the introduction to his well-known work 'The Wonder That Was India', A.L. Basham captures India's antiquity and continuity on a comparison of the Indian civilisation with the other major civilisations of the world. "The ancient civilisation of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a break to the present day. Until the advent of the archaeologist, the peasant of Egypt or Iraq had no knowledge of the culture of his forefathers, and it is doubtful whether his Greek counterpart had any but the vaguest idea about the glory of Periclean Athens. In each case there has been almost complete break with the past. On the other hand, the earliest Europeans to visit India had found a culture fully conscious of its own antiquity – a culture which indeed exaggerated that antiquity, and claimed not to have fundamentally changed for many thousands of years. To this day, legends known to the humblest Indian recall the names of shadowy (!) chieftains who lived nearly a thousand years before Christ, and the orthodox Brahmin in his daily worship repeats hymns composed even earlier. India and China have, in fact, the oldest continuous cultural traditions of the world"[Introduction to 'The Wonder that was India' p.4]."

The concept of Dharma and its deep penetration in Indian psyche

If any word has made the deepest penetration and impact on the Indian psyche it the 'Dharma'. Early English travellers had

noticed that this one word was universally understood in India by the classes as well as by the masses. One cannot understand the Indian psyche and character without comprehending the width and reach of the idea of Dharma. Again unless one understands the meaning of Dharma it is difficult to understand the concept of Hindu Dharma or Sanatana Dharma. The word *dharma* is unique to the Hindu dictionary. It has relevance to all religious and social thoughts and institutions which have originated in India. Whether it is Buddhism or Jainism or Sikhism or other sprouts of India, Dharma is central to all of them. It is surprising that the linguists who linked the Sanskrit language to the Indo-Aryan school of languages and even brought about a near divide of India into Aryans and non-Aryans could not cite a single civilisation in the world outside the geography and history of India which has the word *dharma* or any word similar in phonetics or meaning. This is despite the fact that the word was no new word but occurs sixty times by itself and eighteen times in conjunction with other words in Rig Veda, the oldest Hindu literature [History of Dharmashastra Vol. p.1]. Thus, the word *dharma* is unique to the Hindu civilisation and is understood and practised by the ordinary people of India, even though the scholars find it extremely difficult to assign a clear meaning to it understandable to intellectuals. In 'Sources of Indian Tradition' [First Edition authored by Wm Thodore De Bary, with A.L. Basham, R.N. Dandekar, Peter Hardy, J.B. Harirson, V. Raghavan, Royal Weiler, and Andrew Yarrow and edited and revised in the 2nd Ed. by Ainslie T. Embree Vol. p.210] it is said that "Dharma is in fact a key word for the Hindu culture, and Hinduism itself is sometimes designated as Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Dharma. 'Dharma is one of those Sanskrit words that defy all attempts at an exact rendering in English or any other tongue' [History of Dharmashastra Vol 1 p.1]. Ananda K. Coomarasway, an authority on Indian civilisation, notes that Dharma is a pregnant term, difficult to transate in the present context. In general dharma (literally 'support') is synonymous with 'truth'. Than this ruling principle 'there is nothing higher' (Brhadaranyaka Upanisad); dharma is the 'king of kings' (Anguttara Nikaya); there can be no higher title than that of 'dharmaraja', 'King of justice; one's 'own dharma' is precisely Plato's 'justice', viz. to perform the task one

is naturally equipped. ["What is civilisation?" Published by Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts, New Delhi p11. Note no.22]

The word has passed through many vicissitudes. The dictionary set out various meanings of Dharma such as ordinance, usage, duty, justice, morality, virtue, religion, good works, function, characteristic. [Ibid] It is very difficult to say what the exact meaning of the word dharma was in the most ancient Vedic language. The word is clearly derived from the root 'dhr' (to uphold, to support, to nourish). In a few passages the word appears to be used in the sense of 'upholder, supporter, or sustainer as in Rig Veda [Ibid] According to a western author, Gavin Flood [An Introduction to Hinduism, Cambridge University Press] One striking feature of Hinduism is that practice takes precedence over belief. What a Hindu does is more important that what he believes. Hinduism is not credal. Adherence to dharma is, therefore, not an acceptance of certain beliefs but the practice of performance of certain duties which are defined in law in accordance with dharmic social stratification [p12]. Dharma, therefore, is context sensitive. At a universal level dharma refers to a cosmic, eternal principle, yet it must also relate to the world of human transaction. At particular level, dharma applies to specific laws and the contexts to which they apply. One of the sources of dharma according to Manu is 'custom'. This means that dharma can be adapted to particular situations and particular applications of it were decided by local assembly of large number of learned men, as stated by Guthama dharmashastra. [Ibid p.58]

But that does not mean that the concept of 'dharma' was an old concept incapable of reinstatement in the present modern context. Jayaprakash Narayan [JP], one of the tallest leaders of the freedom movement, who led the Bihar movement in the 1970s and brought down the Emergency Regime alluded to the concept of dharma in his longest piece of theoretical writing titled 'A Plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity' contained in the publication 'Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy' [at pages 192 to 236]. In his thesis, J.P. set forth in 1959 his plan for the radical decentralisation of his country's government and economy. Although it draws

heavily on Gandhi's dream for independent India, the plan omits the religous or spiritual incentives that have provided the "glue" holding together successful community experiments of the past. It does however stress the values of "ancient India" which may be understood to mean the values of Hinduism, such as the concept of dharma. [Sources of Indian Tradition Vol. 2 p.370] This is what JP writes on the concept of dharma as applicable to modern conditions. [Ibid 373]

"A word that figures boldly on the ancient signpost is dharma. Indian polity held that the State was subject to dharma, which it was its duty to uphold and protect. "

The concept of dharma was of great importance in ancient Indian society and it prescribed and regulated individual and group behaviour in all walks of life.

The concept of dharma and its role in the Indian polity and the wider life of society is another example of that synthetic, organic, communal organisation of Indian society which has been discussed above.... Unless life is in India again organised on the basis of self-determining and mutually co-ordinating and integrating communities, that organic self-regulation of society which the concept of dharma represented will not be possible. To that extent democracy will remain distantly removed from the life of the people..... [If] the village becomes a community...... only then will it be possible for the village to adopt as is dharma the welfare of all the villagers, so that none goes without food, clothing, a roof over his head, work to do; no child goes without the benefit of minimum health service.

At page 375 [Ibid] uses the word *'purushartha'* in the context of the function of the private enterprise. *Purushartha,* as will be seen, is the very essence of Hindu way of life or *Hindutva.* He says:

"A word about private enterprise. Private enterprise, in the sense of *purushartha,* the individual's spirit of enterprise, should have the fullest scope in the community. But the community and the individual would be imbued with the spirit of the community. Therefore, private enterprise in a communitarian society would also partake of that spirit and work for private as well as communal good.

Further private enterprise would also be subject to the principles of self-government and responsibility to, and integration with, the community....."

J.P. concludes [Ibid p.376]:

"It is time now to gather all the threads of the argument and tie them together. Ancient Indian thought and tradition; social nature of man; social science; ethical and spiritual goals of civilisation; the demand of democracy; that the citizen should participate in the ordering and running of his life; the need for saving the man from alienation from himself and from the fate of robotism; the requirement that the state and other institutions of society be reduced to human scale; the ideal, above all, that man should become the centre of the civilisation – all that point in the same direction: a communal or communitarian way of life; communitarian ethics and education; communitarian social, economic and political organisation. In this paper I have been mainly interested in the political aspect of the matter: the shape of the political organisation, or polity, most desirable for the country."

Thus one of the most acclaimed socialists, a modern thinker and even a revolutionary, Jayaprakash Narayan also held dharma as the central requirement for reorganising the Indian polity and economy. So dharma is not an ancient concept, but it works at all levels even now. How dharma sustains the Indian society even now will be dealt with in the context of the social and economic functioning of the Indian society. And that is precisely why J.P. perceptively factors in dharma as the centre of his plan for political restructuring of India.

Hindu dharma and Sanatana Dharma

Hindu *Dharma* is a relatively new name for what has been timelessly known as *Dharma or Sanatana Dharma*. Hindu Dharma is geographically Indian, or *Bharatiya,* but it is universally valid because, unlike other schools of thought, it accepts all other and diverse thoughts without rejecting any. This all-inclusive school of thought was a nameless philosophy that did not need to distinguish itself from others, as there was no other thought system from which it needed to be distinguished. It was a thought that did not need an identity different from other thoughts as it accepted all other

thoughts as valid. It is only when exclusive schools of thoughts emanated from the Abrahamic stable, which rejected the validity of all thoughts other than those of the concerned Abrahamic school, Sanatana Dharma needed to distinguish itself form the exclusive Abrahamic thoughts. It is not Hindu Dharma which in philosophical or practical terms rejected the Abrahamic thoughts, but it is the Abrahamic thoughts which by their theological beliefs compulsively rejected the Hindu Dharma, just as they have to reject all faiths other than their own. With the result the Sanatana Dharma had to acquire and accept a name to distinguish itself; not because it was an exclusive thought but because it was an inclusive thought and all other thoughts exclusive. This is how the word Hindu evolved to distinguish the exclusive Abrahamic thoughts from Hindu Dharma or Sanatana Dharma. The name was meant not so much to distinguish Hindu Dharma from others as it was to distinguish the newly emerged exclusive thoughts from the inclusive Hindu Dharma.

Sanatana Dharma or Hindu Dharma is the soul of India and a non-conflicting civilisational asset and functional idea. So it is according to those who were deeply conscious of soul of India what will ultimately prevail. So Aurobindo alluded to the Divine message he had received in Alipore Jail in his historic Uttarapara speech [extracts from which are given]:

"When I was asked to speak to you at the annual meeting of your Sabha, it was my intention to say a few words about the subject chosen for the day, the subject of Hindu religion. I do not know whether I shall fulfil that intention; for as I sat here there came into my mind a word that I have to speak to you, a word that I have to speak to the whole of the Indian Nation. It was spoken to myself in jail and I have come out of jail to speak to my people."

"There [in the jail] I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what He had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion the earlier realisation, the first lesson came to me. ..... It seemed to me that He spoke to me again and said, "The bonds you had not the strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that should continue. I have had another thing for you to do and it is for that I have brought you here, to teach you what you could not

learn for yourself and to train you for my work."

"Then he placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the *Sadhana* of the Gita...... I realised what Hindu religion meant. We often speak of the Hindu religion, of the Sanatan Dharma, but few of us really know what that religion is. Other religions are preponderatingly religions of faith and profession, but Sanatan Dharma is life itself; it is not that has not so much to be believed as to be lived. This is the dharma that for the salvation of humanity that is cherished in the seclusion of the peninsula from of the old. It is to this religion that India is rising. She does not as other countries do for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world. India has always existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great."

"He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion. ...... But now day after day I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in the body, the truths of Hindu religion. They became a living experience for me and things were opened to me which no material science could explain."

"The second message came and it said, "Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the *Rishis,* saints and *Avatars,* and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you..... When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for Sanatan Dharma that they arise. .... When it is said that India shall rise it is Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists."

"This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you...... That word is now finished. I spoke once before with this force in me and I said that this movement is not a political movement and nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed,

a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, religion, a faith; I say it is the Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with Sanatana Dharma, with it, it moves and with it, it grows. When Sanatan Dharma declines, this nation declines, and if Sanatan Dharma is capable of perishing with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is, nationalism. This is the message I have to speak to you."

[Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry pp.1-3-110]

'*Hindutva*', 'Hinduness' and 'Hinduism' are not independent but interchangeable concepts. The statesman-philosopher, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, said in his lectures at the Oxford University that originally the word Hindu had geographical, not creedal, significance. It signified the geographic identity of *Bharat,* the identity of the people in a particular geographic area, that is, *Bharatvarsha;* the term did not signify any particular faith or method of worship. Hindu was the name of the people of *Bharatvarsha,* the national identity of *Bharat.* Even in the sense of a faith, Hinduism is unlike Semitic religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, which have a global agenda to Islamise or Christianise the world, which means converting the adherents of other faiths and beliefs and eliminating those faiths. The goal is not denied. It is only the means and the methods that are in dispute or debate. The Hindu view is in direct contrast to this Semitic mission.

An appropriate definition for Hinduism is given not by any scholar on Hinduism, but the one contained in Encyclopaedia Britannica, a compilation that perceives the world from a Christian standpoint. On Hinduism, the Encyclopaedia says:

"In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. The Hindu is inclined to revere the divine in every manifestation, whatever it may be, and is doctrinally tolerant, leaving others – including both Hindus and non-Hindus – to whatever creed and worship practices suit them the best. A Hindu may embrace a non-Hindu religion without ceasing to be a Hindu, and since the Hindu is disposed to think synthetically and to regard other forms

of worship, strange Gods, and divergent doctrines as inadequate rather than wrong or objectionable, he tends to believe that the highest divine powers compliment each other for the well being of the world and the mankind. Few religious ideas are considered to be finally irreconcilable. The core of the religion does not even depend on the existence or non-existence of God or whether there is one God or many. Since religious truth is said to transcend all verbal definition, it is not conceived in dogmatic terms. Hinduism is then both a civilisation and a conglomerate of religions, with neither a beginning, nor a founder, nor a central authority, hierarchy, or organisation." [Encyclopaedia 15th Ed. Vol. 15, p.888/89]

Quoting this from the encyclopaedia, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held in 1977 that Hinduism is a non-conflicting religion. Later, when the political idiom of India began to be influenced by Hindu Dharma through the kinetics of *Hindutva,* the Supreme Court had to consider the meaning of *Hindutva.* After considering the meaning and content of Hinduism and *Hindutva,* the Court held in 1994 that *Hindutva,* the kinetic effect of Hinduism, too is a non-conflicting and secular idea. So conceptually and practically, *Hindutva,* which is the kinetic effect of Hindu Dharma, is a non-conflicting idea. And so it has been in history and in practice. The Hindavi Swaraj of Chhatrapati Shivaji is the first state that adhered to Hindu Dharma. Otherwise it was the general rule of Rajadharma which was the governing rule of this land. The addition of the word Hindu as a prefix to the rule of Shivaji was in response to the Islamic theological rule which had devastated the Hindu land everywhere.

Hindu Dharma a non-combative socio-cultural view intertwined with politics and economics

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, one of the well-known thinkers of independent India, repeatedly asserted, in his profound exposition of 'Integral Humanism', that human life is integral. No aspect of life is autonomous, or compartmental. This is true both at the micro and at the macro level. In fact, this integral nature is not limited only to the humans. It extends to the whole of the creation. Pandit Upadhyaya refers to the integration of the Vyashti, the individual, Samashti, the collective, and the Parameshti, the creator. There

is integral relationship in the creative processes; and this applies particularly to the relationship between humans and nature. Given this integral relationship, and even limiting it to humans only, the politico-economic life of a nation cannot be divorced from its social and cultural life.

Socio-cultural behaviour of the people impacts and shapes the economic and political construct of a nation. Economic and political dimensions in turn have a vital bearing on the socio-cultural evolution of a society. The modern world moves on economic theories and econometrics. Every decision, concerning political, diplomatic or security aspects, is linked to economics. Yet even the die-hard west-centric economic and social thinkers feel that there is something like a '20% missing link' in economics. What is that missing link? That is culture. Culture is the uniqueness in the personality of a society. It is inextricably mixed with economics. And economics interfaces politics. Therefore, there is an inseparable linkage between society, culture, economics and politics. Not only are they interdependent, they exert enormous mutual influence. It is admitted that economics influences culture. But culture influences economics more than economics influences culture. Therefore, any analysis of socio-cultural life will have to factor in economic and political dimensions as well.

Secular India and Hindu Dharma

In secular India, where anything associated with ancient India is viewed with suspicion as communal and unfriendly to secular way of life, the definitions of what constitutes Hindu, Dharma, Hindu Dharma and *Hindutva* are rendered contentious by the secular polity that is largely defined and directed by vote banks. Nevertheless, as politics penetrates every aspect of life including the impenetrable institution of family, any discussion on the socio-cultural life of a nation, particularly a nation like *Bharatvarsha*, which has an unbroken, though disturbed, tradition of thousands of years, is a complex and demanding one. More so because our nation has drifted away from public domain; it has been preserving its core life style stealthily for hundreds of years under alien rule, and has continued its stealthy living for five decades even under the independent indigenous rule. The task is

even more difficult, because any discussion on understanding the core values of our ancient life represented by Hindu Dharma has to be carried out in a situation that is confounded by such drift and stealthy living. What was and is even now original to the Hindu people has become a hidden virtue; the Hindus have lost the confidence to openly live with it because of secular India's explicit and institutionalised allergy to traditional India. Yet Hindu Dharma is the core of India's tradition. Proper understanding of India's traditional values represented by the concept 'Dharma' requires a dispassionate discussion on the socio cultural life of this ancient nation, uninhibited by the politics of the day. Traditional India is largely the product of Hindu Dharma. The concept of secularism evolved in the mono-religious Christendom. As a result of the misapplication of this Christian concept to the multi-religious Hindu Dharma, which does not distinguish between different faiths and accepts all faiths, the Hindu Dharma was itself equated to the exclusive Abrahamic faiths. This has made an understanding of the meaning of Hindu Dharma even more difficult.

Secular India's allergy to ancient India

Secularism is a concept evolved within Christianity; it was never designed to handle a multi-religious situation. Only the Hindu tradition, and certainly not Christian secularism, has accepted and handled a situation where multiple religions are accorded validity. This fact has not been internalised in the understanding of secularism in free India. We have refused to understand that outside the history and geography of India there is no multi-religious social, cultural and political matrix which can be presented as a benchmark for this ancient nation. We have tried, incorrectly and inappropriately, to make the secularism of Christendom as benchmark for this ancient nation's modern polity. Consequently, understanding of different elements of ancient India has been rendered difficult in modern conditions, conditions for which the rules have been laid by Christendom.

Hindutva—the kinetic form of Hindu Dharma

Hindu Dharma represents the potential energy of the Indian people. But without the manifestation of that potential energy in its

active form, it was unable to gather together its adherents to face the challenges. *Hindutva* is the kinetic aspect of Hindu Dharma. Hindu Dharma or Hinduism was never organised. Nor was it organisable. Organisation and Hinduism were contradictory terms. A thought which accepted all other thoughts as valid, which found fault with none and demeaned and discredited none, can never be organised, because organisation is always motivated to build strength around a thought against another. If there is no 'other' thought and all thoughts are acceptable and valid then there is no need to organise. This was the strength of Hinduism or Hindu Dharma. It did not need an organisation, and it was incapable of being organised.

But when it was faced with the onslaught of the Abrahamic faiths which rejected other thoughts, considered their followers as Kafirs and Heathens, and denied them even the right to live, Hindusim slowly assumed a kinetic form. Hinduism had to acquire this form to secure its defence against the thoughts that used physical might against Hinduism. This is how Hinduism, which had internal kinetic dimensions that led to continuous evolution and to change with continuity, and which did not need any external kinetics, began to develop external kinetics as defence against the thoughts that sought to extinguish it.

That was how Chhatrapati Shivaji thought of and was motivated to establish a Hindavi Swarajya; this was a departure from the traditions of the Hindu nation and a clear response to the Islamic assault on India. Never in the history of Hindus was there a kingdom which had a religious connotation or implication. In fact, the Hindu concept of 'Rajdharma' protected the *Desachara* of even the conquered people; it made it obligatory on a conquering king to respect the beliefs and life-style of the conquered people. Thus the victory or defeat of kings did not mean any impact on or change in the life-style or beliefs of the people. But, since the Abrahamic faiths were powered by the state and the army, to defend itself Hindu Dharma also had to manifest an external kinetic form that allowed it to take defensive counter-actions. Over the years such counter action became the kinetic force of the Hindu society, and come to be known as *Hindutva. Hindutva* is the kinetic aspect of Hindu Dharma. For an unorganised, and in the sense of the

Abrahamic religions, unorganisable thought like Hinduism, this kinetic aspect is necessary; without *Hindutva,* the kinetic force inherent in Hinduism, Hinduism was incapable of saving itself from the aggressive Abrahmic faiths. Those aggressive faiths would have long overrun Hinduism, if it were not protected by *Hindutva.*

The transition of Hinduism to its kinetic form, *Hindutva:*

This leads to a discussion on how the transition of Hindu dharma to Hindutva occurred. As the Secular Indian establishment and the world at large are the principal factors that need to be tackled – the ordinary Hindu is already in tune with the concept of *Hindutva* in his total lifestyle – this discussion needs to be focussed on the evolution of *Hindutva* s focussed on the more recent and modern understanding of *Hindutva.* It is focussed on *Hindutva* as it evolved and the premises of its evolution.

That Hindu Dharma is non-conflicting in precept and practice is the fundamental reason why *Hindutva* as a social and political idea had to evolve. But Hindu Dharma's non conflicting precept is its differentiating uniqueness, its strength, and also its weakness, particularly in its interface with Islam and Christianity. In the Christian view, *Hindutva* is a pagan idea. Paganism everywhere collapsed in the face of Christianity, because it did not know how to deal with a faith that denied the foundations of all faiths other than its own. Analysing why the Roman Empire and Roman Paganism collapsed under the onslaught of Christianity, Encyclopaedia Britannica says:

"Christianity consistently practised an intolerant attitude to Judaism and paganism as well as heresy in its own ranks. By practising its intolerance vis-à-vis the Roman Emperor cult, it thereby forced the Roman Empire on its part into intolerance. Rome, however, was not adapted to the treatment of a religion that negated its religious foundations, and this inadequacy later influenced the breakdown of paganism." [Vol. 4. page 492]

It is not just the fate of Roman paganism; all pagan religions collapsed the same way before the onslaught of Christianity. Pagan religions were unfamiliar with a religion like Christianity, which negated the foundations of all other religions. Till Christianity arose on the horizon, no religion negated the foundations of another religion. It is only Christianity which introduced the idea

of a religion rejecting another religion and claiming to be the true religion. Even Judaism, even though it claimed to be the only religion, did not invalidate or negate other religions. It is this proselytising element of Christianity, which makes it essentially intolerant and even violent.

Hinduism like other pagan religions, it does not negate the foundations of other religions, and in fact accepts all other religions. Therefore, like the Roman pagan religions, Hinduism must also have been a candidate for collapse; but it did not collapse. Why Hinduism did not collapse has stunned the forces inimical to it. More than the theological foundations, it is the socio-religious structure of Hinduism that protected it. Its defences were too complex for any armed or ideological aggression of the kind that felled the other pagan faiths.

While Hindu Dharma did not and will not collapse in the face of Christianity, it has been hurt and hurt grievously in many areas. It is being hurt and injured even now. The Hindu belief that all faiths are sacred human experiences is fundamentally incapable of handling a faith like Christianity, which completely denies validity and legitimacy to any faith other than itself. It is difficult even to make the Hindus imagine that there could be a faith that denied validity to another. This inability persists even today. This is one of the greatest challenges to Hinduism in India.

The Islamic belief in exclusive validity is identical to that of Christianity. But the problems of Hindus in their interface with Islam are even greater. Islam came into *Bharat* mainly as an invading faith; it was imposed here through statecraft and military, both of which were driven by faith. The interface between Hindutva and Islam has been highly violent. Will Durant says that the Islamic invasion of India is the bloodiest invasion in history. The Islamic impact on India led to huge transfer of populations and territories from the Hindus to Islam. First Afghanistan, then Pakistan and Bangladesh, ceased to be part of India, after the people in those societies ceased to be part of the Hindu society.

Thus, the need to organise which was imposed on the Hindus by the invasion of Hindu Dharma by the Abrahamic faiths gave birth to the concept of *Hindutva. Hindutva* became the organising formula for Hindus. Hindu Dharma was an abstract and the need

of the Hindus to think, and function together, with a sense of unity, manifested through the action oriented concept of *Hindutva.*

The endeavours of Hindus and Hindu Dharma to face up to the challenges and to manifest itself at the national and at the global level constituted the kinetic effect which transforms Hindu Dharma into *Hindutva.* Thus, *Hindutva* is the kinetic form of Hindu Dharma. This form is an evolution necessitated by the absence of organised strength in Hindu Dharma. The lacuna of organisation in Hindu Dharma was natural to its inherent character. Hindu Dharma had no conflict with other religions and therefore it was non-combative in character, and therefore unorganised, and even without needing an organisation. Since Hindu Dharma was non-conflicting and non-combative in nature, it lacked the aggressive content needed to measure up to the aggressive Semitic faiths that had a global mission to convert the whole world to their faiths. Since Hindu Dharma accepted the validity of all faiths, it could not deny that validity and legitimacy to the Abrahamic faith also, despite the fact that they denied not just validity to Hindu Dharma, but also theologically denied it the right to exist as a religion. With these structural weaknesses arising out of its inclusiveness, the adherents of Hindu Dharma evolved over centuries a facet of Hindu Dharma that responded to the onslaught of others; that is how the kinetic form of Hindu Dharma, namely *Hindutva,* was born. The entire freedom movement was in substance powered by the implicit kinetics of *Hindutva.*

But free and Independent India, which was hijacked by those who believed in the secularism as practised in Christendom, turned the secular Indian allergic to Hindu Dharma. This distortion confounded the mind and polity of India for over four decades. The Ayodhya movement finally evolved as a corrective to this distortion and brought balance to the polity of India. Now the kinetic form of Hindu Dharma, *Hindutva,* is the mainline thought despite the fact that the political idiom of India remains secularist; but the secularism that was practised for the first four decades is not the secularism that is being practiced now. What was once understood as '*dharmanirapekshata*' or neutrality of the state towards religious faith, which approximated to the Christendom's view of secularism, is now recognised as '*sarvapantha samabhava*' or equal

protection to all religions, which is the very essence of Hindu Dharma. So the kinetic form of Hindu Dharma, that is *Hindutva,* has forced a reinterpretation of secularism to make it consistent with the Hindu Dharma.

The evolution of *Hindutva* in vote bank based secular polity.

Hindu Dharma, which almost got eclipsed in the public domain and went underground in Independent India under the Nehruvian spell, began to assert itself again in the public domain in the late 1980s and early 1990s through the Ayodhya movement. Before the advent of the Ayodhya movement, the secular polity of Independent India had gradually turned into a game of minority appeasement for votes; it had consequently become anti-Hindu. The Ayodhya movement evolved as a corrective to this distortion. The movement brought about massive political changes in the country; it put the pseudo-secular polity, parties and leaders on the defensive. The BJP, with its agenda of *Hindutva,* became the largest political party in less than a decade and captured power in 1998 as part of a coalition. Today, *Hindutva* has moved to the centre stage of national polity. It is no more a marginal or marginalisable idea. Pseudo-secular political parties and their leaders are in the process of giving up secularism to fight elections on the basis of good governance. Politics is in the process of being restored to political parties, which were only appeasing the minorities for votes just a decade ago. Expressing allergy to Hinduism and Hindus had become part of the political process and normal secular ideological expression. But today this style of politics is fetching negative returns.

Now one cannot disregard the Hindus or distance themselves from Hinduism in Indian politics any more in the endeavour to secure minority votes. Imagine the government of Kerala headed by the Congress Party extending the rights of minority institutions to the Hindu educational institutions! This would have been unimaginable without the tectonic shift that is taking place in the national polity. The secular political parties are seeking to make a distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva, implying that Hinduism is good, but not *Hindutva.* But some reflection would show that *Hindutva* is only the kinetic manifestation of the dormant potential of Hinduism; it is the defensive force of the only non-

conflicting and non-combative religious faith.

Hindutva movement has been setting the agenda for national debate for the past decade and more. The emergence of *Hindutva* as the mainline thought places special responsibilities on those leading the *Hindutva* movement. Unlike the minority-led movements which can agitate and go on agitating as perpetual dissenters, unconcerned about governance and the running of the country, the *Hindutva* movement has the responsibility to ensure that national governance is not affected, whichever party is in power. It is the alienation of the Hindus from the establishment which turned the majority Hindus into dissenters in the decades following Independence. As a result of such alienation the majority of this country never felt that it was in power as Hindus. In fact, the very idea of majority rule was defined as opposed to the idea of secularism.

The polity of Independent India prior to the Ayodhya movement and rise of *Hindutva* was largely bereft of nationalist character. It was a polity that was driven by personalities rather than ideology. The cult of personalities as the centre of politics, without any ideology informing and driving the polity, has almost ended with the ascension of the BJP to power. With *Hindutva* emerging as the central focus of the nation and pseudo-secularism getting marginalised, the earlier phase of the marginalisation of Hindutva and Hindus in politics is over. The Hindu movements now will have to reconsider their posture of perpetual dissent, and turn into mainline drives of the country. It is true that the Hindu agenda remains largely unfulfilled. But the Hindu movement has a difficult situation to handle. It cannot agitate and at the same it cannot give up its ideological thrust. Any agitation today is seen as a rift within the Hindu movement. So the Hindu movements need to handle the situation with extreme dexterity and skill.

A challenge: The notion among Hindus, even Hindu scholars and leaders, that all religions are of the same nature or have the same goals

The internalised experience of the Hindus over millennia that all religions are same has settled in the genetic code of the Hindus. This was blindly applied to the Semitic religions also when they arrived in India. This is evident from the intellectual and social

responses to Judaism, early Islam and early Christianity when they reached the shores of India. This is also partially true of our response to the Parsi religion. But these faiths, when they arrived in India, were refugee faiths, having been driven out from their lands by their enemies or quarrelling cousins, like in the case of Shias who were driven out by their Sunni cousins.

The general truth about these faiths is that they never recognised or shared the Hindu idea of *'Dharma'*, which was the common denominator of the multitude of faiths within *Hindutva.* In fact, this was and continues to be an area of unresolved theological conflict between these alien religions and *Hindutva.* This conflict was less pronounced in the cases of Judaism and Zoroastrianism, which were racial religions not open to other races, and which therefore did not insist upon Hindus converting to these faiths. They became like separate castes in *Bharat.* But this conflict became pronounced and even violent in the case of Islam and Christianity, which entered *Bharat* as refugee faiths and turned into invading faiths after the Islamic hordes and colonialists entered *Bharat.*

The violence arose because of the spirit of conversion that was not only inherent in them, but also was ordained as a compulsive trait of a believing Christian or Muslim. Encyclopaedia Britannica records that Columbus set out to sail to India because he believed that Satan, in the form of Hinduism, had taken refuge in India, and further believed that unless this hindrance called Hinduism were to be removed through Christian missions, the impending return of Christ, which was on hand, would be indefinitely delayed. Thus the colonial powers had as much a religious motive as an economic-commercial motive fuelling their urge for expansion. The less said about Islamic invasion of India the better. It was motivated as much by religious fervour as by the desire to loot.

These two proselytising religions are intolerant by nature, because of the idea and institution of conversion that is inalienable from the core of their faith. The faith in these religions is incomplete unless the faithful simultaneously invalidates and de-legitimises other faiths; hence their hostility to the Kafir and the Heathen; and hence their core institutions of Jihad and Crusade designed to deal with the non-believer in their exclusive faiths.

But all this continues to be beyond the comprehension of

the ordinary and even the accomplished Hindu mind. So, even the scholarly Hindus, and Hindu religious leaders, continue to believe that theology of Christianity and Islam are just like our own religions, except that these faiths tend to emphasise their point of view very strongly. The misbehaviour of some in these religions is attributed to the zealots among them. But the truth is that there is potential for violence in the very foundation of these religions. So long as religious conversions are inherent and compulsive to a faith, that faith shall be violent to other faiths. To hold the followers responsible for such intolerance and even violence and exonerate the fundamental religious doctrines which preach such violence is a miserable intellectual failure of the Hindus. The misreading of these two religions, of understanding them in the image of Hinduism, is the biggest intellectual and philosophic failure of Hinduism.

Removing this gross misconception from the minds of Hindu religious leaders, scholars, and others is the first and the greatest challenge facing the Hindu society and the Hindu religious leaders and scholars. The Hindu leaders and scholars must study the Islamic and Christian scriptures thoroughly. They must undertake a massive effort to make the Hindus understand the theology of both. They must engage Islam and Chritianity in an open debate so that modern audiences may listen and watch. They must openly question the Christian and Islamic belief that all other beliefs are illegitimate; question their classification of the humans into Faithful and Pagan or Kafir, ask them on what they mean by Jihad and whether Hindus are Kafirs and Heathens.

The Hindu religious and social leaders must also link up globally with the leaders of other non-proselytising faiths. They must strike alliances with Buddhists, with the remaining pagans in Europe, Africa and the Americas who are trying to revive their traditions, and also with the enlightened followers of Semitic religions all over the world, particularly among the Christians who do not agree with the mission of Christianising the world. We should also ally with enlightened sections of Islamic societies in Iraq, Iran and Egypt and with the tribal chiefs of Afghanistan.

Hindu Dharma is inherently a global thought: hence the challenge of factoring Global influences

In the present context, with mass communication invading

individuals, families, societies and nations, there is cross-country interface between different cultures, which also influences and impacts national cultures. Today, there is an undeniable and unstoppable global influence over national cultures. All over the world there are debates taking place about the consequences of such cross-country influences, about the creeping westernisation of all cultures, about the homogenisation of all cultures into a single global construct. Even within the West there is growing resentment towards the Americanisation of the European culture. Particularly, the French feel so. In fact, there are debates that points towards emerging global conflicts over culture.

As early as 1994, long before Islamic terrorism struck at the US and the West as intensely as it began doing later, a leading strategic thinker in the US wrote about a possible clash among civilisations driven by Christian, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu religions. This was written in the context of Islamic fundamentalism emerging as the greatest threat to the West. The author perceived a possible future scenario where the West might be raged against all the Rest. He advised the West to come to terms with the Rest in order to avoid large-scale violent clashes.

While this particular scholar spoke of clashes among civilisations defined by religion, another thinker felt that the clashes would indeed arise along civilisational lines, but what defined civilisations was not religion, but technology. According to him there would be clashes among pre-modern, modern and post-modern civilisations, which are deeply differentiated from each other by technology. Thus cultural divide, whether the culture is defined by religion or technology, is increasingly perceived as an important element, perhaps the most important element, in forging and breaking global relationships and alliances.

It is necessary – indeed it is a challenge – to factor global perceptions and development in any socio-cultural or socio-economic study of India. For India driven by Hindu Dharma is susceptible to global influences more than any other country. This is for a host of reasons, some of which have been suggested by Dr Abdul Kalam, the current President of India. Paraphrasing Dr Kalam, the reasons for the peculiar susceptibility of India to global influences are: First, India has been a land that was repeatedly invaded and

totally colonised land for centuries, and so the colonial hangover distorts its mind. Second, by faith and conviction it has an inclusive and global mind, it believes in *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, and so, philosophically, it can never be insular. Third, it has no sense of retaliation and so it cannot reject even those who have in the past harmed it. Fourth, it has greater flexibility in accepting outsiders and so it makes very little distinction between those who are its own and those who are outsiders. [A most striking example of this phenomenon is the way the Congress Party accepted a foreigner, Sonia Gandhi] Fifth, it has huge Indian diaspora; the number of Indians outside India is as large as 20 million, with every one of them relating to at least three persons in India as relatives and friends. Lastly, the Indian people account for 1/6th of global population and a country of that size and number cannot remain isolated from the rest of the world. For all these reasons, India is inevitably susceptible to global cultural influences.

India cannot be insulated; therefore, unless India influences the world, the world is bound to influence India. The only way India can neutralise global influence on India is to influence the world and bend it towards its way. This is a huge challenge. Today, India's actual capacity to influence the world is unproven and its potential capacity is suspect. While the world, which means the West, ceaselessly and comprehensively influences Hindu India, there is hardly a matching Indian influence on the world or the West. This is because the main vehicle of Western influences on India in the last century was not the West outside India, but the English-educated elite and the leftists within India. They do the work of the West in India. They influence India towards the Western views and ways. They make India believe that it has nothing worthwhile with which to influence the world and it has every reason to be influenced by the world. They continue to dominate the Indian debate even now. This great challenge too needs to be met.

The response to this challenge lies in establishing an acceptable language and style of communication to get across to the important, vulnerable and critical segment of Hindu society comprising of the English-educated elite. The Hindu leadership must understand that the English-educated population in *Bharat* is more than the total population of England. It is this segment which controls and handles

the levers of power and influence in the society. Their influence over the Indian establishment, including the government, business, finance, media, politics, academics and public discourse in general, is totally disproportionate to their numbers. Their understanding of the real *Bharat,* its history and traditions, its values and culture, is minimal, and often wrong. Some among them even detest all ideas and things Indian. Following the Western view of gender relationships and under the influence of feminism – which has nearly destroyed the institution of the family in the West – some of them are even apologetic about being women in the normal sense of the term.

These influences are gaining force, and even legitimacy, in the Indian discourse. This has accentuated the tussle between the modern and the tradition in India at various levels; it has influenced everything from discourses in the public domain to quarrels and disputes within families. So the *Hindutva* movement, that spans a large canvas extending from the traditional mathas to the modern, westernised and even Christianised versions of Hindu organisations like the new spiritual orders, must specially target this English-educated and the partially and fully Westernised. This requires detailed planning and execution.

If the challenge of Westernisation and cultural invasion – which is becoming an issue all over the world, and shall probably be the principal reason for the emerging clash between Islam and the West – can be handled, and even defied and defeated by any society, it is only the Hindu society. *Hindutva* has the philosophical flexibility and diversity of traditions that allows it to make tradition a part of the present, a part of the immediate context of the individual, without making traditional practices remote or distant. This has been achieved by the Hindu society and the exponents of *Hindutva* by locating Hindu traditions and beliefs deeply within the filial, local and social contexts.

The need to avoid creating or contributing to create the image of a reactionary intolerant and violent *Hindutva*, and of the Hindu organisations as the counterparts of Islamic terrorist outfits:

Today, when communications have linked the whole world and anyone saying something or any event happening in a remote corner is soon broadcast all over the world, all debates have become

global, and so has all opinion making. This is particularly so where the debates concern a nation like *Bharat,* which constitutes 1/6th of humanity, and which is perceived to be an emerging global player in the economic and strategic fields. It is even more so, when the debate concerns *Hindutva* in relation to Islam or Christianity, which are global faiths with powerful global lobbies supporting them.

The world suffers from utmost ignorance about Hinduism. The ordinary world sees it as another exclusive faith. Most people in the world do not believe that there can be a religion that grants the validity and legitimacy of other religions. The world is used only to religions that proclaim not only their exclusive validity, but also the falsity of all other religions. Such ignorance pervades those in the media and even many of the intellectuals. Their knowledge of religions is limited, and they treat all of them to be about the same. They tend to understand Hinduism and *Hindutva* only through their understanding of Islam or at best of Christianity.

The Christian West thinks that all religions other than Christianity are like Islam. They believe that Buddhism is like Islamic extremism, and they find evidence for this belief in the '*Aum Shirinyo*' phenomenon of Japan. They think that the *Hindutva* movement in India is the counterpart of Islamic fundamentalist movements in Pakistan and elsewhere. The difference between the Abrahamic faiths and the Hindu pantheon of faiths is largely unknown to the world, particularly the Western world. Even scholars are unaware of the difference between *Hindutva* and Islam for instance.

Today it is the media that today is informing scholarship and not the other way round. The leaders of the *Hindutva* movement must understand that the Hinduism and *Hindutva* are being judged on the analogy of Islam and Christianity. For, to the West, religion means only Islam and Christianity. They understand and judge other religions only on their understanding of these two Semitic faiths.

The profane media-generated opinion, which happens to be mostly incorrect, is a problem for *Hindutva* and the Hindu organisations. The latter are in danger of being bracketed with Islamic extremist and terrorist organisations. Why go out of India? Even within India the pseudo-secular and left elements always juxtapose Hindu organisations with the Islamic extremist organisations; they always tend to compare and club together

Hindu organisations which protest against Islamic fundamentalism with the Islamic fundamentalist organisations! In the process Hindutva is being regarded as a cousin of Islamic extremism and Hindu organisations as the mirror-image of Islamic terrorist and extremist organisations.

The leaders of the *Hindutva* movement must also understand that *Hindutva* is the only thought that lacks global support. Equally it is a thought that has as its adversaries two of the most powerful global thoughts, Islam and Christianity. It requires sound strategy and great skill and dexterity to navigate the *Hindutva* movement through this maze of global overseeing. The leaders of Hindu organisations need extensive training and deep thinking to undertake this highly demanding enterprise. They must choose words that cannot be faulted; employ the language that cannot be questioned. They must project an image of being the victims of Islamic terror and extremism rather than as their equal or equivalent counterparts. The Hindu organisations must understand that it is only the state that can fight terror with fire. The society can only generate fierce public opinion against terror to enable the government to fight terror freely and without being constrained by the human rights industry, and by the liberals and other intellectual anarchists. This is an area to which the Hindutva movement and the leaders of the movement need to devote adequate time and attention. They must devise proper strategy. They must develop proper leadership and appropriate tools and language for articulation. For, on them depends the opinion that the world shall form of the *Hindutva* movements and the view it shall take of *Hindutva.*

Since global opinion is very crucial to fight Islamic terror, which is a globally linked and globally directed phenomenon, it is necessary for the Hindu organisations to start correcting the distorted opinion created in the past by the omissions and commissions of the *Hindutva* movement and its leadership. This needs to be attended to immediately on an emergency footing. If need be diverse chosen leaders of the movement will have to travel to important countries in the world, meet opinion-makers within and outside of the national establishments and ensure that the obvious difference between the Islamic and Hindu movements are clearly explained to them, that these differences are clearly etched

in their understanding. Now is the time when the world will be receptive to such viewpoints; it was not so two years back. The situation offers a challenge as well as an opportunity.

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Chapter X

Hindu India and Secular Constitution India: the 'Modern' vs the 'Traditional'

A series of Supreme Court decisions in the last decade on concepts and thoughts related to ancient India and Indian civilisation, bring out the endeavours of constitutionalism in India to understand and recognise the legitimate, yet hidden and unexpressed, urges of 'traditional' Hindu India. Conflicts have arisen between 'modern' India and the 'traditional' Hindu India under the Anglo-Saxon 'secular' constitution that free India had adopted to institute a modern nation-state to govern this ancient nation. The word 'modern' here and in this discussion needs to be understood as 'western' as the current idea of modernity is benchmarked on western view and style of life, personal and public. The recent judgements constitute conflict resolution efforts of Indian constitutionalism, and set out the judicially devised formulae to handle the conflicts. These judicial efforts also have had the effect of softening the partly hidden and partly open hostility of modern secular India to ancient India and its culture and civilisation. This subterranean and overt hostility was isolating and disconnecting the modern State from the traditional society in India. Later, this compelled traditional India to lodge an uproarious protest at being ignored by the modern India. How did conflicts arise between 'traditional' India and the 'modern' and how did such conflicts force 'traditional' India to lodge open protest to make its point to the modern and constitutional India need to be analysed in some detail.

The traditional India is the origin and source of the India of today. It is a living reality. At the existential level it is still the backbone of India. In the philosophic plane it is verily its soul. It does not call for any meticulous research to uncover this. It is visible to the naked eye, unless the modern Indian, blinded by modernity, dismisses all traditions as backward and therefore and thereby misses their impact. India's philosophic and spiritual quests manifest explicitly; these involve and bring together the ordinary people of India in their millions time and again, and connect them to their geography in a manner unknown to any other civilisation. In fact the capacity of this ancient nation to bring together the people and link them to their geography constituted the very basis of Indian nationhood. Indian civilisation never attempted to extend its geography-based faith to peoples or nations outside its borders. The geography-based faith of the Indian people constituted their identity as a nation. That is why the philosopher-statesman Dr Radhakrishnan recalled that originally the word 'Hindu' was geographic, rather than creedal in its significance. But it is an undeniable fact that the creed too was geographic and therefore the confluence of the people, creed and geography constituted and defined this ancient nation and its personality as a Hindu nation. The nation in India is a sacred confluence of mass faith of the Indian people and the geography of India. Mahatma Gandhi in his Hind Swaraj saw this confluence as the basis of India as one living organic entity, that is, in the modern idiom, one nation.[Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol.10. New Delhi p.245-315]

It needs no social scientist or demographer to establish this explicit phenomenon in this country. A mere look at the mass power of a 'Maha Kumbh' and 'Pushkar' in the North of India or their equivalent, the 'Mahamakam' and the 'Pushkaram' in the South, and at how these and hundreds of other festivals and mass rituals unite the people of India and link them to their geography, will bring out the importance of tradition in the national life of India; and, it shall also bring out the role tradition plays in integrating it as a nation. It is thousands of such mass festivals and rituals at the national, regional and local levels that geographically unite the people of India and integrate India more than all that the social contract based modern polity, enforced by constitution and law,

and penalised by courts and police for breach of the contract, can accomplish. In fact traditional India effectively and emotionally has entwined the people of this ancient nation into one rainbow like unified society, with linked diversities like the colours of the rainbow. This bond has survived the hostile attitude of modernity that had at the start questioned the very relevance of ancient and traditional India.

The unique significance of this faith linked to geography – which is the collective of the commonwealth of Hindu civilisational faiths – is its non-conflicting nature; being doctrinally tolerant of other faiths, it does not conflict with other faiths. Since it is non-conflicting, it turned out to be non-invasive and consequently also non-expansive. This uniqueness made it possible for this faith linked to geography to respect the faiths, on the principle of '*Sarva Panth Samabhava*' [equal respect for all faiths] and also geographies of other peoples on the principle of respect for '*Desachara*' [the local traditions safeguarded by the local State]. That was how, as seen earlier, the faiths originating in India easily and without persuasion accepted the faiths of other peoples as valid in themselves and this was how the idea of 'Rajdharma' in India accepted the sovereignty of other States as inviolable. We shall see the creedal significance of these concepts a little later.

Even now the traditional India completely and comprehensively integrates the ordinary people of India; the durable unity that such integration secures – otherwise than through the transitory instrument of polity – makes the political India and the State of India feel at ease and function in peace. The multitudes of manifestations of traditional India demonstrate the mass power and eternality of the tradition that binds and brings together the people and make them own and identify with everything about the country, from common myths to common heroes and to common history and consciously make them belong to a common and shared ancestry. These traditions have sustained this ancient nation and preserved its soul even in the absence of a protective government for centuries, and even in spite of hostile governments seeking to undermine and destroy its soul, all in the none-too-distant past. No government can survive and sustain in this ancient nation without the continued support of this undated and un-dateable antiquity and traditions.

Finally, this traditional India is also integral to spiritual India and is inseverable from it.

But despite traditional India's manifest importance in shaping the personality of India as a unified nation, free India's constitutionalism and political establishment have masked it by packaging and marketing 'modern' India as the real one and 'traditional' India as a marginal fallout of a forgettable past, even an unmitigated evil and, in any event, not a matter of pride. There is a widely shared assumption that the growth and development of modern state and society in India, which is orthogonal and hostile to the traditional Indian society that is largely religious, is at the root of all tensions in the Indian public life. In fact, modern India has succeeded in projecting the small convulsions, which take place in traditional India that is distanced from the modern Indian State, as disrupting modern India and delaying the completion of modernity in India. But the truth is that the quarrels which take place in traditional India are like quarrels within large and complex families. If modern India understands this element in traditional India and handles them with sensitivity and without adversarial approach, then the disengagement between the two will get minimised. By projecting traditional India as quarrelsome and difficult, and therefore backward and out of date, modern India has disconnected itself from the spiritual values that lie deep inside the heart of traditional India. This is like the proverbial throwing of the baby with the bathwater. This disconnect with the 'traditional' India only eroded the spiritual foundation of this ancient nation and deprived modern India of thousands of years of spiritual and cultural heritage that the antiquity of this nation represented. This disconnect also marked the beginning of free India's journey towards modernity mostly and totally divorced from its tradition. This disconnect soon deepened to become a divide as modernity began defining itself as the converse of traditional India, turning traditional India into an exotic curio for tourist attraction!

In the background of the divide between the traditional and modern India, the recent judicial rulings indicate a rethink by Indian constitutionalism about 'traditional' India and an attempt to overcome the divide and reconnect modern India to the traditional. These rulings seem to acknowledge, in the constitutional realm, the

'traditional' India as a reality. They also impliedly acknowledge 'traditional' India's continuing, perhaps even increasing, relevance and recognise its legitimacy; these judgements seem to even implicitly accept that traditional India is also a matter of pride. But these rulings, as we shall see later, emerged in the constitutional domain only after traditional India lodged a resounding protest in the political field at being marginalised by 'modern' India. The protests which began from around the mid-1980s and intensified in the 1990s, through the Ayodhya movement, changed the political landscape of India in a manner unthinkable before. Even as these rulings do recognise 'traditional' India hidden and masked by the 'modern' as very much a reality, they also impliedly underscore 'modern' India's definitional and functional deficiencies in grasping the essence of ancient Indian tradition and the culture internalised in traditional India. The 'modern' and 'secular' India's overemphasis and blind preoccupation with modernising and secularising India on the Anglo-Saxon experiences that are culturally and spiritually unsuitable to India, have caused this cultural and civilisational dent and deficit in the national psyche. This will need some further, and even an acuter, analysis.

The concept of 'modern' India is philosophically rooted in the Anglo-Saxon model and is institutionally shaped and structured on the experiments and experiences of Christendom with individualism, secularism and liberalism as symbols of modernity. In short modern India is an exotic and glamorous laboratory, strenuously trying to experiment with the Anglo-Saxon experiences on this ancient nation by a cut-and-paste model without mixing even an iota of nativity and indigenisation. This alien philosophy and exogenous institutions which collectively represent the cut and paste modernity in India have over the years disturbed the harmony of traditional India and have constitutionally de-legitimised it. In addition, and to make this de-legitimisation more pronounced and explicit, practical and acceptable, even compelling and inevitable, India's political interpretation of the key provisions of the Indian Constitution shaped by the so-called vote-bank politics – and the repeated judicial endorsement of such politically motivated interpretation – placed undue emphasis on the institution of secularism transplanted into India on 'as-is-where-is' basis from Christendom. This

constitutionally approved transplant of the intra-Christian doctrine of secularism that evolved in a mono-religious setup in the West into India, with its multi-religious fabric, was contrived without being conscious of indigenous India's aspirations. This transplanted secularism could not effectively handle a multi-religious terrain like India and it has, on the contrary, dangerously distorted, even perverted, the national mind and confused the national identity of this ancient nation. Now this transplant is, by the calibrated process of recovery known to this ancient civilisation, getting de-legitimised and is being gradually rejected because of its undeniable incompatibility with the body and soul of traditional India. This process of rejection began manifesting from the mid-1980s through the very route that the distorted form of secularism took to infiltrate into this ancient nation, namely, the route of constitutional and agitational politics, represented, as recalled earlier, by the Ayodhya movement of the 1980s and 1990s and the consequent political changes it brought about. This we shall see a little later.

Modernism in India is merely a pseudonym for ideas, lifestyles and institutions that are essentially Western, and particularly Anglo-Saxon. This takes us to the question how 'modern' is India in this sense today despite over two centuries of efforts to modernise it. It is no secret that even now the idea of modernity in India is a superficial veneer that masks the real India; modern India fakes the true India, which is basically traditional in nature and psyche. The privately lived India is utterly and by conviction traditional in varying degrees; in contrast, the publicly projected India is feigning to appear 'modern' – read Western – by driving underground and to obscurity all privately held traditions and convictions. The modern India is catchy and glamorous in appearance, but within itself it suffers from alienation, it is confused and disturbed, its heart is neither here nor there. Modern India is also utterly superficial in thinking; it is influenced by extraneous drives and not by autogenous self evaluation. It lacks depth and understanding of traditional India's inner soul which is inextricably mixed with India's ancient traditions and religion. With the result the 'modern' India is virtually cut off from its roots connecting it to the ancient Indian civilisational moorings. To make matters worse, 'modern' India, by the very compulsions of its self-definition, has to abandon the ancient and

traditional Indian tastes, lifestyles and appearances in the public domain only to be regarded and get certified as 'modern'. In fact it has not only to abandon, it has also to trivialise the ancient and traditional India as un-modern and even as anti-modern. More, in order to propagate modernity, an informal, normative open air university, which has monopolised the right to certify who is modern and who is not, was institutionalised by elite Indian intellectualism. It is being successfully operated by the English speaking elites who have been apologetic about the traditional India and are shy of owning it and by most of the Left thinkers who negate the traditions of India as anti-progressive. Both of them, who otherwise disagree on almost everything else, converge on this. This superficially defined and even more superficially presented modernity represents the veneer that masks the real India. Traditional India had gone underground to save itself from the physically harassing and psychologically persecuting modernity, until it regrouped and started asserting from the mid 1980s. Both English speaking elites and the Left thinkers have been intellectually and academically endeavouring for more than a century to re-image India as a nation that is turning back on its traditional past and disconnecting from it to become 'modern'. According to them, unless the new Indian distances and disconnects from his past he cannot qualify as 'modern' Indian.

Despite all such efforts, the Indian gene and Indian beliefs, Indian psychic and behavioural models, continue to be firmly rooted in the ancient Indian idea of 'Dharma', which legitimises and binds all traditional Indian collectives, whether based on religion or language or social groups or otherwise; such legitimisation in India does not require any intervention of the State. This ancient concept of Dharma, which is as old as India itself, is common to all faiths, all Indian Religions – Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist and all their variations – that originated in India. In contrast, the modern 'secular' constitution which free India adopted was almost entirely based on the experiences and assumptions born out of the social and philosophic, and religious and political, experiments of Christendom. Constitutionalism that has been endeavouring, though unsuccessfully, for decades to institute a modern India based on Anglo-Saxon individualism in India is a cut and paste

effort to re-image of India. The rationale behind this strange cut and paste intellectualism in India was the desire of the elite apologists and Left negationists of India to disconnect ancient India from the present and the future modern India. This effort almost totally derecognised traditional India and its soul in the public domain.

Experiences of Christendom, Indian Constitutionalism and 'traditional' India

Let us now analyse how far the experiences of Christendom and Anglo-Saxon institutions on which free India's constitutionalism is based is compatible with the traditional India. The experience which the Christian West had to undergo to realise the need for granting religious freedom to individuals from the oppressive Christian Church, and shape its brand of secularism to philosophise that grant, was the outcome of tens of centuries of struggles within Christendom which evolved in three stages. The first stage was the struggle within the global Church which transformed into a battle between the global Church and nation-States which yielded the seed idea of modern nation state. Then it evolved into a struggle between the nation-State and the national Church, and later that manifested in the concept of secularism that brought about the separation of the Christian state and the Christian church. The third phase of it was the struggle between the national State and the individual that shaped the modern democratic polity with the individual as the centre. This started with the theological evolution through Protestant Christianity which made the individual and the State as the only legitimate entities and the social organisation of the Church as the dispensable idea. It is at the third stage that the concept of secularism shaped a godless society, led to the secularisation of the society in Christendom; until then secularism was purely an intra-Christian arrangement between the two Christian faithfuls, the Christian King and the Christian Church.

These struggles, often violent, were rooted in religious and political individualism that protested, agitated and revolted against organised religious and political collectivisation of the people. The new recruits to the organised Christian Church were uprooted from their own native faiths by the new faith, Christianity, which aspired to create a global religious brand and to dominate the

religious world.

This new faith followed by the new polity was utterly destructive of – why, it actually destroyed – all local cultures, faiths, aspirations and peoples. With the result there is no trace of Mayan or Native Indian culture left in the Americas. No original African culture is left in Africa. No Australian culture is left in Australia. Why, no trace of even native European cultures is left in Europe! In any event in the Euro-centric geo-Christian model, no legitimacy is left for those small numbers who cling to the remnants of the native cultures. Those who still cling to the non-Christian faiths are reduced to being exotic objects demonstrated and exhibited for slaking the morbid curiosity of the modern. To sum up, not even traces of native, indigenous cultures survived wherever Christian faith had penetrated; and where some traces of nativity have escaped and survived, there also the remaining adherents of the surviving nativity have conceded supremacy to the Western culture over their own. These efforts inevitably manifested in a new polity and statecraft based on the same philosophy and model as the new faith, namely building a global brand and endeavouring for global domination through colonisation. This we shall see in some detail.

Now in the West, the post-modern struggle of individual versus the individual, is taking shape as assertive institutions of human rights, gender rights, children's rights and elders' rights, thus atomising whatever little collective cultural discipline is left in the societies and families. Modernity is highly apprehensive of and sensitive to the danger of tradition defying it. Just as traditional India is mortally scared of modernity, in the same way modern India is utterly worried about tradition. Modern India knows that traditional disciplines will exist and defy it so long as traditional collectives that need no sanction from the state for their existence survive. So modernity in the interest of its own supremacy targets all collectives, including the family, in the name of the institutions of individual liberty and human rights and other segmented rights, including gender rights and children's rights. The expansion of the domain of the individual by emphasising the institutions of human rights and segmented human rights like gender rights and children's rights is not only to atomise the society but also to abridge

the idea of God, in so far as Godliness or divinity manifests through society and its varied collectives. The concept of ever atomising rights is destructive of all traditions and traditional disciplines. The consciousness based on rights has been used as a cloak by modernity to destroy all traditional collectives elsewhere and is keen to repeat it here in India too. It is clear that without tradition and traditional collectives, there can be no culture or cultural social capital. The concept of social capital celebrated by some socio-economic thinkers in the West now as unburdening the State and regulating the market-animal is a product of culture. In fact there can be no culture without a collective and no social capital without culturally formed collectives. The result of granting total legitimacy to modernity is to free the individual from all normative collectives and make the State and the market, which represent the contract-based collective of the people, supreme, with no initiative left in any human collective other than the State.

But even as we understand the effect of these processes, we must bear it mind that these struggles were endogamous to Christendom and to the problem-specific curative evolutions within the tight Christian model. These struggles were masterminded and led over centuries by the main players – statesmen, diplomats, philosophers, explorers and traders – to overcome the organised centralisation of religious, political and social power within Christendom. The efforts to free the Christian people from the organised Christian institutions released huge kinetic energies that remained throttled till then and kept bottled up in Christendom. This exploded into the geo-Christian thrust later and this transformed itself in to a huge global mission to plant the 'Cross' across the continents by co-opting and converting the non-Christian peoples, nations and societies into the same organised Christian institutions at the national and global level. This constituted the geo-Christian efforts for domination of the world and evolved into a comprehensive but calibrated process of subordinating the non-Western world to the West. This domination which began as religious thrust turned political with expeditions and explorations and changed form as economic domination through colonisation and has now finally manifested in what is known as globalisation, a combination and convergence of all forms of the earlier thrusts. The main driving

force of these global Tsunami tides is the geo-Christian lust for domination of the world. This idea being contagious in nature is now catching up with non-Christian societies and nations too, in the mad race for survival through competition and seeking domination through competitiveness promoted by globally promoted religious, military, political and economic ideas, alliances and institutions. Consequently, the whole world today is involved in a contest between different nations, individually or in alliances, seeking space for domination over others.

The destruction of all ancient cultures and life-models and road-rolling of the rubble of the destroyed cultures and values and faiths into the unified cloak of westernisation constituted the essence of modernity and secularism which the modern West has presented as the role model for the Rest to follow. The only change in this process of destruction in recent times is the new mode of destruction now adopted. In the past, it was by violence and war. In modern times it is achieved, without physical violence, by asserting psychological superiority of the West over the Rest, and by deriding and trivialising all approaches to life other than the western as un-modern, so as to destroy their legitimacy in the mind of the co-opted native adherents. The 'humanist' West would at best tolerate the 'inferior' Rest in the interest of avoiding the clash of civilisations, should Samuel Huntington's theory of handling the West vs the Rest situation give any clue to the enigmatic Western attitude to the Rest of the world.

In sum, even though the West does not explicitly says so, it means that what is 'modern' is actually 'western' and what is 'western' is actually 'geo-Christian'. The origins and assumptions of 'secular' India's constitution and its later political construction constituted an attempt to own uncritically and implement blindly this alien and exogenous experience with geo-Christian roots as the model for modern India and as the justification for deligitimisation of traditional India.

Meditative Indian consciousness and the Hindu civilisational protest movement in 1990s: the Judicial Response.

This process of 'modernisation' of India clearly and effectively sidelined, marginalised and distanced the establishment of India from the Soul of India rooted in 'Sanatana Dharma'. The meditative

ancient Indian consciousness, which was thus marginalised and sidelined by the rising tide of unbridled individualism, Euro-centric modernity and inappropriate secularism, began re-manifesting through a gradually evolving process. This process began long after we attained freedom, and was marked by a calibrated, as distinct from a revolutionary or violent, process which is part of the Indian genius. It represented 'secular' India's growing conflict with the traditional and ancient India. This process was silent and muted to start with, but soon acquired high decibel value and increasingly and inevitably impacted on the different aspects of national life, including national polity. In this reassertion, the ordinary and believing Hindu took the lead and the leaders actually followed. Soon this turned into a socio-religious-political tornado, into a highly visible and effective Hindu civilisational reassertion, in the 1990s through the Ram Temple movement which had multidimensional effect on the nation's polity and psyche.

This reassertion of the Indian civilisation was also marked by a debate on the content and definition of what modern secularism means. The judiciary in India had never been static and had time and again reacted, dynamically and positively, to the expressed consciousness of the Indian people. This is evident from the way the judiciary first delegitimised all amendments to the fundamental rights listed in the Constitution, but later, when the explicit mandate of the people turned inconsistent with such a view, modulated its position to approve of amendments to accommodate the expressed concerns of the people. Later, during the Internal Emergency declared by the government in the mid 1970s, the judiciary virtually legitimised the dictatorial regime instituted as a result, but, after the people of India resoundingly disapproved of the Emergency and declared themselves against any kind of constitutional dictatorship, the judiciary too forthwith factored the mandate of the people in its rulings on fundamental freedoms of the people and even expanded their meaning and content. From then on the judiciary became acutely sensitive to issues concerning the freedom of the people of India, and even expanded constitutional protections by evolving the concept of Public Interest Litigation. So the judiciary in India has time and again addressed and responded positively to the expressed concerns of the people of India. Similarly, as a

result of the civilisational assertion on the ground, the meditative Indian consciousness soon began to manifest in the reorientation of the national mind in other areas of national life, including the judicial field. Consistent with the national sentiments, the judiciary too began to take note of the civilisational aspirations and concerns being expressed by traditional India, which had remained dormant and had been explicitly and implicitly delegitimised by the constitutional establishment of India. The Court rulings on issues relating to Indian civilisation echo this ongoing debate in India. In these rulings the judiciary seems to have factored in the expressed civilisational urges of the people of the last about twenty years, particularly about the meaning and content of the idea of secularism. These rulings in a way reflect the attempts by the Indian society to recapture and reinvent the identity of the Indian cultural nationalism as part of the ruling establishment in the judicial field.

The State and Society in India, the traditional arrangement and the later conflict

The State-Society divide in India has a history of at least a thousand years. The ancient Indian experience was that State was a less dependable mechanism as compared to Society; the society rested and functioned on auto-drive, powered by the eternal principles enshrined in the concept of *'Dharma'*, which this ancient nation had evolved over thousands of years of continuity of experience handed down from generation to generation. In India, traditions followed by the people at large in their day to day life, not records made by a few, were the medium of directing the course of civilisational continuity. Ancient India had consciously placed the Society above the State. In fact, in the Indian tradition, the State was considered to be merely an instrument of the society, and so less dependable. This was aptly vindicated by global experiences of other civilisations. The rise of different civilisations, which rested on the power and the authority of the State to sustain themselves, like the Greek and the Roman, Egyptian and the Babylonian, Assyrian and the Persian, and their fall, which coincided with the fall of the respective States, as did their rise with the rise of those States, provided vindication for the Indian rationale for not vesting total trust in the State. In contrast, Indian civilisation sustained for

thousands of years with a State that was protective of 'Dharma' but not intrusive. This miracle of a State as integral instrument of the Society was achieved through unfailing adherence to the institution of 'Dharma', which was held to be supreme by all. This was the great miracle that the Saints and *Rishis* of India had performed.

The concept of 'Dharma' – 'duty consciousness' in very rough translation – as institutionalised in the Indian tradition is the very opposite of the concept of rights enshrined in the Christendom's modern civilisational consciousness and in their political constitutions. Nevertheless, the concept of 'Dharma' achieves the same result as the institution of rights does, but, by protecting the rights of the people by better means. In the Indian civilisational perspective, one's right is another's duty. For example, the right of a citizen is the duty of the State. While the Indian tradition would insist that the State fulfil its Dharma, as part of the 'Rajdharma', to the people, modern West would insist that the State honour the rights of citizens. So the institution of Dharma is a comprehensive and participatory discipline which binds all to honour their duty to others, be it the State to the individual, or the individual to his or her parents, other elders, or children or brothers or sisters. In contrast the Western discipline based on the concept of rights enforceable against one another or against the State is adversarial and therefore productive of conflict. So while the West emphasised the rights of all, the Indian tradition emphasised the duty, the Dharma, of all.

How Dharma has nourished India as a self-sustaining and self-policing model

Just a couple of illustrations would explicitly demonstrate that the institution of Dharma is not merely a theoretical concept, nor merely a dead idea, but it is a living reality, a performing institution, and actually a socio-economic delivery mechanism.

First, it is the ancient Indian consciousness inherent in the concept of Dharma internalised by thousands of years of sustained work by Rishis and Saints of India that has resulted in the evolution of a self-sustaining and self-governing and self-policing society in India. That is why for over 700,000 villages and over a thousand cities and towns we have just 12,657 police stations. [Ministry of Home Affairs, Document Crime in India. Is it possible to police over

one billion Indian people located in over 700 thousand locations with just about 12,600 police stations? Absolutely not. The State in India remains at peace, because it is not the police which has the monopoly duty to deliver law and order in India; law and order is maintained by the indwelling consciousness, the Dharma. Now one can rationalise why some Anglo-Saxon intellectuals, uninitiated to the traditional India, regard India as 'a functioning anarchy'. It is because in their view anything un-policed by the State can only be anarchic, not organic. But the truth is that that which is organic will never be anarchic. Atomisation of organic societies brings about anarchy, which is what Christendom experienced when it destroyed all pre-Christian organic religious and cultural entities substituting the Church in their place. Later the State took their place. But the organic formations could never be revived. So without the Church, and later the State, the atomised individualism will only bring about anarchy. That is why western intellectualism would see anarchy wherever the State and law are seen to be inadequate or have less reach. Therefore, while some Anglo-Saxon thinkers badly informed about the inner-direction that India gets would call India 'a functioning anarchy', the even more badly informed indigenous intellectuals in this country would quote them approvingly.

In Christian theology and experience faith has to be driven by the Church and has to be spread by evangelism, which is the duty of the Church. Christendom could not conceive of a faith which sustains on its own. In Christendom's perspective, only a faith which is organised through a book and under a prophet is faith, others are not faiths at all, and the Gods worshipped by the faithfuls belonging to those false faiths are false Gods. They are pagans. Likewise political Christendom could not conceive of a society that sustains on its own without being directed by a Christian state. Anglo-Saxon model which is drawn from the experiences of Christendom cannot even conceive of a largely self-sustaining and self-managing society. So in the dictionary of Christendom, a faith which is not directed by an all powerful Church is a 'functioning religious anarchy' and a society which is not directed by an all powerful State is a 'functioning political anarchy'. This perverse interpretation of Indian society by the scholars of Christendom is the result of the absence of an indwelling

collective and individual consciousness – similar to the institution 'Dharma' – in Christendom and in the Anglo-Saxon States. But the elite English speaking Indian mind, despite its western orientation, can still understand the difference between a religion driven by an organised Church like Christianity and inner-directed faiths like the Hindu commonwealth of faiths. It can also understand the difference between a society driven by the State and a society self-governed and self-managed by the institution of Dharma. Yet having been colonised over a hundred years, it is not decolonised enough to understand that what the Anglo-Saxon thinkers view as 'functioning anarchy' is actually a self-sustaining model and its functionality is nourished by Dharma.

Next, it is only the idea of Dharma as practised by Indian families irrespective of their religious affiliations that has institutionalised a privatised social security system in India, entirely provided by families and communities. This concept and practice of Dharma has saved the State of India from the burden of providing publicly administered social security by preventing atomisation of the families and by unfailingly preserving the noble ideas of 'Grihastha Dharma' [duty of a householder], 'Pitr Dharma' [duty to the ancestors] and 'Matr Dharma' [duty to the mother], which mandate and bind a person to provide for the elders and also look after the younger ones as part of his Dharma. Thus the idea of Dharma is not an antiquated phenomenon frozen in epigraphic and literary information, but a living ideal and functioning institution. This is woven into the idea of birth and rebirth and also the concept of ancestry and obligations to ancestors, which survives even the death of the person; the survivor's responsibility is part of 'Pitri Dharma'. So there is link between faith in rebirth and 'Pitr Dharma', namely the duty to the ancestor even after death. That is why Dr Radhakrishnan described Hindu families as a contract between the living and the dead [Hindu View of Life p.65]

This central feature of Hinduism and of all Indian religions being the behavioural institution of Dharma, at the micro level, that is, at the individual level, the idea of Dharma as part of the rules of life was instituted in what is known as the fourfold 'Purushartha', namely, 'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kama', and 'Moksha'. The meaning is that 'Artha', that is, wealth, and 'Kama', that is pleasure, in human

life, should be governed by the rules of 'Dharma' and a human life lived by handling 'wealth' and 'pleasure' according to the rules of 'Dharma' will lead to 'Moksha', namely merger into God. At the macro level, the idea of Dharma was based on four pillars, namely 'Vyakti' Dharma, that is, the duty of the individual based on the fourfold Purushartha, 'Pitri Dharma', that is, duty to the ancestors, 'Samaja Dharma', that is duty to the society, and Rashtra Dharma, that is duty to the nation. Thus, the entire human life was defined in terms of the institution of Dharma. This comprehensive edifice founded on the consciousness of Dharma has preserved the integrity and personality of the Indian society for thousands of years. Therefore, it was regarded the greatest duty of all to protect Dharma at all levels so that Dharma in turn may protect all. This is captured in the ancient Indian concept *"Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha"*, meaning, those who protect Dharma are protected by Dharma.

The decline from *'Dharma Rakshana'* to *'Dharma Nirapekshata'*

Not just the undated traditions of India, but the historically known Indian States of the past from Chandragupta to Chola were thus founded on the ideals captured in the macro concept of Dharma and on the duty of the State to protect Dharma enshrined in the concept of *'Dharma Rakshana'*. Thus, protecting, but not interfering with, Dharma was the principal duty of the state in the Indian perspective. When these Indian States rose and fell from time to time – as States are bound to – the Indian civilisation did not wane or fall, but continued almost unaffected as before. Thus, the Indian civilisatioin demonstrated a durability which nature and destiny seem to have denied to other civilisations.

The thread of Dharma, as the arbiter transcending the times and rulers, constituted the astounding continuity demonstrated by the Hindu race. This continuity of Dharma, particularly at the macro level, was partly disrupted first by Islamic invasion, which has been described by Will Durant as the bloodiest in history. Later, during the British rule, the institution of Dharma in India was geopolitically overawed, and intellectually denigrated as unsuitable for modern times through the medium of British education which fostered Left and Right intellectualism, both of which were directed

against India. Following the achievement of freedom, the Indian genius could not muster the intellectual resources and the courage to protest against the experimental, tentative and thoughtless imposition of the Anglo-Saxon Christendom's experiences on India. This happened despite the strenuous efforts of Mahatma Gandhi to revitalise the ancient Indian idea of Dharma, and to reinterpret it as a universally appropriate institution for the contemporary world that was recovering after centuries of war and violence unleashed by religious, political and economic colonialism of mediaeval Islamic and Christian theologies and by the later versions of political ideologies and missions rooted in them. But almost the rest of the intellectual leadership that came up during the freedom movement failed to recognise the importance of Dharma, and to appropriately indigenise the established institutional structures of free India. Thus the ruling establishment of India, which the freedom movement ultimately resulted in, just continued from where the British left almost on 'as-is-where-is' basis, and so, perhaps rightly, the British establishment described – why, dismissed – the 'freedom' of India as a mere 'transfer of power'.

The constitution of free India was thus founded, in the main, on the assumptions based on the experiences of Christendom. So it inevitably defined the philosophy of the State of India explicitly as *'Dharmanirpekshata'*, which meant that, contrary to the Indian experience of millennia, the new Indian State was to be neutral with respect to Dharma, and was to renounce its primary duty of protecting Dharma in all its aspects. So from being a nation governed by a long line of States that abided by and protected Dharma, before we lost freedom centuries ago, we became a nation governed by alien States that ruled in ways that were not only contrary to but also destructive of Dharma, and after achieving freedom again, we have now descended to the condition of being ruled by a State that is explicitly neutral to Dharma. Thus, in place of our ancient Indian States committed to *'Dharma Rakshana'*, we have today, in free, independent India, instituted a State committed to *'Dharmanirapekshata'*. We have descended from *'Dharma Rakshana'* to *'Dharma Nirapekshata'* as the guiding philosophy of constitution and governance.

A profound debate, though delayed, is on

In this background, the ongoing debate about the meaning and content of secularism as practised in this country, which commenced around mid-1980s, is indeed the profoundest development in Indian polity since the achievement of freedom. This debate has brought to the surface the systematically silenced and therefore unexpressed dimensions of the national mind. This unarticulated dimension of Indian nationalism was put into a state of deep freeze by forces that claimed to modernise India and were, therefore, determined to distract and distance the Indian mind from its ancient civilisational moorings. The core issue of the cultural and civilisational identity of India and the Indian people is mixed up in this debate. The concept of secularism as expounded by the experiences of Christendom, which was already inappropriate to Bharat, was further distorted by the vote bank politics of India; and the prevalence of such distorted secularism has in the past successfully prevented this debate. Even now the distorted and distorting polity continues to impede, distort and derail this debate. But though the debate about the essential civilisational moorings of India may seem unstructured, unfocussed, listless and even not-so-honest, yet it is extremely important that the debate has begun, that the subject is no more in the state of deep freeze, the state in which it had remained for decades after we became free. This debate is de-freezing the Indian mind and releasing it from the masks that have prevented the people of India from looking at and within their self. So though not as sharp and as focussed as one would like the debate to be, and as the subject deserves, yet the debate about what is our national identity and what constitutes secularism in the Indian context has erupted in the open and perhaps can never be capped again.

Let us look at how did this debate, which is even now regarded by those who oppose it as politically incorrect and not in the national interest, evolve.

'Being free' does not amount to 'being independent'

As a further background to the current debate a short reference to the freedom movement and how free India's political landscape evolved unevenly becomes necessary. Such an effort may also explain how the debate was effectively suppressed and delayed and

why even today it is unfocused and defused, and why even today attempts are being made to suppress it by those who had kept it in deep-freeze for decades after we attained freedom. Those who prevented this debate have actually prevented India and its people from realising the very purpose of their attaining freedom, which is to be and become independent, that is, transit from being just free to effectively become independent. To understand this issue further we need some conceptual clarity about what freedom in the political sense meant and how did the leadership of free India interpret the political freedom we attained in 1947.

In his message on August 15, 1947, Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, widely regarded as the 'Sage of Kanchi', counselled the Indian leadership that 'having become free, we must translate that freedom into independence'[S. Sambamurthi Shastri, The Sage of Kanchi Eng. Tr by P.G. Sundarrajan, Kanchipuram, 1991, p.143-44]. What the sage implied was that becoming free and being free would not amount to becoming and being independent. Implicit in his message was that being free was a precondition to becoming independent and it did not in itself mean being independent. But unfortunately, free India's leadership failed to distinguish between becoming free and being independent and concluded, wrongly, that being free amounted to being independent.

Why did we lose freedom?

This leads us to the question why this ancient nation with all its virtues and valour lost its freedom. Some think that it lacked unity, particularly political unity, and that led to loss of freedom and consequent dominance by foreigners. This is only partly true. The main reason why Indian States of the middle ages failed to prevent foreign incursions into India was that in philosophic and religious terms India and the Indian people had no enemy and therefore India had no concept of an alien enemy who was any worse then the indigenous one. India could understand enmity as part of human life, but it could never conceive of an external enemy in terms of faith. The Indian mind could never conceive or perceive that there could be religions that believed in destroying other religions as part of their creed. In this country the ruling ethics of state craft, the

Rajdharma, went as far as to insist that the victorious king in a war should first worship in the temple where the defeated king used to worship, regardless of whether he believed in that worship or not [See for instance Manusmriti VII. 201-203]. These ethical rules also compelled the victorious king not to appoint his nominee to rule the defeated state, but offer the rule back to the defeated king or choose the one who would preserve the 'Desachara' the beliefs and lifestyle of the people of the defeated territory. The wars in the ancient Indian tradition were only between kings and never interfered with the faith or lives of the people. The king could not effect changes in the *'Desachara'* and had in fact an affirmative duty to protect it. This was how the native Indian kings viewed the defeated foreign invaders and treated them.

This was not a mythological model, as the modern Indian scholarship may tend to claim in order to dismiss it, but a historic one; belief in the so called mythology guided and even now continues to guide the conduct of Indians. Prithviraj Chauhan applied this ethical model and treated Mohammed Ghori every time he was defeated in the way a defeated local king would be treated in the Indian tradition. This he did because he would not even conceive of and therefore did not know that when it came to his turn, Ghori would not treat him the same; Ghori's ethical rules were defined by his belief system, which compelled him to eliminate, not excuse, his adversaries. In fact, for Ghori, his adversaries were not just his personal or political adversaries, but adversaries of his faith and God. Even Jayachand would not have realised in the beginning that he was collaborating with a belief system that had as its core the destruction of other belief systems; Jayachand would only have thought of his alliance as a political pact with another king to defeat Prithviraj Chauhan. Compare how Prithviraj Chauhan handled Ghori with how Chhatrapati Shivaji handled Afsal Khan. A complete contrast emerges. Shivaji knew that the rules that Afsal Khan followed were not the rules that Shivaji was, by tradition, accustomed to. So he had to apply different, and alien, rules to handle him. Had Shivaji followed the rules that Prithviraj Chauhan followed in dealing with his enemies, he would never have emerged victorious. Shivaji followed what Tsun Tsu has prescribed in his 'Art of War'. In that perspective wars were not based on the rules

of Dharma as in India, but on deception. This contrast demonstrates the initial ignorance of the Indian civilisation about the nature of an enemy that is driven by faith and the rules by which he would operate. So a lack of knowledge and understanding that exclusive faiths were driven by models of invasion that had nothing to do with the accepted ethical models of statecraft in ancient India was the singular reason why the Hindu kings never united to fight the invasion. They thought that the invading king was like any other invading king amongst them. This is partly because the kings or the state in ancient India were bound to protect the faith of the people, whether it was in consonance with the personal faith of the king or not.

It was never uncommon that the native king would belong to a particular faith and his own queen-wife would belong to another faith. No Indian king ever declared a state faith, except Emperor Ashoka. In fact, even in that singular Indian state that had a declared state religion, the Magadh Empire, Emperor Ashoka explicitly declared that the Empire would protect all religious beliefs and models of worship. This kind of polity being the universal model in India, the Indian kings were not sensitised to a model where the State would compel the people to follow the faith of the king. So the ancient model of Indian State had only one approach to faith, that the faith of the people, whatever the faith, should be respected and protected. This would have been impossible for the king to do, had the different faiths prevalent in India at different times not respected one another as part of their theological belief systems. In practice too the different faiths in India would and did respect one another. India never knew, and could never conceive, of a faith which did not respect or accept other faiths. So the Indian mind and, therefore, the Indian statecraft was modelled on the Indian understanding and experience of what one faith meant to another.

With faith-neutral polity as our core gene, we could never realise that faith-driven polity could enslave the people and destroy cultures. Consequently, we could not realise the high-potency violent power that the State in a faith-driven geo-polity wielded over the people belonging to the faith, and through this faith on the dominated people. Initially confused between the faith-neutral indigenous polity and the faith-driven external one, the people of

India could not even understand that when the faith-driven polity substituted for the faith-neutral indigenous rule by invasion, that was not a mere change of governance, but something far more comprehensive. So when the foreign forces came to India, the Indian mind merely perceived them through its own localised experience and could not decipher its militant and aggressive character which had as its core the elimination of all faiths other than its own and which wielded the State as an instrument to accomplish this sacred task.

Thus this lack of trans-Hindu experience and lack of understanding that there could be beliefs which believed in the destruction of other faiths was the main reason why we lost political and therefore religious freedom. The character of Indian State was based on the concept of Dharma which is religion-neutral and respected all faiths. This was freedom in the truest sense. This is what ancient Indian statecraft ensured. This is what we lost, and this is what we had to fight to get back. We lost our freedom because we could not conceive of faith driven geo-politics and statecraft dominating the affairs of the State and, through the State mechanism, the lives of the people. This is what led to military defeat and political domination. But still because of our disposition, we likened our defeat in the hands of the foreigners to getting defeated at the hands of indigenous forces. This is how we lost our freedom.

Why did we fail to regain our independence despite regaining our freedom?

Thus we lost our independence for reasons other than politics and statecraft. It is true that a faith which accepted all other faiths as valid was at a disadvantage when compared to faiths which denied validity to other faiths and even denied them the right to exist. This is particularly so when such aggressive and doctrinally intolerant faiths were driving geo-politics and national politics as part of their geo-political programme. So we lost our freedom because of our inability to understand the true character and nature of the faith-driven geo-political forces. This came first in the form of Islamic invasion. Then it came in the form of colonisation. It was not during the Islamic domination of India that we lost our

independence. Under Islamic rule we of course lost our freedom, but to a large extent we retained our independence. We, steadfastly upheld the legitimacy of our faiths, ideas and institutions and stood against the Islamic rule denying it any legitimacy. Islamic rule or institutions could never acquire legitimacy in India either during the Mughal rule or at any time thereafter. The aggressive and exclusive thrust of Islam and the passive inclusiveness of Hindutva could never twine or meet. This is despite the efforts of Akbar to synthesise the Islamic faith with the national faith and ethos of India. So Islam and the national faiths could never engage or interface. Despite centuries of being in the neighbourhood of Hindus, Islam could never come to terms with Hindu faith, nor could Hindus could come to terms with Islam. Either they ignored each other at the minimum, or disliked each other at the maximum at the individual level. This has marked the relation between Hinduism and Islam from then till now. But the mutual disengagement, which might even be regarded as mutual hostility, did not weaken the mind of India, but actually helped to preserve the independence of the Indian mind and the legitimacy of the Hindu intellectualism despite the loss of freedom. So when Islam ruled India and even though its rule was aggressive, violent and bloody, the national faiths still retained their independence and legitimacy. So here was a strange case of a dominated people still retaining their legitimacy and independence, not validating the rule of 'Mlecha' over them. Thus despite the loss of freedom, the people had retained independence. The Mughal/Muslim rule, however violent it was, could never achieve domination over the mind of India. The Indian society and even the Indian economy remained strong.

When the Islamic domination over the body politic of India ended and the British began conquering India, the Indian economy was the second largest in the world, with only China being ahead of India. China's share of global production then was 26% and its share of global trade was 25%, while India's share of global production was 25% and that of global trade was 24% [For trade figures see: International Industrialisation levels 1750 to 1980 by P Bairoch Journal of European Economic History 11, 269-334, 1982 & for India's share of GDP see Angus Maddison, World Economy:

Millennial Perspective OECD Paris, 2001. p.263]. This was after centuries of loss of freedom! At that time the share of Britain in Global production was less than a sixth of India's, and the US was not even recognised for statistical purposes. So during the Mughal period only the body and polity of India had weakened. It was only with the advent and deepening of the British rule in India that, at least partially, the mind of India yielded to domination by the colonial power. Thus, despite centuries of Islamic rule, the mind of India remained unconquered; Islam could claim only the bodily conquest of India. Only the British rule could and did break the confidence of India and the pride of Indians about India because it co-opted the native more successfully than did the Islamic rule. What Islam could not achieve by confronting the Hindus, the British achieved by co-opting them. The British model of co-option confused many Indians into believing that the British rule might be good for us. It was also seen as a relief from the oppressive Islamic rule. At different stages of the British period many of our own were confused as to whether the British were our enemies or friends. Even after the British left India many elite Indians continued to hold the British as the unifiers of India and shapers of modern India.

The rationalisation and formalisation of the 'indifferent' and 'hostile' attitude of Modern India to Ancient India

This confusion delayed even the movement for freedom; the congress movement itself could formally decide on complete freedom from the British as the goal of Indian freedom struggle only in the year 1930. From then on, the freedom movement was not so much a fight for political freedom as it was a battle for total independence – total independence from not just foreign rule but also ideas and institutions that are foreign to India and therefore not suited to the Indian genius. But, gradually yet effectively the foreign rule, particularly the British rule, had colonised a segment, an influential segment, of the Indian mind. So the first thing that free India's leadership should have done was to decolonise the Indian mind fully. But ironically it thought of and brought about no changes which would decolonise the mind of India and Indians. In fact it moved forward as if there was no colonial effect on India. As a result it looked as if as a nation we had accepted colonial

rule as some kind of a blessing in disguise. We were persuaded to accept that colonialism was an inevitable part of the modernising process of an ancient nation and its peoples. This was how Karl Marx had perceived the destructive colonial rule as an inevitable necessity to modernise India, even though the destruction itself was painful [India's First War of Independence, by K. Marx and F. Angels, Moscow 1959 pp.13.18] and for the Indian Left what Marx said is like Bible and Koran, not to be deviated from.

So when after achieving freedom we began to shape the polity and the State of free India, we did nothing except to continue from where the British had left us; with minor cosmetic changes, we simply repackaged the very spirit and module of the alien rulers as the polity of free India. The indigenous rulers presented India to Indians in the way the British themselves had perceived India and wanted to shape it under their rule. It superficially and symbolically emphasised the fact of becoming free through ritual acts like renaming the Viceroy as 'Rashtrapati' (President) and the Vice-regal Mansion as the Rashtrapati Bhavan, and covering up the Government of India Act of 1935 in the new garb of the 'Constitution of *Bharat*'. Other than these ritual and cosmetic acts, the indigenous dispensation did nothing to help the people of India recall and re-assert their civilisational, spiritual or cultural moorings, or reconstruct their polity in a manner appropriate to and consistent with a living civilisation of five millennia. Instead we dated the un-dateable India as a new country born on August 15, 1947.

So our freedom got marked more as continuity of the British colonial rule than as a change from the colonial regime towards a reassertion of the Indian ethos and civilisational personality. Not just in substance, even in form, there was no change, and in fact there was to be no change. Take for instance the ICS system which the Congress movement had vowed to destroy on achieving freedom. But instead of being eliminated as the head of the administration, the ICS became the core and even the master of the indigenous governance of free India. Only nomenclature was changed; the ICS became the IAS and IFS, which merely amounted to the word 'Imperial' being substituted by 'Indian'; there was no change in the character of the civil service or its attitude to India and the

Indian people.

Consequently, most of what the British had conceptualised and institutionalised during the colonial regime not only continued uninterrupted, but also came to be regarded as inevitable and even sacred. Even while framing the Constitution for free India the framers looked at every corner of the world except India for structuring and shaping the future Indian polity. The documents laid before the Constituent Assembly clearly indicated that there was no Indian tradition at work in the making of the constitution of India. When many members of the Constituent Assembly of India were deeply hurt that the constitution did not even allude to the ancient panchayat model of governance, their concern was consigned to the unenforceable Directive Principles of State Policy in the constitution. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the drafting committee, clearly stated the philosophy that informed constitution-making in the context of the demand for ancient Indian Panchayat model thus:

"…Another criticism against the draft constitution is that no part of it represents the ancient polity of *Bharat.* It is said that the new constitution should have been drafted on the ancient Hindu model of a state and instead of incorporating western theories the new constitution should have been raised upon village panchayats and district panchayats… … I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India. I am, therefore, surprised that those who condemn provincialism and parochialism should have come forward as champions of this cause. What is a village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism? I am glad that the draft constitution has discarded the village and adopted the individual as its unit." [Panchayati Raj as the basis for Indian Polity by Dharampal: An Exploration into the Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly 1962. pp.24-26]

This clearly demonstrates the thinking and the philosophy that informed the Constitution of India in its making and as it was ultimately made and delivered to the people of India for adherence. No further evidence needs to be cited to establish the bias against all that Gandhiji stood for.

The underlying conviction of free India's leaders was that

there was nothing worthwhile to be seen within or to be learnt from ancient India in the shaping of future India, and in fact ancient India was a burden on future, modern India. In their eyes, there was no worthwhile contribution ancient India could make to the world and so modern India could only be the donee of what the world, more correctly, the West had to give and what the West alone was qualified to give. Philosophically, they blindly adopted the western notions of State based on social contract theory to philosophise and found the Indian state. They never realised that the idea and evolution of the State in the West was a product of intense and bitter struggles that caused and accentuated continuous wars and revolutions within the Christian societies. This kept changing their boundaries and states radically during the medieval period within the Catholic Church.

The repeated revolutions then took the form of Catholic and Protestant schism within Christianity, and slowly led to the birth of nation states in struggles between the global church and the local church through the idea of 'raison detat' – meaning 'national interest above the moral Christian state' – and afterwards between the Church and the State through the idea of what is 'secular' and what is sacred within the Christian faith, and finally between the people and the State through the intermediation of democracy. The underlying element in the evolution from the frozen church to the modern democracy was the increasing consciousness of and recognition for atomising individualism. Now, the individualistic orientation has seared even the concept of families and has reduced the human into independent man and independent woman.

Free India's leadership completely overlooked the fact that the Indian life model is based on a rainbow of collectives as the intermediate building blocs between the individual and the distant and remote state mechanism. The concepts of Emile Durkheim, who emphasised a society governed by relations in the main rather than a society based purely on contract [Emile Durkheim Divisions of Labour in Society 1893, reprinted in New York, The Free Press 1984], were nearer to the Indian conditions than Rousseau's. Yet, the Indian polity adopted the British Parliamentary System uncritically without any adaptation, and the British judicial system and its laws without examination, despite the fact that the Indian society

was largely based on relations and functions even today more on relations than on contracts.

After achieving freedom, the Indian polity adopted, without much debate or contemplation, the western notion of 'secular' polity, which was shaped by intra Christian religious developments, in a country which was not shaped by Christian religion or Church. This nation was supremely happy that it had become free after centuries, and believed that freedom itself would solve all problems. But as almost nothing was debated then, whether it was economic policy or intra social relations or inter-religious relations, this too was not debated.

A debate on this frozen element in Indian public life was always inevitable in the mainland India, especially after Partition of the country on religious lines. But, despite the un-bargained and un-provided advent of Islamic Pakistan – a product of bitter religious politics – as a neighbour with hostile intentions and connected to global powers playing international politics on and within the borders of both countries, there was no debate about the suitability of adopting ipso facto the 'secular' notions and institutions which had evolved within Christendom and on the basis of the experiences of the West with Christianity.

And this critical and inevitable debate which should have commenced immediately after India achieving freedom began long after, almost four decades late. During this period, a certain unacceptable and wrong orientation was given to the concept of secularism in practice, and this distorted orientation of secularism had become part of the mainstream politics. This was not a deeply contemplated or debated orientation. It was contrived by political demagogy, which was itself shaped by vote bank politics. So instead of thought moulding votes, it happened the other way round, votes began to mould thoughts. Nevertheless, the Indian constitutional system and institutions that sustained it, be it the Parliament, judiciary or even the media, had to offer their unthinking approbation to this un-thought and un-debated element, because it had got frozen into the Indian polity. This frozen element of Indian polity, this wrong and distorted orientation given to the concept of secularism, which seriously confused and defused beyond

recognition the millennia old Indian identity, and confused the minds of the majority and minorities alike in *Bharat,* was in a state of cold war with the soul of India.

Yet, this un-debated defused and confused 'secular' identity became the central idea of Indian democracy following the achievement of freedom. This happened almost exclusively because of competitive politics slowly yielding a pseudo version of the idea of secularism; in such an atmosphere there could not have been any attempt at redefining and re-modulating the western idea of secularism to make it harmonise with Indian civilisational urges.

But slowly over the years, particularly after Nehru passed away, the personal thoughts of Pandit Nehru had become institutionalised in polity as the 'secular' values without any debate whatsoever. With the result, there was no debate whatsoever in respect of these values. Not many of the peers of Pandit Nehru shared the basic thoughts of Nehru on Indian identity or secularism. Yet Nehru, who outlived all his peers in the freedom movement and also got many big leaders in the Congress Party marginalised, ensured that his thoughts became the thoughts of the Congress and the thoughts of the country itself; he also paved the way for his own family to become the exclusive vehicle for the Congress and for the Congress to become the monopoly power house of the country. This constituted the greatest betrayal, the betrayal of the Mahatma by the Congress.

Never in his discourse did Gandhiji ever utter the word 'secular'. He had spoken about the acceptance of all faiths to be equally valid, which is essentially the Hindu view of life; no other faith, particularly neither Islam nor Christianity, would accept other faiths as valid. In fact, theologically these two faiths invalidate and delegitimise all other faiths, and therefore, do not regard other faiths as being equal to them. Accordingly there is a contradiction between the Hindu view of life and the Christian and Islamic views of life. Gandhian view of equal validity of all faiths was based on the Hindu religious view, which has been held in Indian civilisation for thousands of years.

It needs no proof to say that the Gandhian concept of equal validity of all religions was in accordance with the rule of relation between different faiths and their approach to one another based

in the main on the Hindu faith. This is where Gandhiji emphasised the need for harmony among religions not through the medium of the State, but without the intervention of the State. Gandhi emphasised his idea of harmony and validity of all faiths only from the Hindu perspective. This imposed a counter obligation on not just the followers of other faiths, but on the other faiths themselves, to reciprocate this idea of equal validity and legitimacy of other faiths as a matter of faith, not as a matter of law or as part of state policy. In this perspective, the State itself would be an instrument of Dharma, and would be governed by the principles of Rajadharma, and the rule of *Dharmanirapekshata;* the state devoid of or neutral to Dharma would be alien to the idea of State as part of the idea and institution of Dharma within which all religions were to look upon one another as equally valid. That is different religions would accept and legitimise each other not because the State wants it by policy or law, but by their theological foundation. It means that each faith must respect and hold as valid other faiths as part of the faith itself; it is not sufficient for the followers to agree, in disregard of their faith, to treat other faiths as valid for the time being, despite the demands of their faiths to consider other faiths as satanic or devilish and the followers of such faiths as Kafirs and Heathens.

But unfortunately, this concept of equal legitimacy and validity of all faiths as the core faith was never acceptable to the theological foundations and institutional impulses of the Abrahamic faiths; it is not acceptable even now. So there arose the situation where we had the Abrahamic faiths with their claim to exclusive wisdom and the divine sanction to convert and even destroy other faiths coming in inherent clash with the non-conflicting Hindu view of acceptance of all faiths, which was so forcefully articulated in the modern polity by Mahatma Gandhi. Thus arose the theological incompatibility between the inclusive and non-conflicting Hinduism and the exclusive and conflict prone Abrahamic religions. This necessitated intervention of the State, not its neutrality, to protect the Hindu faiths, which accepted all faiths as valid, from the Abrahamic faiths, which fundamentally denied validity to other faiths, and denied even their right to exist by undertaking organised action against them. In Christendom, where the idea of secularism originated, it evolved as a rule of separation between the Christian State and the

Christian Church. It was not a rule of acceptance of the theological validity of all faiths, including non-Christian faiths. At best the non-Christian faiths could be tolerated as aberrations based on the right of individuals to follow their conscience, that is, secularism of Christendom is a rule of neutrality between Christianity in institutionalised form and individual rights.

Secularism in Christendom merely attempted to convert the religious right from being an institutional concept, which it had become through the Church, into an individual right. The idea behind this concept of secularism was that the oppressive Church as an institution might be brought under some control; the idea was not to permit de-Christianisation of Christians. So religion from being a collective affair was turned philosophically in a 'secular' perspective into an individual issue, which was necessary to de-institutionalise Christianity. Thus in Christendom the idea of secularism is an issue between the organised religion and the individual unwilling to submit himself to the organised religion; therefore the State, the Christian State, had to intervene as the arbiter between the two. So under the principle of secularism which evolved within the Christendom the Christian state actually intervened to protect the individual against the institutionalised form of Christianity. So secularism in Christendom was not even a rule of neutrality of the state between the Christian faith and other faiths. It was the rule of the Christian state which granted freedom to an individual to reject institutionalised Christianity.

In Islamic societies, since there was no Church, the idea of secularism could never be understood from the perspective of individual freedom. Since Islam is a global commune, the idea and the consciousness of the individual is minimal. So 'secular' urges to protect the individual are absent in Islamic societies and nations.

But the Abrahamic faiths being sure of their textual inerrancy and theological infallibility and being organised actually pose a threat to Hinduism which accepts all texts including the texts of the Abrahamic faiths, excepting only that part of the Abrahamic faiths which invalidates other faiths. Taking religion as a market, Hinduism which is non-conflicting is also non-competitive, and therefore uncompetitive as compared to the Abrahamic faiths, for

which being in eternal competition with other faiths is in fact part of the faith. In contrast theologically, Hinduism refuses to compete with other faiths. This poses a great threat to the non-conflicting and non-competing Hindu faith from the Abrahamic faiths. So the inherent conflict and threat that the Abrahamic faiths pose to Hinduism actually demands that the State intervene to protect the Hindu faith. So, where Abrahamic faiths are substantial in demography and are demographically growing further, Hinduism actually needs State protection, and State neutrality between a non-conflicting faith and aggressive and proselytising faiths will amount to state backing for the aggressive ones. Not just because it theologically accepts other faiths and they in turn do not, but also because while the Abrahamic faiths are organised to subsume their differences which are implicit in their theological opposition, even enmity, to other faiths, while Hinduism, which never considered other faiths as enemies, never understood the art of organisation for self-preservation or aggressive promotion of itself.

Thus while the state in India should have protected Hinduism from being targeted by the Abrahamic faiths, it actually was instituted to function the other way round, namely, it protected the minorities, which in other words meant, protection of the conflicting Abrahamic faiths and exposing the Hindu faith as a majority faith to head-hunting, head-counting and other forms of danger from the Abrahamic faiths. This unaddressed lacuna in 'secular' constitutionalism began manifesting in Indian polity following the achievement of freedom and began to distort it through the emergence of pseudo-secularist trends. Already secularism as an idea and institution evolved in the Christian West denied protection to Hinduism which was un-protected by an aggressive theology. But pseudo-secularism which evolved in Indian polity post freedom courtesy vote bank politics made it worse. Pseudo-secularism protected and encouraged the conflicting faiths and exposed the non-conflicting Hinduism to the aggressive designs and plans of the conflicting faiths.

The secular State having disowned Hinduism, which is not an organised religion, the Hindu faith, culture and civilisation have been orphaned. The testimony to this may be found in the statement of Samuel Huntington in the preface to his best selling

book 'The Clash of Civilisations', which is regarded as the most strategic thought from the Western perspective, in recent times. Huntington says that he visited and interacted with all major civilisations, 'except Hinduism'! [Samuel P. Huntington the Clash of Civilisations and Remaking of the World Order p.14]. Why 'except Hinduism'? It does not need a seer to find out the reasons. In China, the communist China proudly owns its past and sets up and sustains institutions which will study and project the Chinese and Confucian civilisation. A 'secular' Japan would officially sponsor a Shinto University, and study, promote and present 'Shintoism' to the world. But the socialist and 'secular' India would, as part of its secularity, disown and disinherits itself of Hinduism and anything Hindu in its past. Secularism compelled the Indian State to orphan Hinduism and the 'secular' Indian State would not promote any national or global level Hindu institution to call the attention of a seeker of information and knowledge, like Huntington, about this ancient religion.

While the State denied protection to Hinduism on grounds of secularity, it had also by economic controls and state monopoly prevented private wealth to grow in the hands of the people of India, most of them Hindus, so as to make the Hindu Civilisation entirely dependent on the State. The Hindus were thus deprived of the capacity to build wealth needed to set up charities and foundations by deadly state controls, nationalisation without compensation of private wealth, and exproriatory tax policies; at one time marginal rate of personal Income Tax was 97.5% and of Corporate Tax over 70%, with an additional Wealth Tax of 15% on wealth, besides taxes on gifts and death duties, which were as high as 60%. As all the wealth of the nation came under the control of the State through the socialist policies, it accrued for the benefit of the secularism under the socialist policies. Consequently, there was not a Hindu institution worth the name with which Samuel Huntington could have engaged in a dialogue on Hinduism. Even the Benaras Hindu University, set up to hold aloft the Hindu civilisation is now a secular institution under secular State to promote secularism, unlike the Aligarh Muslim University which is mandated to preserve the minority – read 'Islamic' – character; for this special mandate of the Aligarh Muslim University a special

Act was passed by the Parliament! It is thus and by like approaches that the Hindu civilisation was deprived of a representative intellectual institution to call the attention of a Huntington at the global level or of the Supreme Court in India. Consequently, even to understand and explain Hinduism, a secondary source like the Encyclopaedia of Britannica had to be relied upon and referred to even by the highest authorities of India. This demonstrates how intellectual India has deserted Hinduism, and taken to secular intellectualism, under the sheer pressure of the secular and socialist State, which controlled all funds and wealth. So the State in India had impoverished and orphaned the unorganised Hinduism. Here again the need for a State initiative or the State protection to Hindu Dharma is clearly emphasised. Other faiths being organised faiths and faith based on assemblies and recorded membership or community [Umma] were able to build institutions. Thus while on the one hand socialist India deprived the Hindus of their financial freedom, on the other hand, 'secular' India deprived the Hindus of state protection; Hindus were thus denied the protection and benefaction of the State and were at the same time deprived of the right and the opportunity to generate their own resources to promote Hinduism. On top of it came the unprecedented minority appeasement by the political and State apparatus. Such appeasement went so far as to subsidise the Haj pilgrimage of the Muslims at the cost of hundreds of crores of rupees to the national exchequer. The contrast is obvious and needs examination. The theologically and organisationally unprotected Hinduism which actually needs State protection is left unprotected, and the Abrahamic faiths which are theologically and organisationally protected by the very rules and practices of their faith are further patronised to the detriment of unprotected Hinduism.

While scholars who compiled the Encyclopaedia of Britannica were accurate in their description of Hinduism, the question why 'secular' India could not produce a standard work on Hinduism which could be referred to without being subject to criticism by the seculars is admits of only one answer. That is Hinduism, being not organised, actually needs protection by the State, and as the State protection and support has been denied to it, and as the 'secular' State also became a socialist State, the monopoly over economic

strength exercised by the State also worked to the detriment of Hinduism.

It is in this background we must examine the triggers which caused the tremors in national polity based on pseudo-secularism in the mid-1980s. The famous triggers for the cold-war between 'secular' polity – which is another name for promotion of conflicting Abrahmic faiths and discounting and demeaning the non-conflicting Hindu faith – were two, namely the Shahbano case and the Ayodhya movement. The Shahbano ruling by the Supreme Court on Muslims women's basic guarantees and the infamous response of the 'secular' polity which undid the ruling was the trigger that initiated a debate on secularism. The Ayodhya movement, which evolved as a corrective to the distortions of the 'secular' polity, intensified the debate. The Ayodhya movement, which explosively manifested through the Somnath-Ayodhya *Rath- yatra* in the year 1990, completely changed the political landscape in India and almost totally delegitimised the officially held and promoted concept and meaning of secularism derived from Christendom. As a result, the nation is acquiring, in a calibrated manner, a new orientation to defining the relation between different faiths, and this new orientation is substantially in accordance with the Hindu view. The Ayodhya movement has clearly demonstrated and proved the inapplicability of the idea of secularism evolved in Christendom to this country.

One may be tempted to ask: Why the qualification 'to this country'? Does the meaning and content of secularism vary from country to country? Yes. It does. But unfortunately, even the current debate on secularism does not fully take into account this critical point. That is why the debate that is taking place at present is a truncated and incomplete debate. There is as yet no complete Indian or indigenous perspective to the debate. Thanks to the Anglo-Saxon and Marxian influences and their domination of the Indian intellectual establishment, the indigenous perspective is regarded as backward and mediaeval and un-modern and even anti-modern. Actually even this truncated debate was overdue for nearly four decades after we became free. The debate remained dormant for so long because of two reasons; one of these was

historically inevitable and compelling, the Partition of India. This needs a special mention.

Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan imposed political compulsions on those who opposed Partition to maintain consistency in their position while opposing Partition and the approach to national identity after the Partition. While the advocates of Partition, exclusively Muslims, had claimed the Hindus and Muslims as two nations, those who opposed Partition, almost exclusively Hindus, had to distance themselves from the Hindu ideology and Hindu identity to appear neutral. That the Partition had brought about a totally different situation was not and could not be factored into defining the identity of divided India. While the separatists had clearly defined the identity of Pakistan, all those who opposed Partition merely opposed Partition, and did not define what the undivided India stands for. There was no clear cut intellectual articulation of the identity of free undivided India. While the separatists were clear about what Pakistan meant to them, the unifiers were not clear about what undivided India, without Partition, meant to them. In the process, the unifiers had to take extreme positions to appease the Muslims. Yet, eventually Partition did take place and took place almost inevitably. But the positions to appease the Muslims and prejudicial to Hindus taken to prevent Partition had caught the leadership in a bind. This appeasement soon acquired the name of secularism and that later became the historic burden on free India. Consequently, free India's intellectual and political leadership could not give up the skewed position taken to counter the logic of those who argued for Partition of India on religious grounds into Hindustan and Pakistan. They had to live by it almost as part of the national logic of free India. This was the biggest tragedy of the unsuccessful resistance to Partition. In retrospect it seems that Partition should have been either resisted successfully or else not resisted at all. The theoretical resistance to Partition, not based on convictions, imposed high ideological costs on the polity of free India by imposing a moral dilemma. Thus unfortunately, the position taken by the unifiers in the debate between the separatists, who were exclusive Muslims, and unifiers, who were mostly Hindus, continued to govern

India after Partition and freedom. To make matters worse, left intellectuals and secularists, who actually supported Partition and the creation of Pakistan began substituting for the Hindus after Partition. So there was no scope for debate, and so no debate took place. The Indian leadership was too deeply identified with the logic of preventing Partition to modulate and modify it to the new situation that arose after Partition became a reality. So the debate which should have taken place immediately after we became free, could not take place because of the incapacity of the leadership which opposed Partition to reconsider its logic for opposing the Partition. This moral dilemma permanently afflicted the Indian political and intellectual leadership following freedom.

The different judgements pronounced by the Supreme Court are consistent with the increasing effectiveness of the traditional India in challenging secular India. Secular India had virtually regarded the Sanskrit language as a dead language and had even equated it with Hindu faith exclusively. It had even implicitly conceded that promoting Sanskrit, which is the civilisational, cultural and intellectual treasure trove of India, would amount to promoting Hindu faith and would breach the discipline of secularism. And it would even be regarded as an anti-minority act. In contrast, promotion of Urdu was considered to be part of the affirmative constitutional obligation of the State to the minorities, as part of the celebrated idea of secularism enshrined in the constitution. This perverse political interpretation of secularism also contributed to the rising tide of Hindu civilisational assertion which gathered momentum in the 1980s.

But, even as early as 1976 – before civilisational issues about the meaning and content of secularism and whether the idea of Hinduism or *Hindutva* conflicted with the idea of secularism cropped up in the mid 1980s and turned political forthwith and later became judicial issues in 1990s – a constitution bench of the Supreme Court had occasion to consider the meaning and content of the concept of Hinduism under civil law. The Supreme Court had then approvingly quoted the description of Hinduism from the Encyclopaedia of Britannica to hold that the concept of Hinduism did not connote a religion. This was not in a case relating to any political

or civilisational issue, but in a private case, related to wealth tax, in which there arose the issue of the status of a joint family headed by the son born of wedlock between a Brahmin-Hindu [husband] and a German Christian [wife] family in Hindu law. The issue was whether the family headed by the son born of such wedlock was a Hindu undivided family in civil law so that it might be so regarded for tax purposes. The court held that the son is a Hindu despite the mother being a Christian, and under the civil law the family headed by him is a Hindu undivided family. So the macro idea of what constitutes Hinduism arose in order to determine the micro question of whether a family is a Hindu undivided family or not; and the court decided the question in the affirmative that the concerned family is a Hindu undivided family on the basis of the macro idea of Hinduism. In capturing what constitutes the idea of Hinduism at the macro level and the institution of a Hindu family at the micro level, the Supreme Court referred to the Encyclopaedia of Britannica. [reported in (1976) Supp SCR 478]

There could not be a more apt or acceptable description of Hinduism. Nevertheless, the authority quoted by the Supreme Court to hold that the idea and concept of Hinduism was not an exclusive religious concept but an inclusive cultural and civilisational idea, was not an Indian source, but a foreign geo-Christian source. In fact the Indian elite mind today would find it easier and more legitimate to accept a foreign source certifying what Hinduism is or is not than an Indian source. This is the intrinsic problem with Indian intellectualism. Indian intellectualism would regard the rationale of the Supreme Court more acceptable if it is based on a foreign source than on an Indian one.

This speaks volumes about the bankruptcy of the intellectual work on Hinduism in free India. Because of the perverse political construction of the concept of secularism, the work of any Hindu scholar or saint on Hinduism and the description of Hinduism contained in his work would not be regarded as reliable or acceptable, nor respected as an unbiased view of Hinduism. But the same intellectuals would insist that only a Muslim scholar could be cited on Islam and only a Christian scholar on Christianity. A

criticism of Islamic tenets by a Hindu scholar would be regarded as unacceptable. This logic has led to the political positioning that the reforms if any in Islamic ways in India would have to come by intra-Islamist evolutions, with no interference from others including the secular scholars or secular polity and government.

The settled intellectual position in India is that Hindu scholars or saints cannot be relied on to affirm the truth about Hinduism – be it Ramakrishna Paramhansa, who realised the truth about all religions and confirmed all of them to be true, or Ramana Maharishi, whom many inquiring minds from the West had accepted as a realised soul, or Swami Vivekananda, who asserted the noble concept of universal brotherhood as the core of the Hindu faith and philosophy, or Maharishi Aurobindo, who held Sanatana Dharma as the ultimate truth. Actually if the truth about Hindu religion is to be ascertained, the geo-Christian or the Western and Islamic sources are the least reliable, because both Islam and Christianity believe that theirs is the only true faith and so they cannot be trusted to evaluate Hinduism fairly, even though it accepts all faiths as equally valid unlike the Abrahamic faiths. So the last thing that should be referred to understand what Hinduism means is an Islamic or a Christian source. On the contrary, a Hindu source could be easily cited to understand Islam or Christianity, because Hindu scholars and saints by conviction accept all faiths as valid. But despite this comfortable and congenial intellectual landscape provided by Hinduism, 'secular' India virtually and effectively orphaned the Hindu faith and considered that scholarly approach to Hinduism itself is un-secular. So there was very little of 'secular' intellectual work on Hinduism and its tenets, except abuse and unfair criticism of Hindu faith, concepts, history, culture and civilisation. But thanks to the fact that Encyclopaedia Britannica formed a geo-Christian source, the secularists of India could not question the authenticity of the source. Had the Supreme Court cited from any Indian source, the secularists would have questioned the basis on which Hinduism was construed in such comprehensive and noble terms. Had any Indian source been cited by the judiciary to arrive at a similar conclusion, the secular scholarship would have questioned not just the reliability of the source but the view of the

Supreme Court itself!

This also shows how colonised the secular Indian mind is; it would readily accept a foreign authority on Hinduism but not the noblest indigenous scholars on Hinduism. This shows how endogamous 'secular' intellectualism, particularly fair 'secular' scholarship on the ancient idea of Hinduism, like the one we see in the Encyclopaedia, is almost absent in India. The secular scholarship in India is exogenous, inspired by foreign scholarship, which considers anything ancient about India inferior or secondary to the products of Greek-Roman and Hellenistic civilisations. Since Anglo-Saxon influence dominates the secular Indian scholarship, whether it is of the Right or of the Left, there is no Indian scholarship with an Indian perspective. In fact the entire Indian 'secular' scholarship is almost unanimous that there is nothing Indian about India. India in their view was ever a subject of colonisation: first by the Aryans, next by other nomadic groups, later by Islam, later still by the West; and so the original society in India, if ever there was any such, lost its identity long ago and whatever identity India has today is a non-identity. So in short, there is no traditional or ancient India with which modern India could seek continuity. All that India represents today is the collection of those who invaded India and decided to remain here, and they are the Indians. There is nothing original about India. The original Indians are now in jungles, driven away by a long series of invaders, beginning with the Aryans. So, according to the secular scholarship, it is better not to talk anything about the past of India, which belongs to no one. So the present India is not in continuity with any past; it is a new modern India which is independent of ancient India. Its date of birth is August 15, 1947. It is a young, not an ancient, nation. Its architects are the British. It has no history, which is its own. It is just a geographic construct and not a historic continuity. It is this 'secular' view of India which the civilisational assertion of Hindutva challenged in the late 1980s and 1990s. This challenge and the debate consequent on that challenge impacted on the Supreme Court and its different decisions are the result of the impact of the Hindu civilisational movement on the constitutional understanding of India.

In this judicial assessment of the Hindu civilisational

reassertion on constitutional India, the most important judgement of the Supreme Court is the one on what constitutes Hindutva and whether the idea of Hindutva is consistent with the meaning and content of secularism in the Constitution of India. This judgement was delivered in the year 1996[reported in AIR 1996 SC 1113]. The issue before the Supreme Court in this case was whether Hindutva constituted a religious appeal to the electorate and therefore was forbidden under the election laws. It is explicit from the Supreme Court ruling on *Hindutva* that the idea of secularism, which the Indian Constitution has internalised is basically a Hindu concept, not its Anglo-Saxon cousin in Christendom. The reason is that Hinduism accepts all faiths as valid and, therefore, the concept of secularism in India as has been accepted at the mass level is basically Hindu, not elitist or Anglo-Saxon, in perspective. The other judgements are collateral to this basic approach. This approach was not fully comprehended in the earlier judicial pronouncements. The different judicial rulings bring out the emerging judicial harmonisation of the civilisational assertion of the people of India with the secular constitutionalism of modern India, which is based on the discipline endogamous to Christendom made constitutional by the Anglo-Saxon Christian model and is sold as Western constitutionalism. This rule of harmonisation of the traditional India with the modern India is being promoted and powered by the ordinary people of India, who have protested against the elitist and Left distortions of India.

[*Note: Chapter X is substantially the adoption of the preface written by the author for the book 'Supreme Court on Hindutva', published by the India First Foundation.*]

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Chapter XI

Hinduism, Hindutva and Minority Issues

This topic raises far reaching questions in the field of constitutional law affecting the view that idea of secularism is founded on minority rights in India. The principal issues which need to be addressed and the questions that are least asked – and mostly un-responded and evaded – questions like:

Are minority rights and secularism two sides of the same coin, inseverable and inter-dependent?

Or, are they unconnected, but politically mixed up to mess up national polity?

And, considering the judicially established meaning of Hinduism/*Hindutva* and given the heterogeneous nature of Hindus, are there at all any minorities and majority in India?

And, considering the inclusive and assimilative nature of Hinduism do Hindus at all constitute a majority in India and whether there is any majoritarian political action in India?

And, is the basic constitutional arrangement for Hindu-minority relation not a reflection of the mutual suspicion and mistrust which distorted the Hindu-Muslim relations in the pre-Partition period?

And, is the doctrinal position of a particular faith and its doctrinal tolerance or intolerance towards other faiths not relevant for determining its constitutional relation with the state and with other faiths?

And, whether doctrinal tolerance or intolerance of a faith is not relevant for determining the scale and content of constitutional protection or constitutional restrictions regarding it?

And, is the minority-Hindu relation as devised by the Constitution not as adversarial now as the Hindu-Muslim relation of the pre-Partition period?

And, considering that Hinduism is inclusive and doctrinally tolerant, is not the constitutional protection provided to the minorities threatening to semiticise Hinduism?

And, considering the character of *Hindutva* or Hinduism as expounded by the Supreme Court, does it not offer more empathetic and durable measure of protection of minority faiths than the adversarial constitutional protection to minorities enshrined in the present constitutional model?

And more …

The background: The constitutional and judicial history of the provisions for minorities

The post-Partition Indian Constitution-making efforts seem to have been driven more by idealism than by practical wisdom. In hindsight, it would appear that the issue of relation between Hindus and minorities as structured in the Indian Constitution was not conceived from long-term, nationalist perspective. More critically, the majority-minority relation – read Hindu-Muslim relations – in its original form was evidently conceived and structured to address the psychological dents and deficits in the confidence of the Muslim leadership in the Hindu leadership, which were caused by the distorted, but powerful, message and mission of the separatist Muslim League to the Muslims in general in pre-Partition politics. This constitutional arrangement has been politically administered and expanded in the constitutionally-run political India; but so far it has not been studied, appreciated, critiqued, or handled by the intellectual India from the perspective of national integration, which can be achieved only through assimilation of both the majorities and the minorities into a harmonious whole.

Following Partition, the phrases changed, but the pre-Partition psychology continued and the issue of relationship of the minorities to Hindus came to be interpreted and appreciated from the perspective of misconceived notions of secularism. The original Indian constitutional understanding of secularism was

essentially a transplant from the experience of Christendom and amounted to experimenting with that alien experience in India. Thus, from the start secularism in India has been misconceived and misinterpreted. In Christendom, secularism was the concept of separation of the state and church. But, it must be noted that both the state and the church owed their loyalty to the same religion. Even now the Church of England is headed by the constitutional titular head of Britain, the Crown. In substance secularism is an issue between the state and the religious establishment; it is not an issue between a majority and a minority. In Christendom, secularism was an issue between the state which was essentially Christian and the Christian Church and not between any Christian majority and non-Christian minority.

In contrast, historically all Indian states – save that of Emperor Ashoka, who established the only theocratic state in this soil – have always been religion-neutral. There was never a faith-based state in Indian history other than Ashoka's. Yet, as his edicts show, Emperor Ashoka guaranteed freedom of faiths in a manner unknown to human civilisation then or even later. In India, traditionally the kings could never interfere with the beliefs of the people. Even if there were no Muslim or Christian community in India, an Indian state would have been religion-neutral. Thus, secularism is not and will never be an issue of majority and minority in India here or elsewhere. Yet in India, secularism has been distorted to mean precisely what it is not; it has been made into an issue concerning the relation between Hindus and minorities.

Theoretically, thus, secularism has nothing to do with majority-minority issues; it has nothing to do with the special minority rights devised under the Constitution. Secularism defines the character of the state as a religion-neutral institution. But, unfortunately, in the Indian debate on secularism, the issue of minority rights has been constitutionally confused with and politically linked to the secular character of the Indian state. This is a clear – in some sense even an intended – distortion. This happened essentially because the pre-Partition debate on Hindu-Muslim relation was reborn as debate on secularism after Partition. While, theoretically, secularism, in its truest and genuine sense, is an inseverable and inalienable part of the character of the state as a religion-neutral

institution, the special minority rights – even if these were justified in the beginning and up to some point in time, like reservation for weaker sections – cannot be an eternal element or feature of any constitution. It can only be a transitional, time bound, arrangement, which will obviously need to be calibrated and phased-out when the minority overcomes its perceived and psychological backwardness, becomes self-confident within and gains trust and confidence in the majority and finally integrates with the majority as an equal. The genuine secular character of the state in the sense of the state being neutral to religion and religious issues is the very essence of a representative state. In that sense, special rights for any section of the people is inconsistent with a representative, section-neutral state.

Another issue, which has been deliberately mixed up and confused with the issue of secularism and minority rights, is the issue of minority identity. In fact, constitutional recognition of any separate identity and enforcing that identity diminishes, and is destructive of, the secular foundations of the state. Non-interference in religious matters, which is integral to the secular character of the state, implies protection of the idea of identity. But explicitly promoting – by granting special rights – special identity of any section of the society, be it the majority or the minority, is theoretically injurious to and destructive of the idea of a religion-neutral and sectional-identity-neutral state. A secular democratic state knows only one identity for its people and that is as citizens with equal rights. It knows no other identity. Any other, sectional identity, constitutionally recognised and mandated and made enforceable, is only at the cost of the secular character of the state. At least this is the theoretical position of the religion-neutral secular state.

This distortion in the conception and practice of the theory of minority rights as mixed up and, in fact, messed up with the concept of secularism occurred partly because the majority-minority relation in India has been historically an extension of the colonial and pre-Partition psychology and political process into scheme of the Constitution of India. In pre-Partition India, all issues of faith were essentially Hindu-Muslim issues. The process of framing the Constitution of India could not get over the hangover of the pre-Partition psychology and Partition, nor could the practice

of post-Partition politics do it. The interface between the Hindu faiths and the Islamic faith during the colonial period, being a product of mutual suspicion and distrust promoted in the main by the Muslim League, had become substantially adversarial. The Supreme Court traced the conceptual origin of the minority rights in the Constitution in St Xavier's case [AIR 1974 SC 1389 at 1413]; speaking through Justice H.R. Khanna, the Court said:

"75. Before we deal with the contentions advanced before us and the scope and ambit of Article 30 of the Constitution, it may be pertinent to refer to the historical background. The closing years of British rule were marked by communal riots and dissensions. There was also a feeling of distrust and the demand was made by a section of the Muslims for separate homeland. This ultimately resulted in the Partition of the country. Those, who led the fight for Independence of India always laid great stress on communal amity and accord. They wanted the establishment of a secular State wherein people belonging to different religions should have a feeling of equality and non-discrimination. Demand had also been made by a section of people belonging to various minority groups for reservation of seats and separate electorates. In order to bring about integration and fusion among different sections of population, the framers of the Constitution did away with separate electorates and introduced the system of joint electorates, so that every candidate in an election should have to look for the support of all sections of the citizens. Special safeguards were guaranteed for minorities and were made part of the fundamental rights with a view to instil a sense of confidence and security in the minorities. Those provisions were a kind of a Charter of rights for the minorities so that none might have the feeling that any section of the population consisted of first class citizens and others of second class citizens. The result was that the minorities gave up their claims for reservation of seats. Sardar Patel, who was the Chairman of the Advisory Committee dealing with the question of minorities, said in the course of his speech delivered on February 27, 1947:

"This Committee forms one of the most vital parts of the Constituent Assembly and one of the most difficult tasks that has to be done by it is the work of this Committee. Often you must have heard in various debates in British Parliament that

have been held on this question recently and before when it has been claimed on behalf of the British Government that they have a special responsibility – a special obligation – for protection of the minorities. They claim to have more special interest than we have. It is for us to prove that it is a bogus claim, and that nobody can be more interested than us in India in the protection of our minorities. Our mission is to satisfy every interest and safeguard the interests of all minorities to their satisfaction" (The Framing of the India's Constitution, B. Shiva Rao, Select Documents, Vol. II p.66). It is in this context of that background that we should view the provisions of the Constitution contained in Articles 25 to 30. The object of Articles 25 to 30 was to preserve the rights or religious and linguistic minorities, to place them on a secure pedestal, and withdraw from the vicissitudes of political controversy. ……"

It is evident from the background traced by the Supreme Court that the constitution-making process was taking place under the heavy pressure of Muslim distrust which had led to Partition and the continuation of that psychology in the form of demand for separate electorates; and, that was the reason for the special dispensation provided for the minorities. So, the nationalist leadership was under the pressure of the special circumstances of the time. This is also established by the speech of Sardar Patel, which testifies to the pressure exerted by the British interests; these interests were teasing the country about her capability to provide countries dividing larger India between them on whether they were capable of minority-protection like the British did and in the process they were dividing the people of India between themselves. In this context, no one seemed to have asked the most obvious question as to what the British did to protect the Hindu minorities in Pakistan, who were about 20% of the total population of West Pakistan before Partition and was under mass exodus to India – actually it's now form less than 2%! So, without a long term perspective and caught in the pressure of the situation, the nationalist leadership of India devised a constitutional scheme for minorities, which later caused, thanks to judicial interventions and innovations, a reverse discrimination against the Hindus. This precisely caused in the reverse what, according to Justice Khanna quoted above, the constitution-makers wanted to avoid, namely

the feeling that any section of the population consisted of first class citizens and the other of second class citizens. Now, considering that the majority communities are the victims of the special rights granted in favour of the minorities, the majority indeed feels that it is constituted of second class citizens. This is evident from the fact that many communities that are part of the majority are trying to shed their majority identity and search for minority identity. This is a clear indication of where the advantage of first class citizenship lies in the Indian polity of today.

Again the charge of the British mal-intervention between the Hindus and Muslims as the reason for the mutual suspicion and distrust would have been valid for defining and deciphering pre-Partition political games in which the Indian nationalists lost out to the Islamist leaders and had to accept Partition. But even after Partition, considering the quality and character of the constitutionally devised interface between the Hindus and Muslims – which was mirrored into the relation between the Hindus and the minorities in general – the same mutual suspicion and distrust seemed to have laid the foundation of the constitutional relation between the Hindus and the minorities, read the Muslims in the main. In fact the general relation between the Hindus and minorities has been structured on the model of the Hindu-Muslim relations of the pre-Partition times. Thus, the constitutionally devised scheme seemed to extend the suspicion and distrust which dogged the Hindu-Muslim relation, even to the relationship of the Hindus with other minorities.

Given the forces and philosophy that drove the Partition of the country, the people of India would have rightly expected that the post-Partition India give go-bye to the distortions of the pre-Partition days. But, this is precisely what did not happen and following Partition, both the Constitution-making process and constitutional functioning in India continued to nurture the psychology of mutual suspicion and distrust, which distorted the Hindu-Muslim relation in the pre-Partition India, as the basis for the constitutional relation between the Hindus and the Minorities. The mutual suspicion and distrust distorted the political relation between the Hindus and Muslims in particular.

So even though post-Partition India claims to detest and depart

from the distortions of pre-Partition Indian polity, in substance, and even in form, it has internalised, in the Constitution of India, substantially the same distortions arising out of mutual suspicion and distrust that stymied the national polity in pre-Partition India.

With the result, the constitutionally devised relation between the Hindus and the minorities has been reduced to an adversarial relation between the two faiths and communities. The constitutional scheme allows very little play of trust in the majority Hindus by the minorities. So the majority Hindus, instead of allaying the fears of Muslims and promoting confidence in them, opted for the easy way out and went out of the way to please and co-opt the minorities – read Muslims – by offering them special rights. Thus, in retrospect, the pre-Partition suspicion and distrust between the Muslims and the Hindus seems to emerge as the un-spelt reason for the extraordinary constitutional provisions, particularly Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution. Thus, the working of the constitutional relation between the Hindu majority and the minorities has gradually yielded adversarial relation between the two in politics and in the public domain. In this adversarial positioning, the Hindu majority seems to be at the receiving end. Having conceded rights to the minorities which the majority does not have under the Constitution, it is faced with the spectre of various Hindu communities renouncing their Hindu adherence to claim minority status. There is an exodus from the Hindu fold to the special safety net which the Constitution has created for the minorities. Thus, the constitutional provisions that have unbalanced the relation between the Hindus and the minorities have gradually turned the unbalanced relation into an adversarial relation. Such is the result of the pre-Partition distortions of mutual suspicion and distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims becoming the principal drive of the constitutionally-devised relation between the Hindus and minorities.

On top of it, the intellectual India, which largely characterises itself as the secular India, began to articulate all distortions of the pre-Partition days as virtues of secular polity. Everything in the Muslim League politics that was detested in the pre-Partition India as divisive and disruptive came to be accepted, and even adored as legitimate part of minority politics, in post-Partition India.

The majority-minority relation became central to this distortion. This distortion promoted and perverted intellectualism, even as protests rooted in nationalist thinking mounted against it. All that the separatists in the pre-Partition days said and did to rationalise the Partition became the logic and the agenda of secular India to delegitimise the nationalist protest. The fundamental reason for this is the continuance of the psychology of Partition that has been written into our Constitution in the form of perverted notion of majority-minority relation; this perversion has been even further deepened in the actualisation of the constitutional provisions in the politics and even in judicial pronouncements.

The issue of minority rights, particularly the special rights provided to minorities under Articles 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution, has been often a subject of intense debate in public domain.

The relevant part of Article 29 of the Constitution, which grants special right to the minorities states that 'any section of the citizens resident in the territory of India or any part thereof having distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same'. Even though the main Article does not limit it to the minorities, the head note of the Article, which reads 'Protection of interests of minorities', has the effect of limiting it to the minorities. It is not clear even now whether the rights under Article 29 are available to non-minorities also.

The relevant part of Art 30 states, "All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."

The rights granted under Articles 29 and 30 are undeniably rights available only to the minorities, not to the majority communities, even though the Constitution is not a Hindu-majoritarian, but a secular, Constitution. This places the Hindu communities at a disadvantage vis-à-vis not just the minority, but the secular state itself.

At one point the Central Government did give an assurance to the judiciary that the majority community would not be placed at a disadvantage. But that assurance remained on paper; no step has been taken to implement it. With the result, the Constitution of India,

which is non-majoritarian and secular, has become minoritarian in character. More importantly, the minoritarian character of the Constitution has been perversely interpreted to mean the secular character itself!

The imbalance in the original constitutional scheme for structuring the relation between the majority and the minorities was accentuated and even deepened by a series of judicial decisions expanding the scope of minority rights under Art 30 and by de-linking the cultural rights under Art 29 from the educational rights under Art 30 of the Constitution. Art 29 of the Constitution granted to all sections of citizens of India having a distinct language, script or culture of their own the right to preserve the same. Art 30 of the Constitution granted to all minorities, whether based on language or religion, the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. One view was that the educational rights of minorities under Art 30 were intended to facilitate the exercise of the right to preserve their language, script or culture granted under Art 29; and, the other view was that since the rights under Art 30 are qualified by the word 'educational institutions of their choice', the rights under Art 30 cannot be limited to the rights granted under Art 29. In the Presidential Reference on the Kerala Education Bill, the Supreme Court took the view that the educational rights under Art 30 are independent of the cultural rights under Art 29. The only dissent to this view – which appears to be more correct view now considering the repeated need to scrutinise the scope of constitutional rights of minorities – was by Justice T.L. Venkatarama Aiyar, who said that such a view would place the minority in a more favoured position than the majority communities. The majority opinion expressed by the Supreme Court in the Reference on Kerala Educational Bill and the subsequent decisions of the judiciary expanding the scope of the rights of the minorities under Art 30 heightened the imbalance between the majority and the minorities in the constitutional scheme. The dissenting views of Justice Venkatarama Aiyar, which judicial philosophy would regard as the brooding appeal to the judicial conscience in future, have actually proved to be a brooding appeal to the judicial conscience of India. The appeal of Justice Venkatarama Aiyar seems to have had its impact in some of the recent decisions

of the Supreme Court; these decisions seem to be concerned at the licentious rights given to minorities under the Constitution, which has created an imbalance in the majority-minority relations. This is explicitly manifest in the most recent pronouncement of the Supreme Court.

A survey of the judicial decisions on minority rights indicates that more than the secular governments of the day it is the judiciary which has tended to expand the scope of the minority rights and make it more expansive than what the constitution-makers could have intended. When the government had pleaded that the provisions of Art 30(1) should be limited by the scope of the cultural rights specified in Art 29, as otherwise the minorities will enjoy more rights than the majority community, the judiciary held that the minority rights under Art 30 (1) should not be limited by the scope of Art 29 and that Art 30 stands independent of Art 29. Again, whenever the governments had pleaded before the judiciary that the normal powers which the government exercise in respect of the educational institutional belonging to all should be allowed to be exercised in respect of minority institutions also, the judiciary had almost held that no action of the government should have the effect of denying aid to such minority institutions to ensure compliance with any of the regulations made by the government. Such denial of aid, the Courts seem to have held, would mean abrogation of the rights under Art 30. Thus more than the executive, it is the judiciary which has expanded the scope and content of the minority rights under Art 30 (1) of the Constitution.

Later, a rethinking began to develop in judicial circles. In his Tagore Law Lectures on Indian Parliament and Fundamental Rights, Dr Gajendragadkar, a highly reputed Chief Justice of India expressed the view that:

"The right to establish and administer educational institutions which is guaranteed by Art 30 is in substance a right to safeguard the language, script and culture of the minority concerned. It is conceivable that a linguistic or religious minority may start educational institution of its choice solely or mainly with the object of preserving its own language, script and culture." [p.54-57]

This view was unfortunately rejected by the Supreme Court in St Xavier's case [AIR 1974 SC 1389]. This is despite the fact that

in St Xavier's case itself, two of the judges, Chief Justice A.N. Ray and Justice Palekar, had said – in fact had implicitly warned – that

"If the rights under Art 29 and 30 are the same then the consequence will be that any section of the citizens, not necessarily linguistic or religious minorities, will have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The scope of Art 30 rests on linguistic or religious minorities and no other section of the citizens of India has such a right."

This is a clear judicial admission – and in fact a judicial warning to the law-makers – that the special rights of the minorities are special only to the minority and the majority does not have that right. H.M. Seervai, a great constitutional jurist, in his monumental work on the 'Constitutional Law of India', dismissed Dr Gajendragadkar's view saying that

"…it is unnecessary to consider Dr Gajendragadkar's views in detail, beyond saying that, first, that they do not proceed on an analysis of the terms of Art 29 and 30, but on what he believed to be the intention of the framers of the Constitution which he then read into Art 29 and 30, a procedure which is contrary to the settled principles of construction." [Constitutional Law of India H.M Seervai 3Ed. Vol. I p. 963].

Later in 1972, in his Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture on the Philosophy of National Integration under Chapter 6 entitled, 'The Role of Universities in National Integration', Dr Gajendragadkar reverted to the subject of special minority rights and said:

"I am, however anxious that the problem should not be politicalised, but should be considered in the context of academic considerations without inducing political overtones. May I earnestly suggest that the University Grants Commission and the State Education Ministers should, with the co-operation of Vice-Chancellors and the I.U.B. evolve a healthy consensus after a frank and full discussion of the pros and cons of the problem; failing that, the said authorities may consider whether it would be appropriate and advisable to move the Supreme Court to reconsider its decisions, or to move the Parliament for a suitable amendment of Art 30 (1) which may save the present supervisory and regulatory jurisdiction of all the Universities in respect of the colleges affiliated to them."

Neither the intention of the framers of the Constitution that

they did not intend to grant such special right was considered valid for interpreting the two articles in a combined form, nor the creation of a highly adversarial majority-minority relationship as a result of reading the two articles separately, seems to have had an impact on the judicial interpretation of the two articles. The net result of the situation is that the majority-minorities relation structured in the two articles is weighed heavily against the majority communities. The manner in which H.M. Seervai concluded the discussion in his treatise –

"… where special rights are conferred on minorities alone, it is obvious that the minorities and majorities are treated differently and a plea for uniformity between the minorities and the majority contradicts the very concept of special minority rights." [Ibid p.964]

It is a poetic articulation of the distortion and the consequent imbalance in the minorities-Hindus relation in the Constitution. This also showed the extent to which the elite intellectual opinion was and continues to be divorced from the popular opinion as we shall see later.

The unbalanced minority rights under the Constitution have been repeatedly subject to review by the judiciary not only as to its meaning and scope, but more importantly to determine who, which community, is eligible to be regarded as a minority under the Constitution. The latter issue, namely who constitutes a minority community, which has been unceasingly disturbing the judiciary, holds the key to assess the very character, quality and credibility of the constitutional grant of special rights to the minorities. Claims by communities and sects that have been historically and culturally and even religiously part of the Hindu society – like first the Buddhists, then Arya Samaj, then Swaminarayan Sect, then Ramakrishna Mission and, most recently, the Jains – should have opened the eyes of the nation to the disastrous implications of the form and the content of the scheme of the minority-majority relations enshrined in the Constitution. But, perhaps by the time the nation realised these sad consequences of this un-thought introduction of special rights for minorities in the Constitution, the national polity had lost its vitality and the nationalist orientation necessary to correct such distortions. On the contrary, the national

polity seemed to have even begun relishing the perverted fruits of these distortions, which became the fodder for converting the minorities into committed blocks of votes for interested political parties, including the apparently nationalist parties.

The claims to minority-status by sects and communities integral to the Hindu faith and culture kept reminding and demonstrating to the nation the disadvantage suffered under the constitutional dispensation by various communities/sects merely for being part of the majority in the country. The decision of these communities and sects – including the Ramakrishna Mission, which was founded by Swami Vivekananda for Hindu renaissance and whose message is generally regarded as the philosophic inspiration for Indian nationalism and the movement for the freedom of India – to declare themselves as non-Hindus and claim minority rights, while it must have been a great emotional and spiritual strain and a great intellectual compromise for them, actually exposed the fundamental distortion in the very concept of minorities in the Constitution and the protective rights attached to the minorities in India. The rights, particularly the special rights attached to minorities – which are not available to the majority in the Constitution – have been the greatest motivation for these communities, which were always reckoned and regarded as integral to the Hindu society, to desert the Hindu identity to become eligible for minority rights. This is besides and in addition to the political clout which the block-voting minorities wield in the democratic polity of India. The majority votes in the polity, on the other hand, are split among the different sub-organic segments of the loose Hindu society and consequently erode the capacity of the Hindu society to resort to a majoritarian exercise of franchise, in apprehension of which the Constitution had provided for the special minority rights.

Thus, the distortion in the constitutional philosophy and scheme of minority rights and the terms on which the Constitution grants the minority rights are evident in the fact that different segments of the Hindu society admittedly consider it a burden to be part of the Hindu society, even though the Hindus are considered as the majority community which had, at the time of framing the Constitution, granted those rights for the minorities through the inalienable provisions in the Constitution. Undeniably, it is a

constitutional burden to bear the majority identity in India. This extraordinary situation where the majority feels disadvantaged in the constitutional scheme of balancing between the majority and minority needs careful and detached analysis.

What is the philosophy behind the grant of minority rights in constitutional framework? The very concept of constitutional grant of minority rights is based on the need to balance the political power of majority in a democracy by a special dispensation for the minorities which is not subject to manipulation by majoritarian exercise of political power. It is a demonstration of goodwill in the constitutional sense by the majority which takes the shape of constitutional guarantee by the majority for the minority so that the minority does not face any disadvantage merely because it is a minority. In short, it is an assurance by the majority that it would not set up its majoritarian power over or against the minority. This assurance is constitutionally accepted by the majority by surrendering its power as a majority to abridge the rights of the minorities and disentitling itself by making the constitutional guarantee un-amendable. A Constitution being thus theoretically the work of the majority in a democracy, the power of the majority inheres in the very philosophy and structure of democracy. The grant to the minorities is by the majority to offset that power so that the minority does not suffer any disadvantage as a minority.

A constitutional scheme that forces the communities and sects which have been the constituents of the majority to give up the majority identity and embrace the minority identity is unheard of in the constitutional history of any democracy. Such a constitutional scheme cannot be either fair or durable. So, there is something fundamentally wrong with the scheme laid in the Constitution of India to arbiter the relation of the majority and the minorities in India. The disadvantage suffered by the constituents of the majority in India is obvious and is not a theoretical issue as the flight of important segments of the majority from the majority identity is real.

The tendency of the sections of the Hindu society – which constituted a residual majority or a benevolent majority without inherent or induced tendency to act as majority – to desert the

Hindu society also resulted in weakening the backbone of Indian nationalism. Because of the linguistic awareness generated by the states re-organisation process and the concept of linguistic minority and the privileges attached to the linguistic groups, already the bonds of the Hindu society and its capacity to think and act politically had been weakened, particularly in the 1950s and 1970s. Even now the remnants of such weakening forces show their potentiality in the quarrels between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra and Karnataka on political or border issues. With the bonds of the benevolent Hindu majority, which could unify the nation because of its larger geo-cultural character, breaking down, partly because of the constitutional scheme and partly because of the minority-centric polity, there was a justifiable reaction by the Hindu leadership to correct the distortion by induced political action. Triggered again by minority centric-political compromise on the Shahbano issue in the early-mid 1980s, the Ayodhya movement rose in response like a tidal wave to unify the disparate Hindu-centric nationalist forces in a manner unknown in history. This correction process which had set in motion an alternative point of view got weakened midway by the premature ascension of the BJP to power with the help of political forces which could not raise themselves above the politics of minority appeasement. So, the paradigm-shift that the Ayodhya movement promised did not take place. Thus, the political correction of the constitutional distortions which began in the late 1980s, which could also have led to putting the country's polity back on rails, was at least partially aborted in the late 1990s. But the processes which the momentous political developments of the 1980s triggered have certainly made the awakening irreversible. This awakening which had spilled beyond the political confines of the Ayodhya movement has also touched upon the intellectual domain of the nation. But, it could not and did not penetrate deep into the national intellectual consciousness which had been weakened by decades of indoctrination on flimsy and unsustainable philosophy of majority and minority relations that has also been drafted into the Constitution.

The provisions of Art 29 and 30 constitute an unprecedented innovation and distortion in the Indian Constitution. They grant

not religious or cultural rights to the minorities, but secular rights. What should have been the universal rights of the people of India, subject to safeguards applicable to the rights under Art 25 and 26 of the Constitution, had been reduced to sectional rights of the minority. The cost of this distortion is immeasurable and it continues to impose heavy costs on the nation. How does the Constitution of India compare with other constitutions of the world in this respect?

A look at the Silver Jubilee Edition of 'Basu's commentary on the Constitution of India' [Volume D pages 257-273] will bring out that in no other constitution of the world – including in the constitution of what is acclaimed the freest democracy in the world, the USA – is there any provision that bears similarity to Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India. In fact, the principles of constitutional law laid down by the US Supreme Court, far from granting any special rights to any section of the US citizens, grants intrusive rights to the state to regulate the educational institutions of all denominations, including the majority Whites and the minority Blacks and others. This is totally contrary to the fundamental principles of Art 29 and 30 and particularly Art 30.

The US Supreme Court, while upholding the 'Due Process' principle which is the core of the US Constitution, has held that:

"While the state possesses **the unquestionable power** to regulate **all** schools, to inspect, supervise, and examine them, their teachers and pupils; to require that all children of proper age attend some school, that the teachers shall be of good character and patriotic disposition, that certain studies plainly essential to citizenship shall be taught, and that nothing shall be taught which is inimical to the public welfare – the child was 'not the mere creature of the state' and that the state had 'no general power to standardise its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only."

Actually, this denies all citizens of an unqualified right to provide education of the type they want to. It means that the US Constitution denies to its citizens, to use the language of the Indian Constitution, 'the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice'. In fact, there is no special right granted to any section of the citizens of US, in spite of the fact that the Blacks constitute one of the worst discriminated minorities, that

too a racial minority subjected to apartheid. That means that the Blacks in the US cannot claim any right to establish schools of their own choice and teach what they want to teach any more than the Whites could do, without both of them subjecting themselves to the unquestionable power of the state to discipline them.

That only the disabilities of minorities are terminated by the right to religious freedom and that no special rights are created in the Constitution of US and Canada has been judicially noticed by the Supreme Court. The Court has also noticed that the Indian Constitution, not merely terminates the disabilities of the minorities, but also creates and grants special and positive rights for them. In St Xavier's case, the Supreme Court [Justice H.R. Khanna] says:

"It has been said in the context of the American Constitution and the Canadian Bill of Rights that the constitutional protection of religious freedom removed disabilities, it did not create new privileges. It gave religious equality but not civil immunity. Its essence is freedom from religious dogma, not freedom from conformity to law because of religious dogma [see the dissenting opinion of Frankfurter J., in West Virginia State Board of Education, V Barnette, (1942) 319 US'624 as well as the judgement of Richie, J., speaking for majority of Canadian Supreme Court in Robertson and Rosetanni V Queen 1963 SCR 651 = 1964 DLR 2d 485]. As a broad proposition not much exception came be taken to the above dictum and it may provide workable yardstick in a large number of cases. Difficulty, however, arises in cases which are in the twilight region. Provisions of prevention of disabilities do not, no doubt, create positive privileges, the two aspects are so intermixed that the danger is that one may not, while denying what appears to be a privilege, impinge upon a provision which is designed not only to prevent a disability and set at naught the guarantee of the Constitution. Apart from that whatever might be the position in USA and Canada, so far as our Constitution is concerned it contains articles which are designed not only to prevent disabilities of the minorities but also create positive rights for freedom. Art 30 belongs to that category." [Para 93 of AIR 1974 SC page 1422]

This, the judicial way of confirming that there is no constitutional precedent for the type of rights that Articles 29 and 30 give to the

minorities in India. This is despite the undeniable fact that even though the minorities in other countries including the US are founded in even more distinct identities like race and colour. In such countries the possibility of assimilation is far less than in India where the minorities are largely a product of conversions and retain a large part of the parent society's lifestyle. In the circumstances, the need for rights of the kind which Art 29 and 30 bestow on the minorities is far less, and even unnecessary, in India, as compared to countries like the US. Therefore, the only reason why the special rights for minorities like the ones in Art 29 and 30 are written into the Constitution is because of the hangover of the psychology of pre-Partition politics during the Constitution-making process.

One of the critical lacunae in the Constitutional appreciation of the rights of different faiths and their adherents and also in the judicial pronouncements is the theological position of different religions and the attitude of different religions towards other religions. Indian Constitution gives equal respect and also equal opportunities to all religions, but the unequal theological advantages enjoyed by Christianity and Islam, which basically hold that they are the only true faiths and all other faiths false, is not appreciated in constitutionally positioning them. Thus unequal faiths are treated as equals. This results in discrimination against faiths that are not aggressive like Christianity and Islam. So, the constitutional provisions are not only religion-neutral, they are also neutral between aggressive and non-aggressive religious theologies. The Indian Constitution does not accord merely equal treatment to faiths with aggressive theologies, it provides special rights to the faiths with aggressive theological position, thus providing a constitutional protection to aggressiveness. There has never been a theology-factored debate in the context of equal rights for different religions. As it is an accepted principle of constitutional interpretation that the treatment of unequals as equals will result in inequality, treatment of theologically unequal religions as equals will also result in unequal and unbalanced relation between and consequent discrimination against the theologically moderate faiths like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Since the Indian Constitution treats the two minority faiths,

Islam and Christianity, and therefore, the Muslim and Christian communities, more favourably than it treats the Hindu faiths and the Hindu communities, it is necessary at this stage to understand the relative philosophical and theological position of the three religions – Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and their approach to each other. It is obvious that the Constitution of India does not treat the three religions on par, but gives special and favourable treatment to two of the most aggressive, even intolerant, religions of the world, namely Islam and Christianity. In this context, what we quote below is not just mere philosophic literature, but a globally recognised reference text, namely the Encyclopaedia Britannica, produced by the intellectual effort of the Christian civilisation. The Supreme Court has approvingly quoted the Encyclopaedia on what constitutes Hinduism.

In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. The Hindu is inclined to revere the divine in every manifestation, whatever it may be, and is doctrinally tolerant, leaving others – including both Hindus and non-Hindus – to whatever creed and worship practices suit them the best. A Hindu may embrace a non-Hindu religion without ceasing to be a Hindu, and since the Hindu is disposed to think synthetically and to regard other forms of worship, strange Gods, and divergent doctrines as inadequate rather than wrong or objectionable, he tends to believe that the highest divine powers complement each other for the well being of the world and the mankind. Few religious ideas are considered to be finally irreconcilable. The core of the religion does not even depend on the existence or non-existence of the God or whether there is one God or many. Since religious truth is said to transcend all verbal definition, it is not conceived in dogmatic terms. Hinduism is then both a civilisation and a conglomerate of religions with neither a beginning, nor a founder, nor, a central authority, hierarchy, or organisation.

While this is what the Encyclopaedia says about Hinduism what does it say about the other religions and their mutual relationships?

On the relationship of Hinduism with Islam the Encyclopaedia has the following to say:

"The religious situation created by the presence of its [Islam's] numerous adherents always had explosive possibilities: the Muslims do not respect the bovine life and regard Hindu cult practices as idolatry… Up to the present day this situation has raised acute and even devastating issues…… Hindus inclined to worship the holy, whatever its manifestations, may revere Muslim saints or take part in Muslim festivities, often to such an extent that the character of these celebrations has been altered…… Those who, like Gandhi, could not understand the intolerance of orthodox Islam sympathised with the moderation and eclecticism of these [mystic] groups."

And on the relationship of Hinduism with Christianity, the Encyclopaedia says:

"For the eclectic and un-dogmatic Hindu, who believes that religion is a matter of personal realisation, every religion is true and a path to truth. If the adherents of Christianity follow it, the Hindu attitude toward it, not withstanding what he believes to be the militant and essentially intolerant disposition of the followers of Christianity – which is regretted by Hindus – continues to be one of respect and understanding, of tolerance and even sympathy."

The description of Hinduism given in the Encyclopaedia has been quoted approvingly by the Constitution bench of the Supreme Court in [1986 Sup SCR 478] and again in the *Hindutva* judgement referred to later [AIR 1996SC 1113 at 1127]. It is evident from the description of Hinduism in the above quotes that Hinduism has a more positive attitude towards other religions than what is enshrined in the concept of secularism, which is at best a religion-neutral state policy. But the description of Hinduism in the Encyclopaedia makes Hinduism a religion-neutral thought. So there can be no comparison between Hinduism and other religious faiths. There is no organised or evangelical Hinduism; consequently, there is nothing in Hinduism which makes it conflict with any other faith. If the majority of the Indian people follow Hinduism it means that they can have no conflict with any other faith. If the theology or philosophy of the majority faith is conflict-free and accepts other faiths, then where is the need for providing special protections for the minority faiths from such a majority faith? The reason that the Constitution applies the same yardstick to Hinduism as to other

faiths lies in the fact that the Constitution does not take into account the theological and philosophical difference between Hinduism and other faiths particularly Islam and Christianity. That Hinduism accepts as valid all other faiths, including Christianity and Islam has not been factored into the Constitution. This failure to take note of the theological specifics of different religions has led to total distortion of the concept of secularism in the Indian Constitution, especially as it has been interpreted by the judiciary. Hinduism does not distinguish between faiths and does not regard any faith to be false nor does it regard any person to be kafir or heathen; this makes Hinduism the only religion-neutral faith in the world. The Constitution of India does not exhibit any sensitivity to this crucial dimension of Hindu faith and the lack of similar openness to others in Christianity and Islam.

Now let us look at how the Encyclopaedia describes and captures the essence of the other two religions, Islam and Christianity, which are the main minority religions in India.

This is what the Encyclopaedia says about Christianity and its relationship with other religions:

"Christianity, from its beginning, tended toward an **intolerance** that was rooted in its religious self-consciousness. Christianity understands itself as revelation of the divine truth that became man in Jesus Christ himself. 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.' [John 14:6] To be a Christian is to 'follow the truth' [III John]; the Christian proclamation is 'the way of truth' [II Pet 2:2]. He who does not acknowledge the truth is an enemy 'of the cross of Christ' [Phil 3:18]; he 'exchanged the truth about God for a lie' [Rom 1:25] and made himself advocate and confederate of the 'adversary, the devil', who 'prowls around like a roaring lion' [I Pet 5:8]. Thus, one cannot make a deal with the devil and his party — and in this lies the basis for **intolerance** of Christianity."

"Christianity consistently practised an **intolerant attitude** in its approach to Judaism and paganism as well as heresy in its own ranks. By practising its **intolerance** vis-à-vis the Roman Emperor cult, it thereby forced the Roman state, for its part, into intolerance. Rome, however, was not adapted to the treatment of a religion that negated its religious foundations, and this inadequacy later

influenced the breakdown of paganism."

Digressing here for a moment, let us note that there is similarity between Roman pagan religion and Hinduism. Hinduism suffers from the same inadequacy as the Roman pagan religion, namely it is not adapted to the treatment of a religion that negated its religious foundations. That is to say, Hinduism which accepts all religions does not know how to adapt itself to a religion that negated Hinduism's foundations. So, if a religion, like Christianity which negates Hinduism, is treated at par with and even provided greater privilege than Hinduism under the Constitution, then one can understand the uneven and hostile playing field that the constitutional arrangement has created for Hinduism.

Now, let us continue with what the Encyclopaedia:

"Early Christianity aimed at the **elimination** of paganism – and the **destruction** of its institutions, temples, tradition and the order of life based upon it. After Christianity's victory over Greco-Roman religions, it left only the ruins of paganism still remaining. Christian missions in later centuries constantly aimed at the **destruction** of indigenous religions, including their cultic places, and traditions (as in missions to the Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and Slavs). This objective was not realised in mission areas in which Christian political powers did not succeed in conquests – e.g., China and Japan; but in Indian Goa, for example, the temples and customs of all indigenous religions were **eliminated** by the Portuguese conquerors."

"The attitude of **intolerance** was further reinforced when Islam confronted Christianity from 7th century on. Islam understood itself as the conclusion and fulfilment of the Old and New Testament revelation: from the Christian view, Islam was understood eschatologically – i.e., as the religion of 'false prophets' or as the religion of the Anti-Christ. The **aggression** of Christianity against Islam was carried out under this fundamental attitude of **intolerance**. **Intolerance** of indigenous religions was also manifested in Roman Catholic Missions in the New World: these missions transferred the methods of struggle against Islam to the treatment of the American Indians and **destroyed** the Indian cults and cultic places. Against Protestants, the Counter-Reformation displayed the same kind of **intolerance** and was largely equated with the struggle against

Turks."

"The legacy of Christian **intolerance** and the methods it developed (e.g., inquisition, or brainwashing) operates in the **intolerance** of the ideology and techniques of modern political revolutions."

"The Roman Catholic Church in the past has consistently **opposed** the development of religious **toleration**. Its claim to absolute power in a state is still practiced in the 20th century in some Catholic countries, such as Spain and Columbia in relationships to Protestant minorities." [Ibid 15th Ed., Vol. 4, page 491-492]

At another place, the Encyclopaedia says why Columbus tried to cross the world in the Westerly direction, and this also indicates the attitude of Christianity to Hinduism:

"Columbus, in undertaking to cross the ocean in a westerly direction in the 15th century, for example, believed that **Satan has taken refuge in India**, thus successfully **disrupting** the extension of the Gospel and **delaying** the return of Christ. According to his eschatological calculations, the time for the return of Christ was nearly at hand: thus, India had to be reached by the shortest way possible so that last bulwark of Satan might be removed through Christian missions."

The Christian eschatological belief is that Christ will come back and rule the world and thereafter only the end time will come and the true Christians will attain salvation. But Christ will return only if the Kingdom of God is established by removing all resistance to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. So the Christian theology regards Hinduism as Satanic faith that needs to be wiped out through Christian missions so that the establishment of the 'Kingdom of God' may not be further hindered or delayed. [Ibid page 504]

About Islam and its relation with other religions, the Encyclopaedia says the following:

"The rise of Islam and an organised Muslim community raised the problem of relation with other communities and religious groups. The older monotheistic communities, the Jews and the Christians, who possessed a revealed literature were given the status of the 'People of the Book' (ahl al-kitab) and their religions and cultural autonomy was recognised. But, the **pagans were given only two**

alternatives: either to accept Islam or to die.

"From …… experience, the orthodox concluded (1) that the rebels within a Muslim state must be brought back to submission through jihad, a conclusion that appears to be corroborated by the Qur'an. And, (2) that a non-repentant apostate should be put to death. Whereas the orthodox law still holds both these views, the modernist Muslims accept only the first, rejecting the second one on the ground of the Quranic declaration 'there is no compulsion in faith'.

"The invitation issued by the Qur'an on the basis of monotheism – 'O people of the Book! Let us come together on a principle that is common between us – that we shall not worship any one besides God and shall not associate any one with him…' – was inapplicable to Hinduism and Zoroastrianism." [Ibid, Vol. 9, page 925-926]

The comparative fundamental theological position of the three faiths and their respective attitude to one another is necessary to appreciate the impact of the special rights granted in favour of the two Abrahamic faiths in the Indian Constitution. Now-a-days, it is fashionable to charge a religious group which is committed to the letter of its faith as 'fundamentalist' and such attitude is labelled 'religious fundamentalism'. The Fundamentalism Project of the University of Chicago [Fundamentalism Observed Vol I. p.820] which did some basic thinking on this issue has concluded that:

"Some of the traits of fundamentalism examined here are accurately attributed to the 'People of the Book', the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, than to their first distant cousins of the fundamentalist family: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Confucians. Sacred texts do not play the same constitutive role in South Asian and Far Eastern traditions as they do in the Abrahamic faiths, nor, is history conceived of as a structured drama proceeding inexorably to a climactic final act."

Despite this fact these are the Abrahamic faiths for whom special rights have been granted under the Constitution of India, and the moderate non-fundamentalist groups of faith under the umbrella of Hinduism have been given a less than favourable treatment. Any reading of the Constitution of India, without reading the theological principles of different faiths, particularly the Abrahamic faiths, will be very misleading. That is why it is

necessary to read the provisions of Art 25, 26, 29 and 30 along with the theological positions of the Abrahamic faiths and their approach to the Hindu faiths. This would make clear the reverse discrimination that the Constitution has laid down against the Hindu faiths and communities; and, it will show that such reverse discrimination in favour of aggressive and intolerant theologies can be productive of great public mischief, a mischief which is now already demonstrably clear.

The most critical aspect of the special grant in favour of the minorities in India is that the grant is also, and in fact specifically, in favour of religious minorities. More specifically, the grant is in favour of two of the proselytising religious minorities, namely Christianity and Islam. There is already the right granted by Art 25 to these religious denominations not only to profess but also propagate their faiths which, it has been claimed, includes the right to effect lawful conversions also. So quality of the grant under Arts 29 and 30 in these circumstances is devastatingly different. Religious minorities in India, particularly those professing the proselytising faiths, can have a free run by exercising their secular rights under Arts 29 and 30 for effecting their religious proselytisation. The combination of Art 25 and Arts 29 and 30 are devastatingly hostile to Hindus in the country who, as the Supreme Court has observed – as we shall see later – are not really a majority. The proselytizing faiths can use their special rights under Arts 29 and 30 along with their seemingly general rights, but which constitute only their special rights because they alone have the theological sanction and even the compulsion to convert others, while the Hindu faith has neither the sanction nor the mandate to convert and increase the number of her adherents. So, the combination of Art 25, 29 and 30 have always had the potentiality to turn the religious minority into religious majority. In the US, even though the Blacks are not a religious minority, and educational right is only a secular right, yet they have not been given any such special secular right. But in India proselytising faiths have been granted secular rights without putting any restraint on their proselytising potential or programme.

The experience of constitutional India has shown that the

potential to change religious demographic profile through the use of constitutionally mandated special rights and privileges has not been an unrealisable or unrealised potential. It has been demonstrably realised in the working of the Constitution of India in different parts of India, particularly the North East. This means that the special rights of the proselytising faiths under Art 29 and 30 and their special quality to proselytise, which makes the general right to profess and propagate faiths actually a special right for them, amounts to an invitation by the State and provision of a constitutional mandate to bring about religious demographic changes in India. Such change has the potentiality to change the very secular character and multi-religious fabric of the Indian nation. A mere look at the figures of the changes in the religious demography of the North-East will demonstrate how the Constitution of India has worked to facilitate this process in that area. When the Indian Constitution was not in force, and the British were ruling the country for 150 years and more, such devastating changes in the religious demographic profile of the North-East did not take place. The devastating demographic changes in the Indian subcontinent and in India – which should shake the conscience of all sensible Indians, including those who proclaim themselves as secular – are best brought out in the words of the scholars of the Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai, who have produced a scholarly and painstaking work on the subject entitled 'Religious Demography of India' in the 2001 revised edition [preface]:

"In many respects, the data of 2001 simply carries forward the trends of religious demographic changes observed upto 1991, but there is also a clear intensification of these trends in certain aspects. When we look at the date for the whole of India, including the Indian Union, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the new data only reconfirms then the distinct possibility that Muslims and Christians together shall become the majority in the Indian region early in the second half of the twenty-first century; the new data falls almost perfectly on the trend-line that we had drawn on the basis of data up to 1991."

"Within the Indian Union, the quantum of decline in the proportion of Indian Religionists – and the corresponding increase in that of Muslims and Christians – observed during 1991-2001

is the largest since Independence and Partition; it seems that the rate of change has become definitely quicker since 1981. The difference between the decadal growth of Indian Religionists and Muslims has widened from 10 per cent in earlier decades following Independence to about 45 per cent during the last two decades. And Christians, whose decadal growth, in the Indian Union as a whole had declined to about 17 per cent during the previous decades, from the very high level of 33 per cent in 1961-1971, have registered a sudden spurt in their growth to 23 per cent during the last decade 1991-2001.

"A large part of the difference in the growth of Muslims and Christians on the one hand and Indian Religionists on the other can be attributed to the previously known belts and pockets of high Muslim or Christian presence and growth. The most significant of these pockets is an eastern border belt that starts from Uttar Pradesh, runs along the borders of Nepal up to Bangladesh borders, crosses through Bangladesh, and encompasses almost all districts of lower Assam and Cachar. Muslims have been growing at a quick pace throughout this belt, beginning from the Purnia region of Bihar running up to Naogaon of Assam. During 1991-2001 and also in the previous decade 1981-1991, the rise in the proportion of Muslims in this belt has been extraordinary. Muslims now form 45 per cent of the population of this belt and if we take into the significant presence of Christians in lower Assam and in parts of Santhal Pargana, Indian Religionists are already near a minority in this region as a whole. Muslims are a majority in 9 districts of this belt and a near majority in the other two."

"As we move beyond this belt towards the North-East, we enter into a territory that has not become more than 45 per cent Christian. In the states of the north-east together, excluding Assam, the proportion of Christians has increased by 6 per cent points during the last decade alone; the changes have been especially sharp in Arunachal Pradesh, which had so far escaped large - scale Christianisation and in Meghalaya where the Christian growth in certain pockets had been relatively low. Indian Religionists now are in a minority in this region."

"Thus, the Indian Religionists have been reduced to a minority in a wide swathe of the territory of Indian Union stretching from

Purnia in Bihar to the eastern most tip of Arunachal Pradesh and comprising strategically perhaps the most critical region of India. In several parts of this region Indian Religionists do not seem to be welcome any more. In most of the North-East, Indian Religionists have been registering decadal growth that is far below their natural growth, indicating large-scale conversions. But during the last decade, the decadal growth of Indian Religionists in many districts lf lower Assam has also been extremely low, indicating large-scale out-migration from the region."

"The 2001 data has indicated drastic changes in the religious demography of Kashmir valley also. Census could not be conducted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991. In the two decades since the last census in 1981, even the absolute numbers of Indian Religionists in the valley has declined, while the total population in the valley has increased by nearly 77 per cent. Detailed census data on the demographic profile of the Hindus in the valley shows that there are a few Hindus families left in the valley; the Hindus that have been counted there are families that are almost all adult, literate, working males. The valley has indeed been cleansed of any meaningful Hindu presence."

"Kashmir, on the northern extremity of the Indian Union, and the eastern flank of the country from Purnia to Arunachal Pradesh, are the areas of most serious concern; presence of Indian Religionists in these two regions has become precarious. But there are also several other regions in the country where the religious profile of the population has begun to change in a very noticeable manner in the recent past."

Thus, the work of Art 29 and 30, together with the misconstrued notions of minority appeasement, has been to assist the conversion efforts of the principal proselytising faith, namely Christianity, in the North-East and in other places in India. In contrast, the minority Blacks in US do not constitute a proselytising minority. They cannot convert Whites into Blacks. And yet the US Constitution does not grant any special right for Blacks. Despite the fact that the Blacks will always remain Blacks and no White will be converted into Black, no special right, like the rights granted under Art 29 and 30, has been granted for Blacks in the US. No sensible nation will

grant to proselytising faiths the kind of special rights which the combined effect of the provisions of Art 25, 29 and 30 do. In fact, the non-proselytising faiths actually need special protection against the proselytising ones. This is because the strength of the proselytising faiths comes from their theological aggressiveness. Constitutional framing of relations between proselytising faiths and the non-proselytising ones will have to factor in the theological demands that the proselytising faiths make on their followers as part of their faith, while the non-proselytising faiths not only do not make such demands on their followers, but also, on the contrary, become easy victims of the proselytising faiths by their philosophy of accepting all religions, including the proselytising ones, as valid. In these circumstances even provisions that grant equality to all religions, without providing the safeguard of special protection for the non-proselytising traditions, would prejudice the non-proselytising faiths vis-à-vis the proselytising ones. So Art 29 and 30 of Indian Constitution constitute a hostile constitutional imbalance between the majority and the minorities and against the majority communities in India, and therefore, constitute a constitutional distortion, which has from the beginning had the effect of encouraging far-reaching and dangerous changes in the religious profile of the nation. Such changes have the potential to create high voltage ill-will and rift between the proselytising minorities, who have special rights and privileges, and others, who are in fact in need of special protection against the proselytising minorities.

The special minority rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution undeniably constitute a clear constitutional distortion and, as already discussed, create a peculiar imbalance against the communities, which do not have the benefit of the special rights given to the minorities. That is precisely why different communities which are socially, culturally and constitutionally integral to the Hindu society began claiming that they were not part of the Hindu society and seeking special rights as minorities. For example, in the Constitution of India all communities including Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are defined to mean Hindus. Thus the Hindu society is inclusive, not an exclusive rigidity. The philosophy of *Hindutva* or Hinduism has been judicially defined in inclusive terms by the Supreme Court.

Against the background of how the highest judiciary has interpreted Hinduism or Hindu cultural phenomenon, the question that needs to be debated is whether there is really a majority in India, in the sense of cultural or political majority capable of being majoritarian in political terms and in political action natural to a majority in a democracy, which warrants special protection to the minorities who will be disadvantaged otherwise.

In this context, a recent judgement of the Supreme Court, which has been largely ignored in the media and in the public domain, is very critical. In this judgement the Supreme Court deals with many profound issues including how the pre-Partition politics led to the introduction of the constitutional provisions for the protection of the minorities and whether there is any Hindu or other majority in the country; whether the constitutional provisions of equality among all citizens should not be realised so that there is no need for segregation of the citizens into majority and minority; whether the continued emphasis on majority and minority divisions will not lead to the growth of sub-nationalism and endanger national unity and integrity. This judgement seems to be a brooding appeal to the conscience of India to review its assumptions about the majority and minority phenomenon in the constitutional and judicial pronouncements and also in polity. The judgement sounds a clear warning about the growing minority consciousness and consequent proliferation of minorities to the prejudice of national integration.

This profound judgement recently delivered by the Supreme Court on the scope of minority rights in the Constitution has completely escaped national debate. Not that it has escaped the attention of the media and the elite. Actually, it seems to be the other way round; it is the media and the elite which seem to have escaped debating the extremely profound thoughts expressed by the Supreme Court. This judgement critiques the constitutional philosophy behind the concept of minority rights and at once realistically and factually tracks the historic course that led to – and, in fact, forced – the introduction the idea of minority protection into the Constitution.A reading of the judgement demonstrably establishes that the Court is keen on a rethink on the issue of majority

and minority in India. The Court is clear that the constitutional right of the minorities is necessarily a means to an end and not an end in itself. It says that the end result of the process of constitutionalism in India is to eliminate the need for classification of the people of India into majority and minority. When the entire political and intellectual class is equating the special rights of the minorities under the Constitution to the very character of India as a secular state, insisting that the rights of minorities testify to the secular character of India, the Supreme Court is explicit in its view that the minority rights will continue only so long as the goal of the Constitution, namely equality of rights of all citizens, is not achieved. So, the goal of secular India should be not to preserve any special rights for any minority, and not to keep reminding sections of people of their minority character, but to eliminate the need for special status and rights for any minority, and in fact the very idea of minority should be eliminated, and all citizens should be placed equally.

This is how the Supreme Court debunks the present assumptions about the majority and minority phenomenon in the country. "There is no majority in India. All are minorities amongst Hindus who are divided on caste lines", says the Court.

It adds that "the word 'Hindu' conveys the image of diverse groups of communities living in India", thereby questioning the view that Hindus are a political or united majority capable of majoritarian action against others.

It castigates different segments of the Indian society claiming minority status and says, "If claims of sections of Indian society to the status of 'minority' are considered and conceded, there would be no end to such claims in a society as multi-religious and multi-linguistic as India is."

While dealing with the tendency to add new communities and groups to the list of minorities, the Court speaks of the duties and responsibilities of Minority Commissions at the Centre and at the States, and says that "Commissions set up for minorities have to direct their activities to maintain integrity and unity of India by gradually eliminating the minority and majority classes."

The Court postulates what should be the goal or the end of the process of constitutionalism in this context. It says, "the constitutional ideal is to create social conditions where there

remains no necessity to shield or protect the rights of minority." It means that the constitutional rights of the minorities are a means to achieve this end, like the reservations for different classes of people so that they also develop on par with others.

The issue in the case before the Supreme Court was whether the Jain community constitutes a national minority or not. The Jain community had pleaded that it be regarded as minority under the Constitution. Rejecting the claim unhesitatingly, the Court said, Jains are integral to the Hindu faith. It did not stop at that. It exposed the naked fact – the absence of a constitutional, political majority in India. It said, "in a caste-ridden Indian society, no section or distinct group of people can claim to be in majority." That is, according to the Court, Hindus are not a majority. Thus, we have the paradox of ever expanding list of minorities, on the one hand; and on the other, a non-existent majority! Yet the seculars keep warning about 'majoritarianism' threatening to extinguish all minorities while the highest Court says there is no majority in the country! The highest court has in effect lamented that we keep generating more and more minorities instead of assimilating the existing ones.

Historically, how did the idea of minority and the demand for their special care and protection originate in our Constitution? The Court traces this history: The British attempt 'to form separate electorates' 'on the basis of population of Hindus and Muslims' led to 'demand for reservations of constituencies and seats in the first elected government to be formed in free India'. 'Resistance to such demands by Hindu and some Muslim leaders ultimately led to Partition of India and formation of separate Muslim State', Pakistan, it added. How did the pre-Partition political paralysis get into our Constitution post-Partition? According to Court: ' "Against this background of Partition, it was felt necessary 'to allay the apprehensions and fears' in the minds of Muslims and other religious communities by providing to them special protection of their religious, cultural and educational rights." Undeniably, such fears were deliberately generated among Muslims to justify Partition and also the need for special protection for minorities in the Constitution. But, even after Partition, this political distortion continued as the seculars systematically kept alive this fear psychosis

to intensify the majority and minority divide and also give political, constitutional legitimacy to it.

It is in this context that the Court felt concerned about the trend among the Hindu communities to seek minority status for constitutional privileges. It warned 'many of them claim status as minority' and 'expect protection from the State. If each minority group' fears 'the other group', the Court added, that would create 'an atmosphere of mutual fear and distrust' and pose 'a serious threat to the integrity of our Nation.' It would 'sow seeds of multi-nationalism in India', it warned. It pointed out that 'the ideal of a democratic society, which has adopted the right of equality as its fundamental creed, should eliminate the majority and minority concepts. The Court counselled the Minority Commission not to proliferate, but instead prune, the list of minorities, so that over a period they 'are done away with altogether.

Indeed, it is a profound judgement with letters worth their weight in gold – yet no one reads a single article about it in the media, not a sentence from the columnists. The secular megaphones are deafeningly silent. They would shout in chorus 'abide by court verdict' on, say, the Ram Temple issue. But will they ever say that the profound words of the highest court in this judgement should be respected, accepted? No, for, if they do, their secular charade cannot continue. For them, the minorities have to be protected, even if a majority does not exist and even if one has to be invented. This is the Indian secular theatre – with the more and more communities queuing up to be listed as minorities, and no one willing to be bear the cross of the majority. Thus moves on a country full of minorities – each of them demanding only rights and privileges – and with no political, constitutional majority on the other side to bear the responsibility for the nation.

There has been a pointed, and yet un-debated and un-rebutted, criticism in the national debate that has been on since the early 1980s that the concept of minority rights in the Constitution has, thanks to vote-bank politics, been distorted in the post-Partition polity. The criticism pointed to how the concept of minority rights has drifted from its original intent as guarantee against the apprehensions of the minorities generated, albeit deliberately, by the

pre-Partition Hindu-Muslim political divide and has degenerated into a political patronage for the minorities. While this judgement of the Supreme Court does not explicitly discuss the concept of minority protection and minority rights from the perspective of its transformation into political patronage, it has undoubtedly raised far-reaching question on the issue – almost questioning the very concept of minority in Indian society and polity – from, surprisingly, the perspective of the unity and integrity of India. In fact, the highest court has related the idea of minority in India not to any unbridgeable majority-minority divide within the Indian society – like ethnic or racial divide or unwilling subjects being forced to accept the State run by a majority – but it has traced the advent of minority rights in the Constitution to the developments in the pre-Partition history which had created a divide essentially between Hindus and Muslims. The Supreme Court tends to view the evolution of minority rights in the Constitution as a necessity forced by the pre-Partition disputes between Hindus and Muslims over reservation of seats and constituencies in free India.

Again, this is the first time that the highest court of the land has assessed the potentiality of the idea of minority rights to destroy the very idea of national unity and integrity. So far the philosophy and justification of the concept of minority rights rested on the premise that it represented the very idea of secularism and, a fortiori, as the secular foundation of India, the very basis of the unity of India; according to this way of thinking, minority rights are part of the secular constitutional scheme that secures the unity and integrity of India. But the philosophy of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court challenges this premise, namely that the concept of minority rights is implied and therefore expresses the secular character of India. In fact, throughout the course of its discourse on minority rights and the historic course that led to their introduction into the Constitution, the Supreme Court has not even remotely linked the idea of minority rights to the secular character of the Indian nation. So the distorted national debate which has proceeded by mixing the concept of secularism with the idea of protection of minority rights has been exposed by the judgement of the highest court. It does not require any proof that secular character of India has

nothing to do with the minority rights and likewise minority rights have nothing to do with secular identity of India; yet, the concept of secularism and the idea of minority protection by special rights have been deliberately mixed up in the national debate.

The distorted nature of this mix-up can be demonstrated by decoupling the two concepts, namely minority rights and secularism: Will India remain a secular state if it were to be declared as a Hindu State by deleting Art 25 and 26 of the Constitution, while retaining the minority rights under Art 29 and 30 of the Constitution? The answer is no, and it is obvious why. If Art 25 and 26 are deleted, India will lose its secular character and cease to be a secular state. And yet the minorities would be getting constitutional protection despite India losing its secular character and no more being secular state. That means that despite not being a secular state, India will still constitutionally protect the minorities. Reverse the illustration and see the result. Imagine that Art 25 and 26 are retained so that the secular character of the Indian state is preserved and Art 29 and 30 are deleted. This would mean that India would be a secular state, but without any guaranteed special minority rights. So there is no relation or correlation between the secular character of India and minority rights under Art 29 and 30. This is what this judgement has brought out without saying so in as many words.

Considering the fact that the Hindu majority is not really a religious, political or social majority which is capable of becoming majoritarian in the sense of a majority converging on minorities by political action, the special rights to the minorities, particularly minorities belonging to the proselytising faiths, constitute a horrendous reverse discrimination against all communities lumped together as Hindus. So granting special rights to the minorities which have a compulsive mandate from their faith to convert may lead to unthinkable consequences prejudicial to the very idea of a secular state. In this sense, it may be stated, even at the risk of repetition, that the judgement in effect constitutes a brooding appeal to the political and judicial conscience of India to correct the historic distortions which have taken place in the scheme of constitutional guarantees for minorities. Since the Supreme Court has opened up an entirely new perspective to debate the concept of minority and minority rights, it is necessary in the larger national

interests to analyse and debate this judgement.

The unbalanced relations between the majority and the minority – namely the grant of minority rights to political conscious minorities, when no politically conscious majority existed in the country – was only founded on the invention of a majority invented where none existed. A Hindu majority that was non-existent in the political sense of the term had to be theoretically invented for constitutional purposes to justify the rights in favour of minorities, particularly united and politically savvy and conscious minorities. This skewed situation in time brought about a situation where the Hindu majority, which was non-existent, began organising itself and began securing its political identity through the ideology of *Hindutva*. Till *Hindutva* and related issues began to dominate the national political scene, there was no Hindu political action. Even after the Hindu political agenda was unveiled by the Ayodhya movement and the consolidation of the Hindu vote bank began taking shape, there was no majoritarian political thought or action. It was still a complaining and brooding Hindu minority, which had to bear the cross as a constitutionally defined majority. The Hindu communities, as the SC says in the judgement referred to above, is a collection of different communities, each of which qualifies as a minority, but together they do not constitute a majority.

To reverse the process of this reverse discrimination against the Hindu communities, either the individual Hindu communities had to distance themselves from the Hindu fold and consequently, the majoritarian identity forced upon them, or they had to start a movement to highlight the reverse discrimination process inherent in the Constitution. The actions of the secular governments like overruling of the Supreme Court judgement in the Shahbano case by a special constitutional amendment, the provision of Haj subsidy, and other such issues, and justification of such blatantly anti-secular measures as integral to secularism, created enough space for the Hindu political thinkers to plan political action by exposing how the Hindus are being discriminated in their own country and espousing their cause. No sensible, responsible political party, leader, intellectual or media would have countenanced such a situation, in which the majority feels insecure at the political clout

of the minorities. That is how, in response, the Hindu political action shaped up during the late 1980s and early 1990s, which led to far reaching political changes in the country. Thus, Hindu political action was triggered by the minority-patronage and the legitimacy that political action was confirming on them.

The political developments of the past two decades have testified to the fact that the popular sentiments about the constitutional and political imbalance between the majority and minorities in this country has begun making its impact on politics and on the fortunes of the political parties. But, it is equally true that intellectual India is still to understand the true and full impact of the political imbalances between the majority and minorities induced by distortions in the provisions of the Constitution. So the intellectual India is clearly lagging behind the ordinary people of India in its appreciation of the deteriorating balance between the majority and the minorities, particularly the proselytising minorities. With this inability of the intellectual India to understand the mind of the ordinary Indians, the gap between the people of India and the intellectuals and elites is becoming wider and wider. Intellectual India tends to dismiss the popular opinion about the excessive constitutional and political space given to the minorities as merely a communal reaction to an assertive minority. This is a response born of a frozen mindset; intellectual India should reappraise its position and bridge the gap between itself and the ordinary Indians. Otherwise the nation would suffer inevitably, as the intellectual India which has the responsibility to steer the national mind along proper lines would be failing in its duty to the nation and the people and particularly the minorities themselves.

The theology of the Abrahamic religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, which have a mandate to convert the world, is clearly intolerant of other religions; the philosophy and beliefs of Hindus, whether it is called Hinduism and *Hindutva,* is of the greatest tolerance, and even acceptance of other faiths. In the most profound judicial analysis of what *Hindutva* means in the context of the general idea of religions as the law and the Constitution would view, the Supreme Court held in the famous '*Hindutva*

case' that the terms *Hindutva* or Hinduism cannot meaningfully be confined to the narrow limits of religion alone, excluding the content of Indian culture and heritage; that the term *Hindutva* is related more to the way of life of the people in the subcontinent.

This case is important, because in this case the paradigm shift which was taking place in India through the Ayodhya movement founded on the ideology of *Hindutva* was virtually challenged as misuse of religion for electoral purposes and was, therefore, a corrupt practice within the meaning of the electoral law.

The rationale of the Supreme Court in reaching the conclusion – that *Hindutva* or Hinduism refer to more the way of life of the people of the subcontinent than merely a religion – may be summarised in the words of the Court itself. Quoting from the decision of an earlier constitution bench reported in AIR 1966 SC 1119- pages 1128-1131, the Court says:

"When we think of the Hindu religion, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. Unlike other religions of the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any one prophet; it does not worship any one God; it does not believe in one philosophic concept; it does not believe in any one set of religious rituals or performances; in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may be broadly described as a way of life and nothing more."

"The term Hindu, according to Dr Radhakrishnan, had originally a territorial and not a creedal significance. It implied residence in a defined geographic area. Aboriginal tribes, savage and half civilised people, the cultured Dravidians, and the Vedic Aryans were all Hindus as they were the sons of the same mother. The Hindu thinkers reckoned with the striking fact that the men and women dwelling in India belonged to different communities, worshipped different Gods, and practised different rites. (Kurma Purana) [The Hindu View of Life by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, p.12]

Monier Williams observed that '… It presents for our investigation a complex congeries of creeds and doctrines which in its gradual accumulation may be compared to the gathering together of the mighty volume of the Ganges, swollen by continual influx of tributary rivers and rivulets, spreading itself over an ever-increasing area of the country and finally resolving into an intricate

Delta of tortuous streams and jungle marshes… The Hindu religion is a reflection of the composite character of Hindus who are not one people but many. *It is based on the idea of universal receptivity.* It has ever aimed to accommodating itself to circumstances, and has carried on the process of adaptation through more than three thousand years. It has first borne, then so to speak, swallowed, digested, and assimilated something from all creeds. [Religious Thought and Life in India by Monier Williams, p.57]

The Court goes on to pose the question:

"We have already indicated that the usual tests which can be applied in relation to any recognised religion or religious creed in the world can turn out to be inadequate in dealing with the problem of Hindu religion. Normally, any recognised religion or religious creed subscribes to body of set of philosophic concepts and theological beliefs… Does this apply to Hindu religion?"

And the Court answers by quoting S. Radhakrishnan again:

"Naturally enough, it was realised by Hindu religion from the very beginning of its career that the truth was many sided and different views contained different aspects of truth which no one could fully express. This knowledge inevitably bred a spirit of tolerance and willingness to understand and appreciate the opponent's point of view. This is how the several views set forth in India in regard to the vital philosophic concepts are considered to be the branches of the self-same tree. The short cuts and blind alleys are some how reconciled with the main road of advance to truth."

Based on this, the Supreme Court says:

"When we consider this broad sweep of the Hindu philosophic concepts it would be realised that under the Hindu philosophy there is no scope for ex-communicating any notion or principle as heretical and rejecting it as such."

"The development of Hindu religion and philosophy shows that from time to time saints and religious reformers attempted to remove from the Hindu thought and practices elements of corruption and superstition and that led to the formation of different sects. Buddha started Buddhism; Mahavira founded Jainism; Basava became the founder of Lingayat religion; Dyanseshwar and Tukharam initiated the Varakari cult; Guru Nanak inspired Sikhism; Dayananda founded Arya Samaj; Chaitanya began

Bhakti cult; and as a result of the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Hindu religion flowed into its most attractive, progressive, and dynamic form. If we study the teachings of these saints and religious reformers, we would notice the divergence in their respective views; but underneath that divergence, there is a kind of subtle indescribable unity which keeps them within the sweep of the broad and progressive Hindu religion.

"It is somewhat remarkable that this broad sweep of Hindu religion has been eloquently described by Toynbee." Says Toynbee, "When we pass from the plane of social practice to the plane of intellectual outlook, Hinduism comes out well by comparison with the religions and ideologies of the South-West Asian group. In contrast to these, Hinduism has the same outlook as the pre-Christian and pre- Muslim religions and philosophies of the Western half of the world. Like them Hinduism takes it for granted that there is more than one valid approach to truth and to salvation and these different approaches are not only compatible with each other... but are complementary." [The Present Day Experiment in Western Civilisation, p.48-49]

The Supreme Court then refers to another constitution bench judgement in Commissioner of Wealth Tax vs Late R. Sridharan [(1976) Supp SCR 478] in which the Court had quoted the Encyclopaedia on what Hinduism means. Based on these two constitution bench decisions, the Supreme Court held in the *Hindutva* case as under:

"These constitution bench decisions, after a detailed discussion, indicate that no precise meaning can be ascribed to the terms 'Hindu', '*Hindutva*', and 'Hinduism'; no meaning in the abstract can confine it to the narrow limits of religion alone, excluding the content of the Hindu culture and heritage. It is also indicated that the term '*Hindutva*' is related more to the way of life of the people in the subcontinent. It is difficult to appreciate how in the face of these decisions, the term '*Hindutva*' or 'Hinduism' per se can be assumed to mean and be equated with the narrow fundamentalist Hindu religious bigotry..."

Bharucha J in Dr M. Ismali Faruqui vs Union of India [(1994) 6 SCC 360 (Ayodhya case)] in a separate opinion for himself and Ahmadi J (as he then was) observed as under:

"…Hinduism is a tolerant faith. It is that tolerance that has enabled Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and Sikhism to find shelter and support upon this land."

"Ordinarily, *Hindutva* is understood as a way of life or a state of mind and it is not be to be equated with or understood as religious Hindu fundamentalism. In 'Indian Muslims – The Need for a Positive Outlook' by Moulana Wahiuddin Khan (1994), it is said:

"The strategy worked out to solve the minorities' problem was, although differently worded, that of Hindutva or Indianisation. This strategy, briefly stated, aims at developing a uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all cultures co-existing in the country. This was felt to be the way of communal harmony and national unity. It was thought that this put an end to all the minorities' problems."

"The above opinion indicates that the word '*Hindutva*' is used and understood as a synonym of 'Indianisation', i.e. development of uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all the cultures co-existing in the country."

Hinduism is a tolerant and assimilative faith, not antagonistic to other faiths. It is unlike Christianity and Islam, which are basically intolerant faiths because they are considered by the legitimate institutions of those faiths as the only true faith, wherein lies the potentiality for intolerance. So Hinduism is not, and cannot be, a majoritarian thought. Being inclusive, it cannot exclude the minorities and classify them separately and keep excluding and keep classifying them for ever as separate communities incompatible with the Hindu commonwealth of faiths.

It is necessary to factor in the inclusiveness of the Hindu faith and culture in the context of the distinction sought to be made between Hindu faiths and minority faiths. The critical questions which arise in the context of the Supreme Court interpretation of the Hindu faith and culture are these:

Are the Hindu philosophy, faith and culture incompatible with the minority faiths any more than secularism is incompatible with minority faiths?

Are the Hindu philosophy, faith and culture capable of influencing the minority faiths any more than secularism can influence the minority faiths?

Do the minority faiths face the danger of being assimilated by Hindu philosophy, faith and culture any more than they face assimilation by the principles of secularism?

Are not the Hindu philosophy, faith and culture, which are sensitive to other faiths and cultures and are respectful to them, more protective of the faith and culture of minorities than the secularism which only makes the state religion-neutral? That is, does *Hindutva* or Hinduism not grant greater protection than secularism as defined by the Constitution itself?

The most critical question that needs to be answered is this: If these profound questions are ignored and the faiths and cultures of the minorities, instead of being considered as respectable and integral segments of the broad and inclusive Hindu culture and spirituality, are excluded from the inclusive *Hindutva* or Hindu culture on the adversarial principles laid down in the Constitution, will that not set in a process of Semitisation of the Hindu faith and culture and make it exclusive. Will that not rob the Hindu faith of its tolerance? Will that not repeat the fate of the Roman Emperor's religion, which was tolerant like Hinduism, but turned intolerant in the face of the intolerance of Christianity? Will the imbalance and adversarial element in the constitutional relation between the minorities and Hindus not promote tendencies in Hinduism to define itself politically like Islam Christianity and become narrow and intolerant? These are very critical issues, which need to be debated and discussed at different levels in the larger interest of religious and communal harmony and also national integration and national unity.

The distorted relation relations between the majority and the minority in India calls for an extensive debate on the issue of minorities and the relation between the majority and minority, and also on whether the idea of secularism has anything to do with minority rights, whether it has anything to say beyond defining the character of the state as religion-neutral. Constitutionally provided special rights to the minorities had evolved out of the complex pre-Partition history of intrigues and manipulations of the Muslim leadership and the British against the Congress movement which was identified with the Hindus. Otherwise there could have

been no occasion for such special rights for the minorities to be enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Politically, the special rights given to minorities and also the various bounties provided to them are justified on the touchstone of secularism, which according to the Supreme Court judgement seem to be unrelated to each other. This has actually turned the concept of secularism into a matter of minority appeasement in politics. With no substance in the efforts to link minority rights and even the minority bounties with the secular character of the Indian state, there is a need, an acute one, to debate, constitutionally and politically, the issue of the minority rights and the relation between the minority rights and secularism, and also whether the minority identity and the special rights given to minorities were at all meant to be durable part of the Constitution at all. Undoubtedly, this is a critical subject.

❑

Chapter XII

Is Hindu civilisation lethargic and are Hindus life-negating ascetics and, therefore, a non-performing one? Absolutely not; it is a colonial Christian missionary distortion of Hindu-Indian image.

This question is particularly relevant in the context of the present idea of globalisation and the competence of Hindu India to compete with the rest of the world. There has been a persistent charge against Hindu India by colonial scholars like Albert Schweitzer and later by economists like Max Weber that because of over pre-occupation with spiritual dimensions of life and also because of the belief in *karma* which the western scholars had reduced to fate, the Hindus and India had been a non-performing civilisation. Denying as the fallacy spread by the 19th century missionaries that India is a land of lethargic gloom, A.L. Basham concludes, "The traveller landing in Bombay has only to watch the rush-hour crowds, and to compare them mentally with those of London, to realise that the Indian character is neither lethargic nor unhappy. This conclusion is borne out by a general acquaintance with the remains of India's past. Our general impression of ancient India is that her people enjoyed life, passionately delighting both in the things of the senses and the things of the spirit." Again, dismissing the impression created in British academia by scholars like Dr Albert Schweitzer (Indian Thought and its Development) that ancient India was a life-negating ascetics, imposing their gloomy and sterile ideas upon the trusting millions who were the lay followers, Basham says, "The fallacy of this impression is quite evident from the secular literature, sculpture and painting of the time. The average Indian, though might pay lip-service to the ascetics and respect his ideals, did not find life a vale of tears from which to escape at all costs; rather he was willing to accept

the world as he found it, and to extract what happiness he could from it. Dandin's description of the joys of a simple meal served in a comparatively poor home is probably more typical of ancient Indian everyday life than are the Upanisads. India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration of her ancient culture."[A.L. Basham the Wonder That was India: Introduction: India and her Culture p.9]

Basham's study and observation of India is on the dot. Basham was completely right in concluding that that the Indian society was not ascetic or life-negating and Albert Schweitzer was completely wrong in judging the Indian society to be life-negating ascetics. One of the most revered sacred texts of India and the Hindus was and continues to be the Bhagwat Gita. This sacred text teaches all aspects of the Hindu spiritual and material laws and disciplines. In the third chapter of the Bhagwat Gita Sri Krishna asks the enlightened to work so that the ordinary people who see them will get interested in action:

"Whatever the noblest persons do the ordinary man imitates. The standards the noble set the ordinary men follow." [III.22]

"An enlightened man should not cause confusion in the minds of the ordinary people by his conduct. Himself working with equanimity, he should make them interested in all activities." [III.26]

"Just as ignorant men do work out of attachment, so let the

enlightened ones perform the same unattached with the good of the world in view." [III.25]

Thus the impression that the Hindu civilisation preaches inaction and makes people docile and life-negating is completely belied by the highly practical statements of Sri Krishna.

The philosophical element of the Indian life is comprehensive and postulates the attainment of 'Artha' [material prosperity] and 'Kama' [sensual pleasures] as part of the spiritual pursuit of life itself. The Hindu philosophy integrates worldly enjoyment as part of the sacred dimensions of life, not as a secular phenomenon. Actually, there is nothing secular or worldly as distinct from the sacred or other worldly in the Indian spiritual pursuit. The distinction between the sacred and secular is an Abrahamic construct. The world according to the Abrahamic construct is secular and the other world is sacred. In the Hindu view the world is equally sacred. So work for material gain is also equated to yoga and it is accepted at the popular level, not just in the dictionary of the elite as a spiritual phenomenon. It is as much spiritual as the ascetic mission of a sanyasi in the Indian spiritual tradition. A warrior's sword, a tiller's plough, a craftsman's hammer and an ascetic's mast – all command equal value in Indian spiritualism.

It is not that the sacred texts of India which repudiate the unjust insinuation of Hindu India as civilisational misfit for generating prosperity or acquiring worldly pleasures or satisfaction. The performance of India as a society and an economy and as a source of knowledge and innovation in the field of science and technology, arts and crafts and literature and music affirm what Sri Krishna's words and not Albert Schweitzer about the Indian society. It is now an admitted position that the Indian economy as late as 1700 and 1800 was a highly performing economy. It commanded a quarter of the global production and global trade and almost half of its population being industrial employment. This is despite the fact that since the beginning of the 11th century India was subjected to endless attacks by barbaric forces. It was only the colonial rule which brought down the Indian economy.

How wrong is this arrogant colonial dismissal of Hindu India

as a viable prosperous and happy civilisation now needs no proof as evidence after evidence tumble from the stable of the western scholarship itself. Here is one such. An American writer Dick Teresi has recently written a remarkable book 'Lost Discoveries', in which he has detailed the scientific discoveries made by ancient civilisations of the world, in which the Hindu India featured prominently. Two articles that were written by the noted writer Shashi Tharoor in 'The Hindu' newspaper are worthy of mention. Shashi Tharoor is the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information. Because these articles summarise the book 'Lost Discoveries' they are reproduced in full so that a clear view of the strides made by Hindu India in science and technology could be captured. The second article which appeared on July 30, 2003 is reproduced first and the first one which appeared on June 8, 2003 is reproduced next.

"In an earlier column I wrote of how the roots of Indian science and technology go far deeper than Nehru. I cited a remarkable new book, **Lost Discoveries**, by the American writer Dick Teresi, which studies the ancient non-Western foundations of modern science. While Teresi ranges from the Babylonians and Mayans to Egyptians and other Africans, it is his references to India that won me. Where my previous piece focused on ancient India's remarkable breakthroughs in mathematics, in this column I'd like to cover the other sciences in which our ancestors excelled."

For a nation still obsessed by astrology, it is ironic that Indians established the field of planetary astronomy, identifying the relative distance of the known planets from the sun, and figured out that the moon was nearer to the earth than the sun. A hymn of the Rig Veda extols '*nakshatra-vidya*'; the Vedas' awareness of the importance of the sun and the stars is manifest in several places. The Siddhantas are amongst the world's earliest texts on astronomy and mathematics; the Surya Siddhanta, written about 400 AD, includes a method for finding the times of planetary ascensions and eclipses. The notion of gravitation, or *gurutvakarshan*, is found in these early texts. "Two hundred years before Pythagoras," writes Teresi, "philosophers in northern India had understood that gravitation held the solar system together, and that therefore the sun, the most massive object, had to be at its centre."

The Kerala-born genius Aryabhata was the first human being to explain, in 499 AD, that the daily rotation of the earth on its axis is what accounted for the daily rising and setting of the sun. (His ideas were so far in advance of his time that many later editors of his awe-inspiring "Aryabhatiya" altered the text to save his reputation from what they thought were serious errors.) Aryabhata conceived of the elliptical orbits of the planets a thousand years before Kepler, in the West, came to the same conclusion (having assumed, like all Europeans, that planetary orbits were circular rather than elliptical). He even estimated the value of the year at 365 days, six hours, 12 minutes and 30 seconds; in this he was only a few minutes off (the correct figure is just under 365 days and six hours). The translation of the Aryabhatiya into Latin in the 13th Century taught Europeans a great deal; it also revealed to them that an Indian had known things that Europe would only learn of a millennium later.

If Aryabhata was a giant of world science, his successors as the great Indian astronomers, Varamahira and Brahmagupta, have left behind vitally important texts that space does not allow me to summarise here. The mathematical excellence of Indian science, which I described in a recent column, sparkles through their work; Indian astronomers advanced their field by calculations rather than deductions from nature. Teresi says that "Indian astronomy, perhaps more than any other, has served as the crossroads and catalyst between the past and the future of the science." Inevitably, Indian cosmology was also in advance of the rest of the world. By the Fifth Century AD, Indians became the first to estimate the age of the earth at more than four billion years. Teresi's book has a fascinating section relating Hindu creation myths to modern cosmology; he discusses the notion of great intermeshing cycles of creation and destruction and draws stimulating parallels with the 'big bang' theory that currently commands the field.

The ancient Indians were no slouches in chemistry, which emerges in several verses of the Atharva Veda, composed around 1000 BC Two thousand years later, Indian practical chemistry was still more advanced than Europe's. The historian Will Durant wrote that the Vedic Indians were "ahead of Europe in industrial chemistry; they were masters of calcination, distillation, sublimation,

steaming, fixation, the production of light without heat, the mixing of anaesthetic and soporific powders, and the preparation of metallic salts, compounds and alloys." An Indian researcher, Udayana, studied gases by filling bladders and balloons with smoke, air and assorted gases. The ancient Jain thinkers predicted the notion of opposite electrical charges and advanced a notion of the 'spin' of particles which would not be discovered by the West till the 20th century.

So what about physics? Indian metaphysicists came upon the idea of atoms centuries before the Greek Democritus, known in the West as the father of particle physics. In 600 BC Kanada established a theory of atoms in his Vaisesika-sutra; the Jains went further in later years, expounding a concept of elementary particles. Indians also came closer to quantum physics and other current theories than anyone else in the ancient world.

The Upanishadic concepts of *svabhava* — the inherent nature of material objects — and *yadrchha* (the randomness of causality) are startlingly modern. The Upanishads developed the first classifications of matter, evolving into an awareness of the five elements and later of the five senses. When the Samkhya philosophers explained, in the Sixth Century B.C., that "the material universe emanates out of *prakriti*, the rootless root of the universe," they anticipate Aristotle. And when Indian philosophers spoke of *maya*, or that which gives illusory weight to the universe, they did so in terms that evoke the 20th Century idea of the Higgs field, the all-pervasive invisible field so beloved of particle physicists, which gives substance to illusion.

Which brings us back to technology? Did India have any technology of its own before the IITs? The answer is an emphatic 'yes'. I have already mentioned last time the extraordinary achievements of the Harappan civilisation, which included terra cotta ceramics fired at high temperatures, a sophisticated system of weights and measures, and sanitary engineering skills in advance of the West of the 19th century. Our skill at digging up, cutting and polishing diamonds goes back millennia. In the Sixth Century AD, India made the highest-quality sword steel in the world. Iron suspension bridges came from Kashmir; printing and paper-making were known in India before anywhere in the West; Europeans

sought Indian shipbuilding expertise; our textiles were rated the best in the world till well into the colonial era. But we were never very good with machinery; we made our greatest products with skilled labour. That was, in the end, how the British defeated us.

The Earlier Article

"Teresi's book studies the ancient non-Western foundations of modern science, and while heranges from the Babylonians and Mayans to Egyptians and other Africans,it is his references to India that caught my eye. And how astonishing those are! The Rig Veda asserted that gravitation held the universe together 24 centuries before the apple fell on Newton's head. The Vedic civilisation subscribed to the idea of a spherical earth at a time when everyone else, even the Greeks, assumed the earth was flat. By the Fifth Century A.D. Indians had calculated that the age of the earth was 4.3 billion years; as late as the 19th Century, English scientists believed the earth was a hundred million years old, and it is only in the late20th Century that Western scientists have come to estimate the earth to be about 4.6 billions years old.

If I were to focus on just one field in this column, it would be that of mathematics. India invented modern numerals (known to the world as "Arabic" numerals because the West got them from the Arabs, who learned them from us!). It was an Indian who first conceived of the zero, shunya; the concept of nothingness, shunyata, integral to Hindu and Buddhist thinking, simply did not exist in the West. ("In the history of culture, wrote Tobias Dantzig in 1930, the invention of zero will always stand out as one of the greatest single achievements of the human race.") The concept of infinite sets of rational numbers was understood by Jain thinkers in the Sixth Century B.C. Our forefathers can take credit for geometry, trigonometry, and calculus; the 'Bakhshali manuscript', 70 leaves of bark dating back to the early centuries of the Christian era, reveals fractions, simultaneous equations, quadratic equations, geometric progressions and even calculations of profit and loss with interest.

Indian mathematicians invented negative numbers: the British mathematician Lancelot Hogben, grudgingly acknowledging this,

suggested ungraciously that "perhaps because the Hindus were in debt more often than not, it occurred to them that it would also be useful to have a number which represent the amount of money one owes." (That theory would no doubt also explain why Indians were the first to understand how to add, multiply and subtract from zero—because zero was all, in Western eyes, we ever had.)

The Sulba Sutras, composed between 800 and 500 BC, demonstrate that India had Pythagoras' theorem before the great Greek was born, and a way of getting the square root of 2 correct to five decimal places. (Vedic Indians solved square roots in order to build sacrificial altars of the proper size.) The Kerala mathematician Nilakantha wrote sophisticated explanations of the irrationality of 'pi' before the West had heard of the concept. The Vedanga Jyotisha, written around 500 BC, declares: "Like the crest of a peacock, like the gem on the head of a snake, so is mathematics at the head of all knowledge." Our mathematicians were poets too! But one could go back even earlier, to the Harappan civilisation, for evidence of a highly sophisticated system of weights and measures in use around 3000 BC.

Archaeologists also found a 'ruler' made with lines drawn precisely 6.7 millimeters apart with an astonishing level of accuracy. The 'Indus inch' was a measure in consistent use throughout the area. The Harappans also invented kiln-fired bricks, less permeable to rain and floodwater than the mud bricks used by other civilisations of the time. The bricks contained no straw or other binding material and so turned out to be usable 5,000 years later when a British contractor dug them up to construct a railway line between Multan and Lahore. And while they were made in 15 different sizes, the Harappan bricks were amazingly consistent: their length, width and thickness were invariably in the ratio of 4:2:1.

"Indian mathematical innovations," writes Teresi, "had a profound effect on neighbouring cultures." The greatest impact was on Islamic culture, which borrowed heavily from Indian numerals, trigonometry and analemma. Indian numbers probably arrived in the Arab world in 773 AD with the diplomatic mission sent by the Hindu ruler of Sind to the court of the Caliph-al-Mansur. This

gave rise to the famous arithmetical text of al-Khwarizmi, written around 820 AD, which contains a detailed exposition of Indian mathematics, in particular the usefulness of the zero. With Islamic civilisation's rise and spread, knowledge of Indian mathematics reached as far afield as Central Asia, North Africa and Spain. "In serving as a conduit for incoming ideas and a catalyst for influencing others Teresi adds, India played a pivotal role His research is such a rich lode that I intend to return to ancient Indian science in a future column.

Imagine what Dick Terresi wrote in the book 'Lost Discoveries' and Shashi Tharoor wrote in 'The Hindu' newspaper had been contained in the text books produced by the BJP led NDA government on the research work done by some Indian scholar. There would have been a hue and cry that education was being saffronised. How wrong were the colonial scholars on Hindu India?

Not just in the field of science and technology, in the field of trade and economics and education also the performance of Hindu India had been amazing, till the colonial forces arrived in India and unsettled the social and economic institutions and balances within the society. The total number of pupils attending schools in England was estimated at around 40,000 in 1792, at 6,74,883 in 1818, 21,44,377 in 1851 and the total number of public and private schools were stated to be 3363 in 1801 and by stages it reached 46114 in 1851. [Beautiful Tree by Dharampal p. 10 – quoting House of Commons papers 1852-53 Col. 79 p.718] In contrast William Adam in his first report observed that there exist about 1,00,000 village schools in Bengal and Bihar around 1830s. [Dharampal p. 18 citing Report on the state of Education in Bengal] And much before Adam, for the areas of Madras Presidency, men like Thomas Munro had observed that 'every village had a school'. [Dharampal p 18 – again quoting House of Commons papers 1831-32 Vol. 9 p.468] In respect of the newly extended Presidency of Bombay around 1820, senior officials like G.L. Prendergast noted that there is hardly a village, greater or small, throughout our territory, in which there is not at least one school, and in larger villages more. Observations by Dr G.W. Leitner, in 1882, show that the spread

of education in Punjab around 1850 was of similar extent. [Ibid 18] England had fewer schools for children of ordinary people till about 1800. Says Dharampal: "Even many of the older Grammer Schools were in poor shape at that time. Moreover men who wrote about India (whether concerning its education, or its industry and crafts, or the some higher real wages of Indian agricultural labourers compared to such wages in England) belonged to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century society of Great Britain So they ought to be comparing in their minds the situation in England and India even though they did not say so explicitly. [Ibid 19] The Madras Presidency and Bengal-Bihar data presents a kind a revelation, says Dharampal. It presents a picture which is in sharp contrast to the various scholarly pronouncements of the past 100 years or more, in which it has been assumed that education of any sort in India, till very recent decades was mostly limited to the upper castes, namely castes other than the Soodras amongst the Hindoos and amongst the Muslims from among the ruling elites. The actual situation according to Dharampal which is revealed was different, if not quite the contrary, for at least amongst the Hindoos, in the districts of the Madras Presidency (and dramatically so in Tamil speaking areas) as well as the two districts of Bihar. It was the groups named Soodras and the castes considered below them, namely the scheduled castes, who dominated in thousands of the then still-existing shcools in practically each of these areas. [Ibid 21] For instance, in the Tamil speaking areas the total number of upper caste students numbered 16,338 and the soodras and other castes, namely those below Soodras numbered 65,069, four times the number of the forward caste students! [Ibid 27]. In terms percentages, the soodra share was around 70% in most places. [Ibid 27] Thus in education the pre-colonial India seemed to have been doing exceedingly well contrary to what the Indian students were taught in English men's schools before freedom and in Indian schools after freedom.

In terms of economy, trade and commerce, it is now known that till around 1750 together with the Chinese, India was producing 73% of the global industrial output – India's share being almost equal to that China in the aggregate. Even in 1830 what both these

economies produced was still around 60%. [Indian Science and Technology in the eighteenth century by Dharampal. Introduction by Claude Alvares p.]   In global trade also, the share of both amounted to about a half of the global trade in the year 1750. The figure of India which was 24% in 1750 came down to about 18% in 1830 and to about 8% in 1875 and to 1.5% in 1947. Thus, the pre-colonial India was a highly performing economy.

Karl Marx, who was a keen but distant observer of India wrote a perceptive article about India in New-York Daily Tribune in June 1853. The article clearly portrays India as a performing economy but the objection of Karl Marx about India was not that its economy was not performing but its social side was according to Marx stagnant and was changeless, and therefore unfit for revolution. The objection of Marx to the Indian economy was founded on ideological grounds and not on account of failure of the economy. The article is reproduced below as it is not a commonly read document.

Writes Karl Marx:

"Hindostan is an Italy of Asiatic dimensions, the Himalayas for the Alps, the Plains of Bengal for the Plains of Lombardy, the Deccan for the Apennines, and the Isle of Ceylon for the Island of Sicily. The same rich variety in the products of the soil, and the same dismemberment in the political configuration. Just as Italy has, from time to time, been compressed by the conqueror's sword into different national masses, so do we find Hindostan, when not under the pressure of the Mohammedan, or the Mogul, or the Briton, dissolved into as many independent and conflicting States as it numbered towns, or even villages.

Breaking the long write up for a moment, obviously the informants for Karl Marx appear to be the very same 18th century missionaries who had projected India as a self-torturing ascetic people. A.L. Basham clearly and effectively refuted this missionary view as not the correct and realistic assessment of India. Now continuing with Marx...

"I share not the opinion of those who believe in a golden age of Hindostan, without recurring, however, like Sir Charles Wood, for the confirmation of my view, to the authority of Khuli-Khan. But take, for example, the times of Aurangzeb; or the epoch, when the Mogul appeared in the North, and the Portuguese in the South; or the age of Mohammedan invasion, and of the Heptarchy in Southern India; or, if you will, go still more back to antiquity, take the mythological chronology of the Brahman himself, who places the commencement of Indian misery in an epoch even more remote than the Christian creation of the world."

So Karl Marx obviously had no sympathy for Indians and their culture. That the Indian ancestry is traced to a period before Christ is something which Marx could not believe. But unfortunately for Marx, the Harappan excavation has not come by the time he was writing on Indian antiquity. Had he the benefit of the Harappan discoveries, may be he would have had something different to think about India.

"There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindostan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindostan had to suffer before. I do not allude to European despotism, planted upon Asiatic despotism, by the British East India Company, forming a more monstrous combination than any of the divine monsters startling us in the Temple of Salsette. This is no distinctive feature of British Colonial rule, but only an imitation of the Dutch, and so much so that in order to characterise the working of the British East India Company, it is sufficient to literally repeat what Sir Stamford Raffles, the *English* Governor of Java, said of the old Dutch East India Company:

"The Dutch Company, actuated solely by the spirit of gain, and viewing their [Javan] subjects, with less regard or consideration than a West India planter formerly viewed a gang upon his estate, because the latter had paid the purchase money of human property, which the other had not, employed all the existing machinery

of despotism to squeeze from the people their utmost mite of contribution, the last dregs of their labor, and thus aggravated the evils of a capricious and semi-barbarous Government, by working it with all the practised ingenuity of politicians, and all the monopolizing selfishness of traders."

"All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid, and destructive as the successive action in Hindostan may appear, did not go deeper than its surface. England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindoo, and separates Hindostan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history."

It is clear Karl Marx understands the enormity of the damage that the British were inflicting on India. He also understands that all the wars and invasions that India underwent prior to the British did not impact on India deeper than its skin. He knows that the British were breaking down the entire edifice of the Indian society without an alternative sustenance in sight. He understands that the India that the British were evolving was cut off from all its past history.

"There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government; that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works. Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water-works the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations are used for fertilising the soil in Mesopotamia, Persia, and advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigative canals. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident, drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated, in the Orient where civilisation was too low and the territorial extent too

vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralising power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works. This artificial fertilisation of the soil, dependent on a Central Government, and immediately decaying with the neglect of irrigation and drainage, explains the otherwise strange fact that we now find whole territories barren and desert that were once brilliantly cultivated, as Palmyra, Petra, the ruins in Yemen, and large provinces of Egypt, Persia, and Hindostan; it also explains how a single war of devastation has been able to depopulate a country for centuries, and to strip it of all its civilisation."

Now, the British in East India accepted from their predecessors the department of finance and of war, but they have neglected entirely that of public works. Hence, the deterioration of an agriculture which is not capable of being conducted on the British principle of free competition, of *laissez-faire* and *laissez-aller*. But in Asiatic empires we are quite accustomed to see agriculture deteriorating under one government and reviving again under some other government. There the harvests correspond to good or bad government, as they change in Europe with good or bad seasons. Thus the oppression and neglect of agriculture, bad as it is, could not be looked upon as the final blow dealt to Indian society by the British intruder, had it not been attended by a circumstance of quite different importance, a novelty in the annals of the whole Asiatic world. However, changing the political aspect of India's past must appear, its social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decennium of the 19th century. The hand-loom and the spinning-wheel, producing their regular myriads of spinners and weavers, were the pivots of the structure of that society. From immemorial times, Europe received the admirable textures of Indian labor, sending in return for them her precious metals, and furnishing thereby his material to the goldsmith, that indispensable member of Indian society, whose love of finery is so great that even the lowest class, those who go about nearly naked, have commonly a pair of golden ear-rings and a gold ornament of some kind hung round their necks. Rings on the fingers and toes have also been common. Women as well as children frequently

wore massive bracelets and anklets of gold or silver, and statuettes of divinities in gold and silver were met with in the households. It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian hand-loom and destroyed the spinning-wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindostan, and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons. From 1818 to 1836, the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5,200. In 1824, the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards, while in 1837 it surpassed 64,000,000 of yards. But at the same time the population of Dacca decreased from 150,000 inhabitants to 20,000. This decline of Indian towns celebrated for their fabrics was by no means the worst consequence. British steam and science uprooted, over the whole surface of Hindostan, the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry.

Marx clearly understands that the British have uprooted the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry. He knows that the mechanised products of the British industry were ruining the local economy, and the British exports to India risen by 5200 times during 1824 to 1837. He knows that the textile rich Dacca had been virtually deserted.

"These two circumstances – the Hindoo, on the one hand, leaving, like all Oriental peoples, to the Central Government the care of the great public works, the prime condition of his agriculture and commerce, dispersed, on the other hand, over the surface of the country, and agglomerated in small centers by the domestic union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits – these two circumstances had brought about, since the remotest times, a social system of particular features – the so-called *village system,* which gave to each of these small unions their independent organisation and distinct life. The peculiar character of this system may be judged from the following description, contained in an old official report of the British House of Commons on Indian affairs:

"A village, geographically considered, is a tract of country comprising some hundred or thousand acres of arable and waste

lands; politically viewed it resembles a corporation or township. Its proper establishment of officers and servants consists of the following descriptions: The *potail*, or head inhabitant, who has generally the superintendence of the affairs of the village, settles the disputes of the inhabitants attends to the police, and performs the duty of collecting the revenue within his village, a duty which his personal influence and minute acquaintance with the situation and concerns of the people render him the best qualified for this charge. The *kurnum* keeps the accounts of cultivation, and registers everything connected with it. The *tallier* and the *totie,* the duty of the former of which consists [...] in gaining information of crimes and offenses, and in escorting and protecting persons travelling from one village to another; the province of the latter appearing to be more immediately confined to the village, consisting, among other duties, in guarding the crops and assisting in measuring them. The boundary-man, who preserves the limits of the village, or gives evidence respecting them in cases of dispute. The Superintendent of Tanks and Watercourses distributes the water [...] for the purposes of agriculture. The Brahmin, who performs the village worship. The schoolmaster, who is seen teaching the children in a village to read and write in the sand. The calendar-brahmin, or astrologer, etc. These officers and servants generally constitute the establishment of a village; but in some parts of the country it is of less extent, some of the duties and functions above described being united in the same person; in others it exceeds the above-named number of individuals. Under this simple form of municipal government, the inhabitants of the country have lived from time immemorial. The boundaries of the villages have been but seldom altered; and though the villages themselves have been sometimes injured, and even desolated by war, famine or disease, the same name, the same limits, the same interests, and even the same families have continued for ages. The inhabitants gave themselves no trouble about the breaking up and divisions of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged. The *potail* is still the head inhabitant, and still acts as the petty judge or magistrate, and collector or renter of the village."

"These small stereotype forms of social organism have been to the greater part dissolved, and are disappearing, not so much through the brutal interference of the British tax-gatherer and the British soldier, as to the working of English steam and English free trade. Those family-communities were based on domestic industry, in that peculiar combination of hand-weaving, hands-spinning and hand-tilling agriculture which gave them self-supporting power. English interference having placed the spinner in Lancashire and the weaver in Bengal, or sweeping away both Hindoo spinner and weaver, dissolved these small semi-barbarian, semi-civilised communities, by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia."

Karl Marx had noted that the village organisation of the Indian society and the economy had dispersed the economic regime and had given self supporting power. He had also noted that it gave a measure of autonomy and independence to the small unit of village. But he regards them without adequate information about their true nature as semi-barbarian and semi-civilised. And finally Marx gloats over the destruction that the British political and economic machine wreaks on the Indian community and village system.

"Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organisations disorganised and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilisation, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village-communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed

upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindostan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalising worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Kanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow."

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.

Then, whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings, we have the right, in point of history, to exclaim with Goethe:
"Solte these Qual uns qualen
Da sie unsre Lust vermehrt
Hat nieht nyriaden Seelan
Timur's Herrchaft augezehrt?
"Should this torture then torment us
Since it brings us greater pleasure?
Were not through the rule or Timur
Souls devoured without measure?"
[From Goethe's "An Suleika", *Westöstlicher Diwan*]
Karl Marx: Written on June 10, 1853; First published in the New-York Daily Tribune on June 25, 1853

Thus, Marx finally gets reconciled to the destruction being caused by the British as such destruction and torture bring pleasure. But the most noticeable aspect of Marx's approach is the pleasure he derives regardless of the destruction of a whole civilisation and a social order, despite the fact that in economic terms it was functional and had given the participants in the village economic order, according to Marx himself, a measure of freedom and independence. Yet the only reason why Marx preferred to feel comfortable at the destruction of the ancient civilisation of India and its society and economy along, that is throwing the baby with the bathwater, was that 'its social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity'. Marx considered that the changeless India was a danger as that would not accept revolution. The fact remains that the British and Marx were both agreed on the destruction of the Indian economy, society and civilisation, each for their own reason. But the most critical aspect of the Marxian assessment of India was that he never visited India, and his knowledge of India was limited to the missionary information about the Indian society and spirituality. His views and the Christian missionary views seem to be identical on the Indian social and spiritual side. But the undeniable aspect of the Marxian analysis is that his information base was biased and inadequate and despite that he knew that in economic terms the Indian social and economic order was a performing civilisational asset, but he wanted the Indian structure to be brought down not for the reason it was not performing, but it was not changing, and for a thinker who postulated revolution as the condition for progress, a stable society like India was changeless and therefore semi-civilised and semi-barbarian. So in his view the destruction of the performing economy of India was a pleasurable destruction as that alone would lead to change and prepare India for the eventual revolution. But unfortunately for Marx, India has a knack of escaping changes which it does not want and accept changes which it thinks would be necessary, because India changes and at the same time changeless.
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