

Rs. 200/-
ISSN 2582-449X

A UGC Care Listed and Peer-Reviewed Journal

Bharatiyata Special



Committed to India's Energy Security...
Since last six decades

Follow us on:



OilIndiaLtd



OilIndiaLtd



oilindialtd



oilindialtd



OilIndiaLtdPR



Oil India Limited



www.oil-india.com

Editorial Board

Sh. Ram Bahadur Rai
 Sh. Achyutanand Mishra
 Sh. Balbir Punj
 Sh. Atul Jain
 Prof. Bharat Dahiya
 Sh. Isht Deo Sankrityaayan

Board of Expert Editors

Prof. Sunil K. Choudhary
 Prof. Sheila Rai
 Dr. Chandrapal Singh
 Dr. Seema Singh
 Dr. Rajeev Ranjan Giri
 Dr. Pradeep Deswal
 Dr. Pradeep Kumar
 Dr. Chandan Kumar
 Dr. Rahul Chimurkar
 Dr. Mahesh Kaushik

Managing Editor

Sh. Arvind Singh
 +91-9868550000
 me.arvindsingh@manthandigital.com

Design

Sh. Nitin Panwar
 nitscopy@gmail.com

Printer

Ocean Trading Co.
 132, Patparganj Industrial Area,
 Delhi-110092

Manthan

Journal of Social and Academic Activism

Year: 46, Issue: 3

July-Sept. 2025

Bharatiyata Special

Editor

Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

A UGC Care Listed and Peer-Reviewed Journal

Manthan is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed, academic and theme oriented journal dedicated to the social and academic activism, published quarterly from Delhi. It is always oriented on a particular theme. It welcomes original research articles from authors doing research in different genres of Humanities.

Copyright © Research and Development Foundation for Integral Humanism. All rights reserved.

Disclaimer: Research and Development Foundation for Integral Humanism makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information contained in its publications. However, it makes no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness or suitability for any purpose of the content of its publications. Any opinions and views expressed in the publications are the opinions and the views of the authors and are not the views of or endorsed by the Research and Development Foundation for Integral Humanism.

Publisher

Research and Development Foundation For Integral Humanism

Ekam Bhawan, 37, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002

Phone: 011-23210074; E-mail: info@manthandigital.com

Website: www.manthandigital.com

Contents

1. Contributors' profile		03
2. Editorial		04
3. It is Hindutva that is Indianness	Shri Mukul Kanitkar	06
4. What is Indianness and Why is it Needed?	Dr. Indushekhar Tatpurush	15
5. The Spirit of India & Bhakti Literature	Prof. Nand Kishore Pandey	24
6. Arthayam: Economic Vision for World Welfare	Dr. Mahesh Kaushik	31
7. State & Good Governance: The Indian Paradigm	Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma	38
8. A Deliberative Document of Nation and Nationalism of India and Europe	Prof. Vishwanath Mishra	48
9. Indian Spirit & the Sects	Dr. Chandra Prakash Singh	56
10. Etymology: Hind and Hindustan	Prof. Mazhar Asif	63
11. Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyata	Shri Ramanand Sharma	69
12. Feminine in Bhartiyata: A Discourse	Dr. Upasna Tiwari	78
13. The Universality of Indian Measurement of Time and its Astronomical Accuracy	Prof. Bhagawati Prakash Sharma Dr. Jaya Sharma	90
14. Indian Consciousness & the World of Performing Arts	Prof. Chandan Kumar	95

Contributors' Profile

Shri Mukul Kanitkar In 1990, Shri Mukul Kanitkar earned his Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degree from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Law College, Nagpur. Since 1990, he has served as a Jeevanvrat (full-time life worker) at the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, a role he continued until 2012. An educated pracharak since his third year of studies, Mukulji has been a propagator of the organization's ideals from 1990 onward. From 2012 to 2016, he worked as the Joint Organizing Secretary of the Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, and from the latter half of 2016 he has held the responsibility of All-India Organizing Secretary. He is currently a member of the All-India team of the Publicity Department of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and is responsible for coordinating intellectual outreach and discussions (Vimarsh). His base of operations is Nagpur.

Dr. Indushekhar Tatpurush Renowned poet, editor, and columnist. Major works: (Poetry collections) – "Rain in the Bright Sunshine" and "Eye on the Back"; (Essay collection) – "Hindutva: A Discussion" (Edited works) – "Mahamanishi Deendayal" and "National Consciousness, Culture, and Literature" Edited the All India Sahitya Parishad's magazine, "Sahitya Parikrama." His poems have been included in the curriculum of several universities. He has received numerous national awards and honors in the field of literature. Contact No. 8387062611

Prof. Nand Kishore Pandey is a distinguished scholar of cultural criticism in Indian literature. He holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Hindi from Banaras Hindu University. He has served as Professor and Head of the Hindi Department at Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, and at the University of Rajasthan as Research Director, Head of the Hindi Department, Director of the Humanities Chair, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. He was also Director of the Central Hindi Institute, Agra, under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, for five years, and Chair of the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, Government of India. For his contributions to Hindi literature and language promotion, he received the Vishwa Hindi Samman at the World Hindi Conference in Fiji (2023). His noted works include Sant Rajjab, Dadupanth ke Shikhar Sant, Bharatbodh aur Bhakti Kavita, and Aadhunik Hindi aur Sanskriti Bodh. He is currently the Vice-Chancellor of Haridev Joshi University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jaipur.

Dr. Mahesh Kaushik is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics in Aurobindo College of Delhi University and also a scholar in the Centre for Global Studies of the University of Delhi. He is a regular author in different journals and newspapers. He is rendering his services as a guest speaker in SCRT, Nehru Yuva Kendra for last 15 years. Working on different election study projects as a Chief Convener of Electoral survey in the Centre for Global Studies in the University of Delhi, he regularly participates in the election related topics on electronic media.

Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma worked as a National General Secretary and Treasurer of the Indian Council of Political Science for more than a decade, former editor of The Indian Journal of Political Science and Indian Political Science Research Journal and Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut. He has been the Vice Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari. He is a scholar of ancient Indian Sanskrit literature and Indian vision of political thought. He is engaged in teaching, research, and administration for the last 38 years.

Prof. Vishwanath Mishra is a Professor of Contemporary Political Theories and International Relations in Arya Mahila PG College of BHU. Five books are credited to his name are Bhartiya Rajneeti mein Kshetravad aur Nrijatiyata, Rajvidya evam Rajneetishastra, Pashchimi Gyanodaya ke Vaicharik Sankat, Hinsa ka Utkhanan, and Sanatan Gnadhi: Babu se Vaishvik Samvad.

Dr. Chandraprakash Singh is the Director of the Arundhati Vashishtha Research Chair, Prayagraj. He holds a Master's degree from the University of Allahabad and earned his Ph.D. from Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar, on the topic "Vedic Foundations of Indian Religious Traditions." Author and editor of over a dozen books, his notable works include Veda evam Vibhinn Sampradaya, Hindu Sanskriti mein Rashtravad, Rashtriya Asmita ki Nirantarata, Rashtra Drishti, Ekatma Manavavad: Vibhinn Ayaam, and Hindu Drashta Ashok Singhal. For the past fifteen years, he has also served as editor of The Journal of Indian Thought and Policy Research.

Prof. Mazhar Asif an expert on Sufi literature and medieval Indian history, was a professor at the Centre for Persian and Central Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is currently the Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia University. Contact: mazharassam@gmail.com

Shri Ramanand Sharma teaches Political Science at Aryabhata College, University of Delhi, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Delhi University. He is a recipient of the INSPIRE Award from DST, Government of India, and holds a PGDILD from the Indian Society of International Law. His research interests include Indian politics and political thought. Ramanand has contributed to various academic publications and authored chapters for SOL, DU course materials.

Dr. Upasna Tiwari is an Assistant Professor of History at Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi. Holding a Ph.D. from Allahabad University, her academic interests include Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology. She has published multiple papers on ancient history and the Indian knowledge system. Actively involved in college administration and curriculum development, she regularly contributes to national conferences and webinars. A passionate educator and lifelong learner, she is deeply engaged in community development programs and scholarly-cultural initiatives.

Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma is an economist and an expert on ancient Indian scriptures. He served as the Vice Chancellor of Gautam Buddha University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh. He is the convener of the India Solar Power Development Forum and co-convener of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch. He is currently the Group President (Planning and Control) at the Pacific University Group. Contact: bpsharma131@yahoo.co.in, Mob: 9829243459

Dr. Jaya Sharma Associate Professor, Faculty of Management Studies, Pacific Academic University of Higher Education and Research, Udaipur.

Prof. Chandan Kumar is a professor of Hindi, Faculty of Arts, Delhi University, Delhi. Acharya Chandan is renowned as a promoter of Bhakti theatre. Acharya Chandan's special interest is in the study of arts and performing arts in relation to the Bhakti literature of Northeast India. Acharya Chandan is credited with establishing the poems and biography of Muslim poetess and Krishna devotee Taj Bibi in the Hindi world. Acharya Chandan's book 'Hinduani Haun Rahungi', based on Taj Bibi, is in the news. Acharya Chandan's published books in Hindi -- 'Chhattisgarhia Bahurupak', 'Rani Durgavati', 'Bhakt Salabeg' (play), 'Badla Padma Ata' (play), 'Srimanta Shankardev: Life and Philosophy' and 'Sikh Philosophy: Continuity of Sanatan' -- have created popular wisdom.



गैल (इंडिया) लिमिटेड



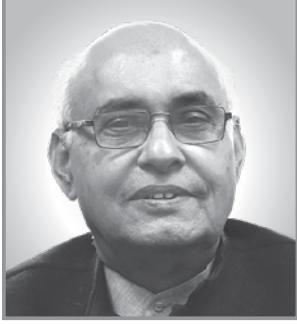
भारत की अग्रणी प्राकृतिक गैस कंपनी

एनर्जाइजिंग पॉसिबिलिटीज

देश में बेची जाने वाली प्राकृतिक गैस में 53% का योगदान

भारत में प्राकृतिक गैस ट्रांसमिशन में लगभग 68% की बाजार हिस्सेदारी

Editorial



Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

This Special Issue of *Manthan* on Bharatiyata (Indianness) lends expression to a particular outlook. It is a way of looking at and perceiving India, at its political self, which has been in a state of change through various ages. While it cannot be denied that the vicissitudes of politics have left their imprint on the Indian mind, but India in its essence is a geo-cultural entity. And it is the perennialism of this entity and its identity that is Bharatiyata or Indianness. It is essential to understand the incidence of political invasions and the resistance to them. The shadows these invasions cast on the body politic of the nation were temporary, and must remain so. India has its own fundamental identity, which is blessed with the strength of perennialism, and it is for this reason it is Sanatan (eternal). The imperialist attempts to keep this eternality shrouded in miasma disturb the path of our vision. It is therefore necessary to remember again and again that which is constant with its contemporary variations and which is also precious for humanity. That is the reason this special issue is in your hands.

The scholarly writers in this issue have analyzed the various dimensions of the subject supported by research. This will continue in the next issue as well. The next issue will be Bharatiyata Special Issue-2. The fundamental identity that has been highlighted in this issue, its diverse but integrated expression has essayed very well by the great individuals of India, Indian literature and various sects. This will be integrated in the Special Issue-2.

Two special issues of *Manthan* published earlier this year, the Dalit and Pasmanda Muslim issues, have received a very positive response. The editorial board is grateful for this. The next two issues will also provide nourishment to our readership. I am hopeful of this and express my heartfelt gratitude to all the research-oriented scholarly writers of *Manthan*.

As always, your response is eagerly awaited.

With warm wishes

mahesh.chandra.sharma@live.com



Shri Mukul Kanitkar

It is Hindutva that is Indianness

It is the scientific way of life developed by the sages who realized the laws of existence that is called Hindutva. An analysis of the interrelationship between Hindutva and Indianness...

In his historic lecture delivered at Uttarpara in Kolkata after being released from Alipore Jail, Maharshi Aurobindo had declared, “When it is said that India will expand and rise, it means that Sanatan Dharma will influence the entire world. India exists because of Dharma and for Dharma.” Maharshi Aurobindo had many spiritual experiences in the Alipore prison. It was in his Uttarpara lecture that he stated that Swami Vivekananda himself had given him initiation and guided him in his *sadhana* (spiritual practice). As a result, he started seeing Vasudeva (Krishna or the Almighty) in everyone—the judge, the lawyer, the defendant, the bailiff, the audience. This experience transformed the revolutionary Aurobindo into a spiritual seeker Maharshi. With the belief that Dharma Sadhana is essential for carrying out national work, he spent his fertile life in Puducherry, a holy place of pilgrimage.

Swami Vivekananda too described dharma as the life force of India. In a speech delivered in Lahore in 1897, Vivekananda described the innate nature of every nation. Nationalism is the expression

of this nature. The nature of India is dharma. Therefore, Hindutva is the nationalism of India. The topic of the lecture was “Common Basis of Hindu Dharma”. Swami Vivekananda propounded that the Vedas, devotion to God, immortality of soul, karma and rebirth, Omkar, as commonly accepted elements in all the sects and communities of the Hindus.

In order to understand the concept of Indianness, we have to understand the basic elements of Hinduism properly. The philosophy of life that developed in the tradition of unity through the principles and attained continuity in India is called Hinduism. Those sages who realized the rules of existence developed a scientific way of life and guided all of humanity in the art of living this joyful, blissful, spiritual life. Over time, this became popular in the name of Hinduism. The sages realized these rules that were independent of place, time and situation for all human beings. Therefore, it came to be known Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana means eternal, infinite and timeless. These eternal principles became popular in conduct as Yugadharma. Therefore,

to understand the relationship between Hinduism and Indianness, some basic elements of the Hindu philosophy of life will have to be clarified first.¹

Integral Vision

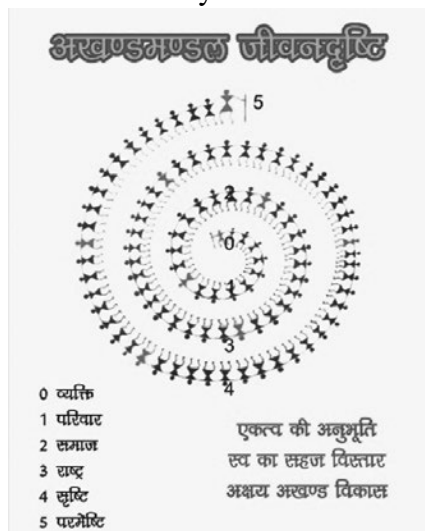
By knowing the unity inherent in the entire universe, we have moulded it into our lives. Every aspect of life has been developed on the basis of the organic unity of the whole universe. This unity is manifested in everything from knowledge to the arts and sciences. This is not just a matter of spiritual unity, but a totally scientific unity which modern science is now understanding. Swami Vivekananda had repeated the message of the Upanishads, “For even a straw to grow, the whole universe has to work. Even an atom cannot move without taking the whole universe along.” It is the realization of this organic unity that is real knowledge. To know the unity inherent in the

basic element that can explain all of creation. It is that entity which physicists are in search of. They are trying to obtain it in the form of oneness of energy. It is in the absence of this integrated vision that the search for truth is going astray in the present times. In the Hindu traditional system, it is the experience of this unity that is the ultimate goal of knowledge.²

At present, due to the dominance of the Western outlook in the entire world, instead of unbroken integrity, it is fragmented thoughts that have become the basis of all knowledge tradition. Due to science too emerging from this fragmented thinking, it has moved towards destructiveness. Not only that, after a certain limit, the progress of science also seems to have stopped. Answers to many questions are not found. Only India can bring forth a solution to this problem. In the field of medicine, allopathy has faced a problem. Along with any remedy, there are side effects as well. Holistic and integrated thinking is the only solution to this. Therefore, the welfare of humanity lies in the coordination of the integrated view of Ayurveda and the diagnostic technique of allopathy. The same situation is in business and economics. Owing to a fragmented worldview, competition has engulfed the entire world. Due to the preponderance of the market based on exploitation, the price of economic development for some is being paid in the form

of the poverty of many people. Achieving the goal of “*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*” (may all beings be happy) is possible only through the outlook of Hindutva.

Indeed, it is this very oneness of Hinduism that has manifested in Indianness. The feeling of considering the whole world as one's family, i.e., “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*”, does not arise all at once. This is the sublimest state of spread of the heart's domain. The unbroken globular expansion of the mind is the realization of the truth of existence being one. The individual ‘I’ does not have a separate existence. We cannot even introduce ourselves without mentioning our relationship. Therefore, the proliferation of this intimate sense of the individual is the family, which is the fundamental unit in Hindu realm. In the social, economic and political sphere, Indianness means the manifestation of the family feeling of Hinduism. We experience the reflection of our own selves in the family in a natural way. It is this feeling of oneness is called *aatmeeyata* or affinity. We easily become one with the happiness, sorrow, dreams, aspirations and resolutions of the family. Special efforts have to be made to expand this affinity beyond the family to the levels of society, nation and all of humanity. These efforts are naturally intrinsic to the Hindu way of life. To experience the unity of the family, society, nation, creation and ultimately the Supreme Being, and to have



diversity of the entire universe is knowledge. The ultimate discovery of a chemist will be the

magnanimity in the mind for that are important parts of Hinduism. The exercitation in this unbroken circle-like spread of the realm of heart is the foundation of the Indian social structure.³

Manifestation of Divinity is the Aim of Life

Perfection is already present in every living being. This dormant divinity is striving to express itself. The aim of life is to manifest it in its totality. Education, training, livelihood, relations, etc., are all simply the means to manifest the divinity of life. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya has clearly defined this element of Hinduism in his *Ekatma Manav Darshan* (Integral Humanism) as a philosophical model of the times. The expression of the one and only unique consciousness is known as personality. The reflection of its collective consciousness—the Virata—is seen in the nature of the nation. Let us try to understand this classical principle from a scientific point of view.

The sages perceived the existence of the world at the level of energy. This was experiential knowledge. Through this, they came to know the rules of the structure of the world. All other methods and traditions developed from these rules. The following are the three scientific rules of existence and of the world:

(a) **Oneness:** The entire world is biologically one. Within the diversity that is visible from the outside, there is only

one consciousness working. Today, modern science too has started knowing about this oneness. Experts in the field of environment say that changes happening anywhere in the world affect the whole world. This is becoming clearer now. It has been proved today that an accident in any corner of the world affects the entire environment. The melting of ice at the North Pole is resulting in the increase in temperatures in Africa and Europe. In physics too, the study of particles is yielding us the knowledge of the whole world being interconnected. The whole world is one. The contiguous existence of interconnected, mutually complementary and interdependent parts is the rule of the world. This 'oneness' is a matter of experience.⁴

(b) **The Uniqueness in Oneness:** When oneness manifests in multitudinousness, every manifestation is unique in itself. The principle of Hinduism is that the One manifests in many forms—'Ekoham Bahusyam'. This diverse world is the manifestation of that 'One'. This manifestation is not a mechanical repetition. Even at the physical level, every object in the world is unique in itself. Every human being too is unique. No one is ordinary or the same, every individual is unusual and special in his own way. Let us understand this by a direct physical example. The fingerprints of every person are unique in themselves. Of the 8 billion people in the world, no

two fingerprints are the same. Not only this, the fingerprints of those who have died and those who have not yet been born are also unique. This is the law of nature. Therefore, this multiplicity is not just the phenomenon of many becoming similar, but is an expression in many forms having their own uniqueness. This world is made up of various parts of one whole. The structure, function and role of each organ are unique in themselves. Each one of us has to experience our oneness. Only then will our role be clear and we will be able to make productive contributions.

(c) **Organic Relationship:** Various parts have an organic relationship with the whole. Just as a branch that breaks off from a tree dries up, similarly, a part cannot survive without being connected to the whole. A branch attached to a tree blossoms and grows but dries up as soon as it is cut. Similarly, the existence of different parts of the world is meaningless without being connected to unity. It is essential to understand the living relationship of man with man, man with society, and of humans with creation. The mutual relationship of the whole world is complementary and alive. We are all parts of the same 'one'. Just as different organs have their own functions and each is special and important in itself, similarly, every person, family, society in the world also has a special and important function. It is necessary to experience this as

well.

Understanding these three rules, determining the aim of one's life in relation to perfection, and manifesting one's role, work and nature through proper execution is the manifestation of divinity in the true sense. It is the origin and development of this Hindu scientific method in conduct, of shaping life, that is Indianness.

Respect for Diversity

It is the result of the oneness of mind that diversity is respected in India. In our land, we know the scientific fact that when one element manifests, it does so with oneness. No two living things in the world are the same. Even two leaves of the same tree are not completely the same. This eternal Hindu principle was brought to life in India. It is because of this that we have respected diversity in all traditions, from food, clothing to everything else. We do not want to make everyone the same. We give everyone an opportunity to flourish and blossom according to their origin. External diversity does not matter a great deal due to the understanding of innate oneness. No matter how different one is from outside, one is the same from inside. Because of this not being clear, uniformity has come to be considered essential for oneness in the West. Due to the Westernization of the entire world, one can see the same attire, clothes and hair everywhere. The beauty of diversity has vanished.

It is the result of the oneness of mind that diversity is respected in India. In our land, we know the scientific fact that when one element manifests, it does so with oneness. No two living things in the world are the same.

Even two leaves of the same tree are not completely the same. This eternal Hindu principle was brought to life in India. It is because of this that we have respected diversity in all traditions, from food, clothing to everything else. We do not want to make everyone the same. We give everyone an opportunity to flourish and blossom according to their origin

Originality becomes important in art, knowledge and method. Imitation is looked upon as inferior. The promotion of originality becomes essential. Originality is a sign of life, of organicity. Uniform production is possible only through machines. The insistence on uniformity has brought mechanicalness in art and culture as well. But in India, originality is considered art. From childhood itself, the artist is encouraged to do something new. Training by imitation is for animals. An important characteristic of humans is the ability to imagine. Due to respect for diversity, the development of imagination is important in Indian life. Today it is necessary to awaken it again.⁵

It is because of respect for diversity that an all-inclusive way of life developed in India. "*Ekam Sat Viprahā Bahudhā Vadanti*"—the wise explain the same truth in different ways. This mantra became the basis for accepting diversity. It is because of the insistence on uniformity of the method of worship (religion)

that fanaticism and the terror caused by it have spread in the world. The sect that insists that my God alone is the true one and all others are devils, insists on converting everyone to its faith. All communal conflicts arise from this. In India, diversity has been accepted even in worship. That is the reason people of different faiths live here in harmony. It is commonly stated that "unity in diversity is the specialty of India". But in Indian thought, this is not artificial unity. In actuality, "diverse expressions of unity" is our mantra. It is this we celebrate.⁶

Faith in God

The very nature of a Hindu is spirituality. As a result, devotion to God is manifested in all aspects of life. Whether it is arts like dance, singing, leather work, metal smelting or weapon handling, the ultimate goal of all is to experience God. We have even turned kāma i.e., sexual gratification towards God. This is the meaning of the sculptures of the Khajuraho and Konark

temples. Attaining God is the ultimate goal of knowledge in India. Here, mathematics is not used to count the profits of business; through math too, we want to know the truth beyond numbers, and attain the unalterable God. When we talk about devotion to God, we are not talking about theism. We do not ask to believe in anything. Our emphasis is not on believing, but on knowing. Therefore, even an atheist can enter the field of knowledge. But the goal of his acquisition of knowledge will also be 'truth'. There, devotion to God will be in the form of truthfulness. This is clearly explained in the form of the Vedic mantra "*Ishāvāsyamidam Sarvam*"⁷ as well as the shloka of the *Gītā* "Samam Sarveshu Bhūteshu"⁸. Today, due to the erroneous concept of secularism, we have banished this basic objective of knowledge from national life.

Development based on Dharma Leading to Self-Realization

The outcome of the intimate sensitivity towards biological creation was that India followed the unique model of holistic and eternal development for centuries. The integrated attainment of both *Abhyudaya* (rise) and *Nishreyasa* (self-realization) was considered the goal of life. It is by this that dharma is defined. "*Abhyudaya Nishreyasau Dharmah*."⁹ *Abhyudaya* means material development but at the

same time, one has to take care of *Nishreyasa*, i.e., the elevation of the self. Both are not separate. Hence, development cannot be sought at the cost of destruction of nature. While striving for *Abhyudaya*, one has to take care of the welfare of both society and creation. Only then can our progress be *dharmic*. The *Purushartha* of Dharma is the basis of the other three—Artha (prosperity), Kama (gratification) and Moksha (liberation). Only that Artha and Kama which are based on Dharma are to be availed of. Being based on dharma, the family, society and creation are taken care of even in earning wealth and the fulfilment of one's desires. Holistic development is possible only with the coordination of all of these. Dharma was established in the society through the four *purusharthas* and the order of the ashramas. The ideal of sacrifice is expressed as "*Shatahasténa Samāhara Sahasrahasténa Sank ra*", meaning, "To generate with a hundred hands and distribute with a thousand hands". This is the instruction of the Vedas.

The rich tradition of Indian trade has been continuing for thousands of years. We may have given the highest respect to renunciation and sacrifice, but this does not mean that we have glorified poverty. Hindus have always been worshippers of Goddess Lakshmi. We were world leaders in both productivity and trade. From the islands of the

Far East to the Mediterranean Sea, our merchant ships have been exporting culture along with prosperity. Trade continued from Central Asia to China through the Silk Route. All this trade was based on dharma. The honourable conduct of Hindu traders has woven its place in the languages, proverbs and legends of many countries. Even today, there is a saying in the Japanese language, "A Hindu never lies". This credibility is the result of the conduct of our traders for centuries. This is the ideal of progress.

At the turn of the millennium, in 2000, the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), an organization of the rich countries of the world, conferred the responsibility of writing the economic history of the world to the renowned economist Angus Maddison. After study and research, a book named *Economic History of the World—A Millennial Perspective* was published. In that book, the economic history of the past 2,000 years, beginning from the birth of Christ, has been presented with complete research. Till the beginning of the 15th century, India was leading the world. It had a share of 43% to 66% in the gross product of world trade. After that, due to the rise of China, India's share seems to be decreasing. Production did not decrease, but the overall share did decrease. At the beginning of the 19th century, when the British rule stabilised in the

country, India's contribution to the world's production was 23%. In-depth research is necessary on this subject as to how the principle of holistic progress was established in society as well as in its formal structures. The same model of development will have to be implemented today with the changes in accordance with the times.¹⁰

Collective Character (Nationality)

Indian culture is collective in nature, because Hinduism believes in the collective. All our Vedic prayers are in the plural. Swami Vivekananda went to the extent of stating that individual salvation is not possible. This culture of collectiveness is a unique characteristic of India. An individual is brought up from childhood to sacrifice for his larger unit. An individual should sacrifice for the family. The family should sacrifice for the community, the community for the village, and the village for the nation. This has been our traditional message, expressed as, “*Tyajét Ekam Kulasyārthé, Grāmasyārthé Kulam Tyajét. Grāmam Janapadasyārthé, Mokṣhārthé Prithv m Tyajét*” (Forsake the individual for the sake of the clan and leave the clan for the sake of the village. One should give up the village for the sake of the people, and the earth for the sake of salvation)¹¹ It is the collective that draws respect. At one time, caste and society were the means of expanding the mind

Indian culture is collective in nature, because Hinduism believes in the collective. All our Vedic prayers are in the plural. Swami Vivekananda went to the extent of stating that individual salvation is not possible. This culture of collectiveness is a unique characteristic of India. An individual is brought up from childhood to sacrifice for his larger unit. An individual should sacrifice for the family. The family should sacrifice for the community, the community for the village, and the village for the nation

of the individual and developing a collective character. Owing to castes acquiring a narrow political framework and appeal, the awakening of nationalism is now the best means of achieving the development of collective character.

For the development of nationalism, it is necessary to awaken national pride. For this, a correct historical perspective is essential. Training should be given to look at history with pride in one's selves. All countries propagate their specialties. In India though, there is no need to forcibly increase pride. Only the truth needs to be revealed to the present generation. The most important point in the awakening of nationalism is pride towards the nation. Today our generation is not at all proud of its country. They have been taught that whatever is good and great comes from foreign countries. This is why travelling abroad becomes a matter of pride. Therefore, in building national character, it is necessary to provide complete information about the things of the country that inspire pride. Information

about the achievements made by the countrymen in the past and present, in every field of knowledge and science, should become a part of general discussion. Thus, looking at history with the right perspective is also necessary for building national character.

Along with pride, it is necessary to make people aware of the national goal as well. Progress can be made easy if the personal goal of life is in tune with the national goal. This will make us aware of the nation's vow. Only when the nation is aware of its vow can it develop to its full potential. The root cause of all the current problems of the country is that India has forgotten its vow. The welfare of the world is India's life goal. All Hindus pray with the shloka “*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*” (may all be happy)¹². Our ideal is to make every human being in the world better, expressed as “*Kriṇvanto Vishvamāryam*” is one of our ennobling ideals.¹³ India's eternal life goal is to train the entire world in the science and art of living that originated in our land. This is why India has

always been called the teacher of the world. Today, getting it back to its respected position should be the life goal of all of us who are part of the nation. Only individual character building is not enough. Along with all-round personality development and moral uplift, the development of national character is our goal. If individual scholarship, talent, wealth are not dedicated to the noble national interest, it is not only useless but also leads to destruction. Therefore, the *sanskara* (attribute) of nationalism through emotional sublimation builds collective character. This is the eternal Indian value.

Family Values

Hinduism is a culture of relationships. We greet even strangers with a relational form of address. We call even a stranger walking on the road as “Bhaisahab, Behenji”. For us, everyone is family. We call school a “Shala Parivar”. All colleagues in the branch of a bank are called branch *parivar*. For us, the ideal

of any collective unit is the family. Any group can express its best only when it develops as a family. Genuine collective functioning, which is called teamwork in today’s terminology, is possible only with the family values of intimacy, sacrifice, cooperation and fulfillment of duty. The ideal of “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” (the world is one family) is the ultimate ideal for establishing family values in the world.

Sense of Responsibility (Function of Yajna)

Yajna is a unique concept of Hindu culture. If every task is done as an offering in a yajna, a noble sense of responsibility arises in that task. The meaning of yajna is not confined only to offering *samidha* (sacred twigs) in the fire by performing *havan* (fire ritual). Although this too is completely scientific, the meaning of the concept of yajna is deeper than this. The cooperation of the universe is necessary to maintain our life cycle. The contribution of units larger than us in our life is like a debt to us.

Yajna is the medium to repay this debt. It is a beautiful means to fulfill our social responsibility. To adopt this thing in life, there is a plan of Pancha Mahayajna in Hindu culture—Nara Yajna, Bhoot Yajna, Pitru Yajna, Dev Yajna and Brahma Yajna or Rishi Yajna. Yajna is the expression of our gratitude towards all those who have contributed in functioning of our life. The Nara Yajna encompassed feeding guests, which ideally means feeding even an unknown person by considering him as one’s own. This is a soulful way of expressing our gratitude to the many unknown entities who have contributed for us. Bhoot Yajna is the awakening of compassion towards living beings. Pitru Yajna is the expression of feelings for one’s family and ancestors, while Dev Yajna is performed to nourish the environmental forces that sustain the entire universe. Brahma Yajna is the selfless work done to carry forward the knowledge that has nourished the tradition of the nation since time immemorial.

Offering sacrificial firewood in the fire pit is a form of yajna. It is also completely scientific. Research is being done on its scientific nature and effects. Along with this, it is also necessary to understand the science of yajna in keeping with today’s times and give it a contemporary form.

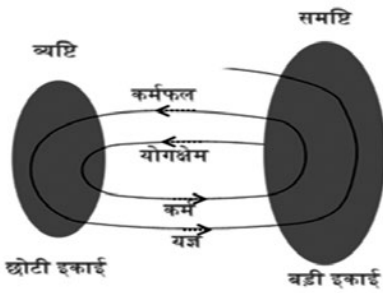
In his *Ekatma Manav Darshan* (Integral Humanism), Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya explains

Hinduism is a culture of relationships. We greet even strangers with a relational form of address. We call even a stranger walking on the road as “Bhaisahab, Behenji”.

For us, everyone is family. We call school a “Shala *Parivar*”. All colleagues in the branch of a bank are called branch *parivar*. For us, the ideal of any collective unit is the family. Any group can express its best only when it develops as a family. Genuine collective functioning, which is called teamwork in today’s terminology, is possible only with the family values of intimacy, sacrifice, cooperation and fulfillment of duty

the concept of yajna with a beautiful model. A smaller unit, the individual, is born from the larger unit, the society. The larger unit nurtures the smaller one. This is called Yogkshema. After attaining Yogkshema, a person is capable of performing karma. He offers karma to the larger unit. In return for karma, the individual receives the fruits of karma from the larger entity. So, in this transaction, Yogkshema is a loan on the individual. The means of repaying that loan is yajna, i.e., work done selflessly without expecting any reward. It is this sacrifice that lends meaningfulness to life. Society too is strengthened by yajna. Only when yajna continues does society acquire the capacity to nurture the next generation.¹⁴

Life becomes complete



by imbibing this sense of responsibility in all tasks. It is the result of the culture of yajna that duties have accorded the highest importance in India. Rights were never discussed in today's sense. In Sanskrit, the word 'Adhikar' means eligibility or qualification. To say that a person is entitled to an honour or position means that he has that qualification. The English word 'qualification' is closer in meaning to 'Adhikar'.

Hindu philosophy of life is in total accordance with the *shastras*. The correct synonym of the English word 'Science', i.e., Shastra, is not merely the cause-and-effect relationship at the level of external matter. The experience of all the levels of the conscious element working at the root of this visible world is called *Shastra* in India. Our sages have studied the subtlest form of energy 'Prana' in great detail. They understood the quantity, flow, speed and qualities of Prana present in different substances of the world and developed a very classical way of life on that basis. Vastu Shastra, Ayurveda, Shakuntala Vidya, Yoga, etc

Claiming in the sense of 'rights' has never been the meaning of 'Adhikar'. In that sense too, protection of everyone's rights is possible only by the proper discharge of duties. By thinking only about individual rights without paying attention to duties, there has emerged a lack of self-reliance and discipline in society today. This will be corrected only by the awakening of yajna karma.

The Shastric Outlook of Life

Hindu philosophy of life is in total accordance with the *shastras*. The correct synonym of the English word 'Science', i.e., Shastra, is not merely the cause-and-effect relationship at the level of external matter. The experience of all the levels of the conscious element working at the root of this visible world is called *Shastra* in India. Our sages have studied the subtlest form of energy 'Prana' in great detail. They understood the quantity, flow, speed and qualities of Prana

present in different substances of the world and developed a very classical way of life on that basis. Vastu Shastra, Ayurveda, Shakuntala Vidya, Yoga, etc. are all based on Prana Vidya (the science of life). How much importance is to be given to which plants in life also depends on this. The calculation of time, sculpture, agriculture and other activity developed from this reality studied and analyzed by the shastras. The rules generally followed in homes are also based on this scholastic analysis. Since the Sun is the source of all the energy of the world, our life is connected with it. Daily routines were conceived of and devised keeping this in mind. The time when there is light before sunrise in the morning and even after sunset in the evening is called *Sandhikaal*. *Tamasik* (that which tends to negativity) activities like sleeping, cutting hair, cutting nails, etc., are prohibited during this time. The feelings and tendencies that arise during this duration of time can have

manifold results. Therefore, it is advised to engage in worship, study, etc., during the morning Sandhi, and physical work during the evening Sandhi. The science of every function can be understood in this way. The importance of the *tulsi* and *peepal* plant and the cow can be understood from Prana Vijñan. The scientist Jagadish Chandra Basu conducted experiments in this regard, proving that there is life in plants. He also started experiments to prove the existence of life in metals. He successfully proved the effect of experimenting poison on metals, but that work did not progress further after him.

Owing to this scientific approach, experience was given more preference than external experiments for acquiring knowledge in India. Experience beyond sensory observations is the real medium of knowledge. In India, the mere acquisition of information is not knowledge. Knowledge means experience. In fact, this is the scientific method. Every person has complete knowledge inside him or her;

it only needs to be manifested. This is possible only through experience. Empirical knowledge is therefore important. All knowledge, from worldly to spiritual, is obtained through experience. It is because of this broad thinking that India's doors have always been open for knowledge. The Rigveda states this eloquently: "*Ā No Bhadrāhā Kratavo Yantu Vishvataḥ* (May noble thoughts come to us from all sides)"¹⁵. This is our basic credo.

We have understood the principles of Hindutva through these nine elements. These can be expanded further, but these are the basic elements. All other things are included in it. The aspects we have looked at are: (1) Integral vision (2) Manifestation of divinity (3) Respect for diversity (4) Devotion to God (5) Progress (6) Collective character (7) Family values (8) Sense of responsibility and (9) Shastric outlook of life. Applying all these in every sphere of life will be the expression of Indianness, i.e., freedom.

Dr. Keshav Balirampant

Hedgewar said at the founding of the Sangh that "It is Hindutva that is nationalism". We have listed the principles propounded by the sages from the Hindutva outlook on life. This is the root of our national character. This is what we call Indianness. Indianness means those Hindu Sanatana principles that were developed by our sages on a scientific basis and were adapted from time to time to suit the needs and challenges of the era, and put into practice. In the present times, it is necessary to do the carry out the same task again in accordance with today's needs. We call these principles Bharatiya or Indian because they have been understood and used in this land since time immemorial. In terms of results and effects, they are in fact universal. These principles can be applied in every era in the entire world. That is why we have called it Sanatana, that is, applicable at any time and at any place. In order to create a system in accordance with the current era in today's context, let us resolve to imbibe these fundamental eternal principles in our lives. ●

References:

1. *Ekatmavad* – Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, The Life Divine – Shri Aurobindo
2. Ko Mohaḥ Ko Shokaḥ Ekatvamānupashyataḥ| (*Ishāvāsyopanishad*; Shloka 7)
3. Ekatmamanavvad—Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya
4. *Taittiriya Upanishad*—Brahmanand Valli, Anuvak—5
5. *Rigveda*; Mandala 1, Sukta 164, Mantra 64
6. *The Discovery of India* – Jawaharlal Nehru
7. *Īshāvāsyopanishad*; 1.1
8. *Shrīmad Bhagwad Gītā*; 13.27
9. *Vaisheshika Sutra*; 1.1.1
10. Based on Angus Maddison's "The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective" (2001, OECD Development Centre) and its auxiliary volume "The World Economy: Historical Statistics" (2003)
11. *Vidura Neeti*; 5.17
12. Shanti mantra from the *Bṛihadāranyakopaniṣad*
13. *Rigveda*; 9.63.5
14. *Ekatma Manavvad*; Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya
15. *Rigveda*; 1.89.1



Dr. Indushekhar Tatpurush

What is Indianness and Why is it Needed?

India came into being based on the name of Bharat. Who is that Bharat? What is his relationship with our culture and philosophy of life? A research effort to find answers to many such questions...

To understand Indianness, it is imperative that we first know the meaning of Bharat, also known as India. The very nature of India is Indianness. To understand this nature, it is imperative to know what India is.

It is well known that this country is named Bharatvarsha because of Bharat, but there is no unanimous opinion on who this Bharat is. Different opinions have been expressed about Bharat in Indian literature. The prevalence of these differences of opinion is not a phenomenon of today, but has been a fact for thousands of years. This is also indicative of the fact that Bhāratvarsha is such an ancient country that thousands of years ago too, there was contemplation about the sources of its naming, as to who that great individual Bharat was, due to whom this country is called Bhāratvarsha. It would be relevant for us to know all those basic reasons, i.e., the myriad Bharatas, which have become the basis of the naming of Bhāratvarsha and impart meaning to Indianness.

Three Bharatas are mentioned prominently in India's *Puranic* literature. The first is Bharata, the

son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, who was a mighty and valorous emperor. Bhishma the grandsire of the Kuru Dynasty, the Pandavas, Kauravas and others of this dynasty are also called Bhārata as they are the descendants of this Bharata. This Bharata is most renowned in the world as the country is named Bhāratvarsha after him. It is said about him in the *Mahabharata* that, "*Bhratād Bhāratī Kīrtiryénédam Bhāratam Kulam I Aparey Yé Cha Pūrvé Wai Bhāratā Iti Vishrutāhā II* (*Mahabharata*, Ādiparva – 1.69.49)

Meaning, this land became Bhārata because of Bharata. Because of him, this dynasty became famous as the Bharata dynasty. After him, the kings who ruled in that dynasty before and even today are also called Bhārata. According to the *Agni Purāna*, "Dushyanta and Shakuntala had a son named Bharat. He was the one who was the vanquisher of all enemies. It is after his name that this country is called Bhārata."

The second individual of the same nomenclature is Bharata, son of Rishabha, who became

the emperor of the world. According to the descriptions found in the major *Purāṇas* like *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Skanda*, *Vishnu*, etc., “Swāyambhuva Manu had a son named Agnīdh; Agnīdh had Nābhi, Nābhi had Rishabha and Rishabha had a son named Bharata. This Bharata was the best among the hundred sons of Rishabha. His father gave him the kingdom of a country called Haimavatvarsha. This Bhāratvarsha became famous by the name of Bharata”. The pronouncements of some *Purāṇas* are as follows. It is mentioned in the *Vishnu Purāṇa* that this land was called Bhāratvarsha after the name of Bharata, son of Rishabhdeva.

“*Rishabhasya Suto Jajne Bharato Nāma Vīryavān* |.....
“*Bharato Yēna Kīrtiyatē Bhāratam Varshamuchyātē* ||”

“Rishabha had a son named Bharata, a mighty warrior. The country which is renowned due to Bharata is called Bhārata.” (*Vishnu Purāṇa* – 2.1.31)

The *Skanda Purāṇa* says—
“*Nābhé Putrashcha Rishabha Rishabhādbharatobhavat* |
Tasya Nāmnām Twidam Varsham Bhāratam Chéti Kīrtiyatē ||

“Nābhi's son was Rishabha and from Rishabha was born Bharata. This land is named after him and is renowned as Bhārata.”

The fifth chapter of the *Shrīmad Bhāgwat Purāṇa*

describes Jambudwīpa and its various *varshas* (land areas). In this, the earth is divided into seven islands, of which Jambudwīpa is the main one. Jambudwīpa is divided into nine *varshas* (land areas), one of which is Bhāratvarsha. It is said about Rishabhdeva's son Bharata that he acquired the kingdom from his father Rishabhdeva and ruled this land. This section was named “Bhāratvarsha” after his him.

“*Yasya Hi Nāmnām Idam Bhāratam Varsham Tat Prajānām Saumyam Karmaphalam Cha*” meaning, “He in whose name (Bharata's) this land is known as Bhārata, for its people, is highly benign for the purpose of karma (actions) and the realization of those.” (*Shrīmad Bhāgwat Purāṇa*, 5/4/9)

According to the major Jain texts, the country is called Bhārata because of Bharata, the son of Rishabha.

The third, lesser known but very important mention, is from the *Matsya Purāṇa*, according to which it is Manu who is called Bharata. The name of this chapter (No. 50) of the *Matsya Purāṇa* is “Bhāratvarsha Varṇanam”. A detailed description of the geography of India is also found in this *Purāṇa*. Here, Suta says that “Manu is called Bharata because of feeding the people and bringing about reproduction. According to the *Nirukta* too, this country is

called Bhārata.”

“*Bharanātprajanācchaisha Manurbharata Uchyatē* |
Niruktavachanācchaiva Varsham Tadbhāratam Smrutam ||”

“It is Manu who is called Bharata because of his nurturing (his subjects) and bringing forth progeny. And verily, the *Nirukta* says that this land is called Bhārata.”

(*Matsya Purāṇa* 114/5)

This singularity of naming Bhārata after Manu by calling him Bharata because of sustenance and procreation of people is very important for two reasons. First, we find the sources of this belief related to sustenance of people in the *Rigveda* as well, which is strong evidence of the fact that the great tradition of Bharatas in our country is very ancient and this identity of Bhārata, i.e., India, is equally ancient. The second issue of significance is that here, Bharata is not just a person but is indicative of a particular tendency which gives a meaning to Bhāratīyatā or Indianness. Here the noun Bharata is not used in a personal sense but in a generic or abstract sense.

At many places in the *Rigveda*, the fire that provides for, nourishes or sustains has been called Bharat-Agni. This country was called Bhārata because Bharata was a worshipper of fire. In the Vedic period, a branch of the Aryans

was named 'Bharata', which exercised influence on this land. Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma, while mentioning the effective presence of this Bharata group in his famous book *Paschim Asia aur Rigved*, writes: "The Bharatas lived on the banks of this (Saraswati) river. According to Macdonell, there is mention of the burning of fire on the banks of Saraswati and Drishadvati (3.23.4); hence it is possible that there were places of worship of the Bharatas on the banks of Saraswati." (Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 87) These Bharatas crossed the rivers (*Atārishurbharatāhā* 3.33.12). The shining fire is revealed for the Bharatas (*Bharatebhya*) (5.11.1). Two Bharata sages, Devāshravā and Devavāt, (*Bhāratā*) produced fire by churning. (3.23.2). Vishwamitra's *stotra* (hymn) protects the Bharatas (*Vishwāmitrasya Rakshati Brahmédam Bhāratam Janam* – 3.23.2). Pusalkar says about the Bharatas, "The Bhāratas lent their name to the entire country, and were the most important of the Rigvedic *Gaṇas* (people)." But in the post-Rigvedic period, "The Bharatas disappear as a *Gaṇa*. (*The Vedic Age*: R.C. Majumdar, pp. 247 & 252) The disappearance of the Bharatas as a *Gaṇa* is a very important event in ancient Indian history."

[*Paschim Asia aur Rigved*, Chapter 5, p. 148]

From the above explanation of Dr. Sharma, it is clear that

in the early times, there was a Bharat *Gaṇa* on this land due to which this country was named Bhārata. Although with the passage of time, that Bharat *Gaṇa* disappeared but the country's name continued to be Bhārata.

A research-based study of a similar purport is available in the *Hindu Dharmakosh*, which is as follows: "Bharata is the name of an important clan in the *Rigveda* and other later Vedic literature. In the third and seventh mandalas of the *Rigveda* they are mentioned along with Sudas and Tritsu and in the sixth mandalas along with Divodas. This suggests that these three kings were of the Bharata lineage." The Bharata people are more renowned in later literature. The *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (13.5.4) describes Bharata Daushyanti (son of Dushyanta) as the performer of the Ashvamedha Yajna. Another Bharat Shatanika Samajit is mentioned, who too performed the Ashvamedha Yajna. The *Eitareya Brāhmaṇa* (8.23.21) describes Bharata Daushyanti as anointed by Dirghatama Mamateya and Shatanika by Somshushma Vajpyayana. The geographical extent of Bharatas is known from their Kashi Vijay (conquest of Kashi) and performing yajnas on the banks of the Yamuna and Ganga. The Kurus in the *Mahabharata* have been said to belong to the Bharata clan. This shows that during the Brāhmaṇa period,

the Bharata people had merged with the Kuru-Panchala clan.

The yajna rituals of the Bharatas are mentioned repeatedly in the *Panchavinshati Brāhmaṇa* (14.3, 13; 15.5, 24). Bhārata Agni is mentioned in the *Rigveda* (2.7.1, 5; 4.25.4, 5.16, 19); the *Taittiriya Samhita* 2.5.9, 1) and the *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.4.2, 2). Roth believes that the repeated mention of this fire is the expression of the warrior form of the Bharatas, which does not appear plausible. Bhārati Devi is mentioned in the hymns (*Rigveda* 1.22, 10; 1.42, 9; 1.88, 8; 2.1, 11; 3, 8; 3.4, 8, etc.) as the divine protective power of the Bharatas. Her relation with Saraswati relates the Bharatas to Saraswati. This continent is named Bharatakhanda and the country is named Bhāratavarsha after the Bharata race. The tradition of naming the country Bhārata after Rishabhdev's son Bharata or Dushyanta's son Bharata is a later one.

(*Hindu Dharmakosh* – Page No. 469, Editor – Dr. Rajbali Pandey, published by the Uttar Pradesh Hindi Institute, Lucknow)

Actually, the word Bharata has been used in dual meanings in the *Rigveda*. In one meaning, it has been used for the 'Bharata people'. The meaning of these words in the *Rigveda*, "*Vishwāmitrasya Rakshati Brahmédam Bhāratam Janam*" (3.53.12) is that Vishwamitra's prayers protect the Bharata

people. Its second meaning is that the word Bharata has appeared as a synonym for a particular kind of fire. The invention of fire is the first basis for the development of human civilization. Without fire, neither agriculture nor yajna was possible. This fire has been called 'Bharata'. And due to the worshipper of the fire in the form of 'Bharata', this country was called Bhārata. The Bharata people, the first inventors, users and propagators of fire, seem to have become so identified and one with fire that in Vedic literature, fire itself was called Bharata. "*Agnirvai Bharatah. Sa Vai Dévébhyo Havyam Bharati*" (*Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa, Vājasaneyā Brāhmaṇa*) That is, this fire itself is Bharata. This is what fills the havishya (sacrificial offering) for the gods.

Therefore, the word Bhārata, broken down into 'Bhā + Rat', is an interesting combination and expresses the basic meaning of Bharatbhāv or the feeling of India. The word 'Bhā' is formed

from the root 'Bhāsrū Dīptau' which means light, i.e., the light of knowledge. This means 'Bhārata', which is constantly 'Rat' (engaged) in (the quest for) 'Bhā' (light of knowledge). It is thus Bhāratavarsha that is the origin of the eternal prayer of "Tamaso Mā Jyotirgamaya" and "Mrityormāmritam Gamaya", which imparts meaning to its name.

From the grammatical point of view, the word Bhārata is derived from the root 'Bhrū', which means to fill, to fill, to complete. The one who is engaged in filling and nourishing is 'Bharata', and this country is Bhārata because of Bharata. Therefore, the sentiments and meaning of Bharatīyatā (Indianness) are inherent in the word 'Bharata' itself.

Here, a question arises: on a land where a long tradition of great men like Manu, Prithu, Dilip, Rama existed, this land came to be known as Bhārata. Could there have been a more glorious name than Manu, who not only created the human race

but also provided a system of law to the whole world? Could there be any other persona greater than Prithu, who made the entire earth prosperous and provided it with a concept of residence in a certain territorial framework? Was Dilip any less of a great man, who established glorious relations with the centre of higher culture transcending the human realm, namely heaven, and established the highest values of life? Or can any other persona even be imagined to be superior to the virtuous Shri Rama, the benchmark of human dignity? Then, what was there in this name Bharata that the oldest inhabited land of the world came to be known by his name?

The concept of Bhāratīyatā or Indianness lies in the answer to this question, which is revealed in the meaning of the word Bharata. The word Bharata means to fill, that which completes the emptiness, to fill to the brim. Perfection is synonymous with life. The endeavour of our entire life is for this perfection, because emptiness is death and incompleteness is nature. The journey towards perfection is life. To smoothly accomplish this journey is dharma, culture, civilization. There is indeed that individual superiority in the characters of Manu, Prithu, Dilip, etc., which is not found anywhere else. However, the thing about the ultimate attainment of all living beings

The concept of Bhāratīyatā or Indianness lies in the answer to this question, which is revealed in the meaning of the word Bharata. The word Bharata means to fill, that which completes the emptiness, to fill to the brim. Perfection is synonymous with life. The endeavour of our entire life is for this perfection, because emptiness is death and incompleteness is nature. The journey towards perfection is life. To smoothly accomplish this journey is dharma, culture, civilization. There is indeed that individual superiority in the characters of Manu, Prithu, Dilip, etc., which is not found anywhere else

that is contained in the word Bharata is not found anywhere else. Here, Bharata is not just a person; it is an emotion, the process of life, and the order of the world. It is a kind of possibility that has the ability to guide and nourish the entire world. It is this element that is manifested as 'Bharata', which Goswami Tulsidas expresses very simply in his couplet thus: "Visva Bharan Poshan Kar Joi; Takar Naam Bharat As Hoi" (He who sustains and nurtures the world is renowned by the name Bharat). Although this was said on the occasion of naming King Dasharatha's sons, the meaning of the word 'Bharata' is very much the same. The significance of being 'Bharat' is that it has the ability to nourish not only itself but the entire world in terms of prosperity, nourishment, intelligence, wisdom, strength and character.

This is the reason why the great thinker Deendayal Upadhyaya in an important instance reminds us of this implication of the word Bharat in naming India. In his fourth day's lecture of the four-day Integral Humanism lecture series held in Bombay from 22 to 25 April 1965, he says, "The explanation of the name of Bharat after whom this country is named Bharat is also the same that 'Bharaṇāt Rakshaṇāt Cha', i.e., the country was called Bharat because of the sustenance and protection it provided. The country that

provides this is Bharat. If there is no guarantee of sustenance in this country, the name 'Bharat' will not be meaningful."

While discussing the foundations of Indianness, we find three dimensions of the same: 1. Geographical, 2. Political, and 3. Cultural.

These three dimensions together give Bhāratīyatā or Indianness the noun of nationality. Therefore, when the question arises as to what is Indianness, these three bases resonate together. It is believed that the nation is a geo-people-cultural unit. It does not depend on the geographical definition of India alone, nor on the ruling power alone, nor on the inhabitants of this land. The overall form of Indianness is possible only in the combined state of these three.

When we reach the conclusion that the nationality of Bharat (India) is Bhāratīyatā (Indianness), it becomes relevant for us to know what the identity of Indianness is. What are those characteristics, symbols that are indicative of Indianness? What are those parameters on the basis of which we can define Indianness?

Every nation has its own unique identity. Especially those nations, which have developed an optimum structure and a unique way of life based on their life experience of millennia and identification with the nature of the world. The oldest nation of the world, Bhāratavarsha, also

has some special characteristics, some originality, some methods which differentiate it from other nations. All those characteristics and originality that form this concept constitute Bhāratīyatā (Indianness). Pandit Vidyaniwas Mishra has expressed this particularity of Indianness in his unique style in the following way:

"The identity of Bhāratīyatā is a continuous process and it is actually our own identity, which is why I constantly feel its significance. In this effort, there is not only faith in our own culture, but one also finds an open mind to understand world culture, a mind that is free from any racial or national prejudice" (Introduction: *Bhāratīyatā Ki Pehchan*; Vidyaniwas Mishra, Vani Prakashan).

This quote by Vidyaniwas Mishra, an expert in Indian thought, expresses the essence of Bhāratīyatā or Indianness, which connects man, from self-realization to universal realization. This vision of India is as much global as it is national. The welfare of the whole world lies in this vision. It is not without reason that this thing points towards the answer to the question of the 'what' as well as 'why' of Indianness. The Indian philosophy of life accepts the presence of an omnipresent element in the entire world and sees everyone, from the universe to the individual entity as one. This totality, this globality is Indianness. The essence of

the path on which this journey continues uninterrupted is *Ekatma Vishwa Darshan* (Integral Universal Philosophy). Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay named this as *Ekatma Manav Darshan* (Integral Human Philosophy).

Indian wisdom believes that according to “*Sarva Khalvidam Brahma*”, (Everything verily is Brahma or the Supreme), i.e., there is a supreme element present in all. This entire animate and inanimate world is a part of God. Just as different parts of the body are inseparable components, his world is also one. Individuals and individuals, individuals and society, society and nature, and nature and God are intertwined with each other. This green earth is our mother; these rivers are life-giving mother, these mountains are our nourishers, these trees are our caretakers, all these are our own, and all these are ‘*Ishāvāsyā*’. To have or experience conflict among them is a distorted state of being. The Indian view does not consider the idea of “survival of the fittest” as an outcome of the struggle for life to be appropriate. This is a brutal system which is known as ‘*Matsya Nyaya*’ (the law of the ocean, akin to the law of the jungle, where a bigger fish devours the smaller one). It is the nature of every living being to be inclined towards self-nourishment and self-defence, while appropriating the share of others for self-

sustenance is distortion. But along with self-sustenance, to think about the sustenance of others other than one’s own self is the identity of Bhāratīyatā or Indianness. Indian belief lies in the protection of the weak with care. It is the responsibility of the capable to protect the incapable. It is the responsibility of the rich to sustain the poor. It is the responsibility of the capable to take the less capable along with them. The incapable should not be ostracized but should be aided with the imparting of attributes—this is the responsibility of the capable folk of the society. Society is not a class of people of one type with the same nature and inclination. It is the conglomeration of the knowledgeable and ignorant, strong and weak, rich and poor, white and black, godly and demonic, all of which is called society. Those who are knowledgeable should not ostracize those who are less knowledgeable than them. Instead of forming a front against the ignorant, we have to assume the responsibility of making them knowledgeable. The powerful should not despise the weak, but take on the responsibility of protecting them. The rich should also donate to the poor and assure them of a decent living in the society. The importance of charity in Indian scriptures points towards this idea. This Indian viewpoint can be understood from a famous Sanskrit maxim:

“*Vidyā Vivādāya Dhanam
Madāya, Shaktiḥ Paréshām
Parapīdanāya|
Khalasya Sādho Viparītamétat
Jnānāya Dānāya Cha
Rakshaṇāya||*”

Meaning, the difference between the righteous and the wicked is that the knowledge of the wicked is for dispute and strife, wealth for pride and power for oppression. Whereas, the learning of the righteous is for knowledge, wealth for charity and power for protection. While struggle, class consciousness and dualistic outlooks culminate in dispute, intoxication and oppression, the integral and holistic thinking of India values knowledge, giving and protection. That is the essence of Indianness.

To understand and recognize Indianness, it is necessary to consider one more important aspect, that is theism. Indian culture can be understood well through this theism. Here, theism does not mean any classical or sectarian definition but belief in a supreme supernatural power that created the world. It is not that the faith in religion exists only in India and not elsewhere. But the form of theism found in India is unique. Indian theism accords acceptance to pantheism instead of monotheism. Pantheism provides the mindset of accepting different opinions easily, whereas monotheism by its very nature fosters a contemptuous view towards

different opinions. This tendency is the progenitor of intolerance. This is an anti-democratic tendency, which ultimately gives rise to narrow-mindedness. Intolerance towards 'other' opinions is the biggest reason for communalism. It is worth remembering that the concept of "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" of Indian thought is the basic basis of pantheism and the concept of "*Ekam Sadviprā Bahudhā Vadanti*" (Truth is one; the wise speak it in different ways) is the basic basis of *Sarvapantha Samādara Bhāva* (feeling of respect for all sects or faiths).

This is why wherever there are sentiments of faith elsewhere in the world, despite it being a part of people's lives, it is not ingrained in the conduct of their entire life like it is in India. Faith is not fully intrinsic to their lives. Their faith is underlined by a place of worship, a book, a supposed representative of the divine and remains confined to a separate chamber, adherence to some rules and regulations

in life, which does not have any movement in the other arenas of daily life. But the eternal source of faith of India, which believes in "Siyaram May Sab Jag Jani; Karahu Pranam Jori Jug Pani" (I know the entire world to Sita and Rama, and I bow in humility with folded hands) and "Hari Vyapak Sarvatra Samaana" (Hari, i.e., God, is omnipresent and is the same everywhere) is found gushing out from every particle of its soil and every moment of its life.

From the lofty peaks of Kailasa to the deep bottom of the Indus, from pebbles and rocks to lumps of soil, from the leaves of the banyan, *ashwattha* and *bilva* to the *tulsi* plant, from *aak*, *dhattur*, *poog* and coconuts to *indivar* and *kadambas*, from green grass, turmeric, rice grains and wheat ears, platforms, four-way paths, places, from the earth to the sky, our unchangeable Supreme Brahma Paramatma has taken the form of Shiva, Shakti, good fortune, beauty and purity in India. Not only this, in India science, astrology,

medical science, economics, political science, botany and other all kinds of knowledge, the arts and sciences grew up under the umbrella of this faith. This has been a very unique thing, something that has not happened anywhere in the entire world. There are many such examples in the world where the custodians of religious belief issued decrees of death against scientists, medical scientists or mathematicians. But Indian theism, based completely on predicative attributes and driven by creative values, enabled all these areas to flourish. Temples, the centre of Indian life, were not just abodes of spirituality. The height to which they brought the emotional elements of life such as dance, music, architecture, sculpture, painting, drama, cooking, etc., is unprecedented. While theism intertwined with Ayurveda, astrology, law, economics and other branches of knowledge is beyond any reasonable doubt, the dexterity with which science and theism were woven in Indian literature is amazing. Sometimes, this piety was transcreated as pleasure while in other instances it settled as merit.

The concept of faith based on this broad base of theism also merits contemplation in this context. Kaṇāda, the philosopher of Vaisheshika says, "*Yatobhyudaya Niḥshreyasa Siddhiḥ Sa Dharmah*", meaning, dharma is the name of that system that is the means of material and spiritual upliftment. The authority of dharma is not subjective; it is systemic. In this lies the establishment of this world (*Dharmo Vishwasya Jagataḥ Pratishthā*). The meaning of *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥshreyasa* is that material achievements are the basic need of human beings, but are not the ultimate

The concept of faith based on this broad base of theism also merits contemplation in this context. Kaṇāda, the philosopher of Vaisheshika says, "*Yatobhyudaya Niḥshreyasa Siddhiḥ Sa Dharmah*", meaning, dharma is the name of that system that is the means of material and spiritual upliftment. The authority of dharma is not subjective; it is systemic. In this lies the establishment of this world (*Dharmo Vishwasya Jagataḥ Pratishthā*). The meaning of *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥshreyasa* is that material achievements are the basic need of human beings, but are not the ultimate

of that system that is the means of material and spiritual upliftment. The authority of dharma is not subjective; it is systemic. In this lies the establishment of this world (*Dharmo Vishwasya Jagataḥ Pratishthā*). The meaning of *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥshreyas* is that material achievements are the basic need of human beings, but are not the ultimate. And the truth of life does not lie only in salvation. The complete form of truth is in sacrificial offering “*Tēna Tyaktēna Bhunjīthāhā*”. From the point of view of Sanskrit grammar, ‘*Abhi*’ is a word that carries a special meaning. The prefix ‘*Abhi*’ is used in the sense of either side (*Abhitah*). That means the rise of both—individual as well as collective progress. Ignoring the group and worrying only about personal progress is individualistic thinking. Ignoring the individual and worrying only about community progress is socialist thinking. Indian wisdom considers the balanced, interdependent progress of both as real progress. Those who wrote the Upanishads have clearly denounced the one-sided path and constantly aspired for the two-way path. This is the reason why in Indian thought, all the conflicts like material and spiritual, enjoyment and renunciation, individualism and socialism, national and global, inanimate and conscious, Maya (illusion) and Brahma

(the Supreme One or Ultimate Reality) were considered complementary to each other, and emphasis was constantly laid on regulating them together. The joining of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha in the *Purusharthas* is the evidence of this balanced adjustment. It is not a mere coincidence that parallel to the belief of “*Ekam Sad Viprah Bahudha Vadanti*”, Jain Acharyas of the Shramana tradition laid down a principle with a broad vision like “*Syadvaad*” (constant questioning of obtained postulates). The maxim of the book *Tattvartha Sutra* written by Acharya Uma Swami, which is famous as *Moksha Shastra*, is “*Parasparopagraho Jīvānām*” (Chapter 5/21), i.e., every living being helps each other by becoming a satellite, i.e., a part of each other. All the creatures of the universe are dependent on each other. Certainly, the global wisdom of all of India was working behind this. The axis of our spiritual thinking rests on the truth that the *Bhagavad Gita* repeats again and again, that is—‘*equanimity*’. According to the *Gita*, it is *equanimity* that is actual yoga. Only who have an equanimous outlook even amidst conflict those are called prudent.

If we put it in a holistic way, it is this equality that is the basic mantra of Indianness. It is this equality that connects Kapali, Bhuteshwar, the dweller of the crematorium, Shiva the lord of

the most eerie beings with the Trailokyamohini the Goddess that charms the three worlds, Anandpurna or the one replete with happiness, Annapurna or the one who nourishes all beings, and the affectionate Jagadamba or Mother of the Universe. It is this equality that transforms Shri Rama, who manifested in the afternoon of the bright day of the month of Chaitra, into the Shodasha Kalanidhan or the embodiment of the sixteen attributes, Leela Vihari or the Master of Cosmic Play, Kanha (Krishna) born in the dark midnight of rainy clouds. It fuses together commitment and detachment, the whole in all of creation, the individual in the whole and renders all of these sublime. The elements that appear opposite and disjointed from outside, become one as they go deeper. It seems as if one does not exist without the other. It is this totality, universality, complementarity and equity that is Indianness.

In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, “The attainment of unity in plurality, establishment of unity in diversity—this is the inherent dharma of India. India does not consider distinctness as opposition, does not look upon the other an enemy; without destroying anyone, it wants to accord a place to everyone in an enormous system. It accepts all sects, and is able to perceive the greatness of each in its own place” (*Swadeshi Samaj – Rabindra Rachana Sanchayan*,

page no. 755; Editor: Asit Kumar Bandopadhyay, Sahitya Akademi publication). This vision is also the appropriate answer to the query “Why Indianness?”

Today, only this Indian outlook can guide a world that is suffering from the dilemmas of mutual conflict, exploitation and oppression. It is because of the absence of this very Indian outlook that we are caught up in some or the other ism, sect, party, group or camp and we see things in pieces, think in pieces and live in pieces. It has become our destiny to countenance fragmented and disorganized forms. If we think as individuals, we look upon society as our enemy. If we think as a society, we consider nature our enemy. If we think in national terms, we find internationalism to be inimical to us. If we think as a male, we feel the female is our enemy. If we think as a Hindu, we consider Muslims our enemy. If we think as a leftist, we consider rightists our enemies. If we desire enjoyment, we believe renunciation to be our enemy. If we think as modern beings, we regard the ancient to be our enemy. In these dialectical relationships, we not only consider each other as our enemy but also endeavour to eliminate the existence of the enemy. This is as though the entire world is a conglomerate of implacably opposing elements, a suicidal battlefield

full of mutual conflict. In actuality, this is highly un-Indian thinking. Indian thought transports all these conflicts to the plane of totality and renders them interactive and in companionship with each other. It is Indianness that takes the mutually opposite radii traversing in different directions on to a wider encumbrance and makes us see the universal form of truth.

There are many answers to the question “Why Indianness?” We have already mentioned one of those in the context of naming India at the beginning of the article that the vision of Indianness is indispensable to fill the incompleteness and emptiness present in the world. Usually, we venture an answer to this question by proclaiming “*Krinvaṇto Vishwamāryam*” (infuse the world with noble ideals) implying that the responsibility of making the world better rests on India. Although when we repeat this concept of making the world better, knowingly or unknowingly, we express only its incomplete truth. That important part, which is the desire of Vedic sages, is left out. The verse of the Rigveda that proclaims it is as follows:

“*Om Indram Vardhanto Apturaḥ Krinvaṇto Vishwamāryam | Apaghnanto Aravnaḥ*” || (Rigveda Mandala 3/Sukta 34/9)

This means that not only are

we the ones to establish *Aryatva*—(preeminence) in the world, but at the same time will be “*Indram Vardhanto Apturaḥ*”, i.e., Indra (our leadership)—strong and powerful and “*Apaghnanto Aravnaḥ*”, i.e., destroying *Arāti*—the evil and inhuman. These two situations must invariably go together, only then can we make the whole world better, and manifest the thought of making it better. In this regard, we also recall “*Yā Prathamā Sanskritiḥ Vishvavāra*”, meaning, this is the first and foremost culture for the welfare of the world. Historical facts and archaeological studies too prove this.

But again, why Indianness? An answer to this question can also be found in the strong opinion articulated by the British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee, expressed nearly eight decades ago. It has been mentioned by Dr. Mohanrao Bhagwat in the “Sangh Drishti” Special Issue (July–December 2021) of the *Manthan magazine*: “It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race.”

We must proclaim and explain this very brief but pithy message of Arnold Toynbee so that its echo reaches the whole world. Otherwise, as Toynbee says, no one else can save this world that is rapidly moving towards destruction. ●



Prof. Nand Kishore Pandey

The Spirit of India & Bhakti Literature

Spiritualism is the root of Indian philosophy. This is the reason why the literary trend of the Bhakti period greatly influenced the contemporary and lateral thinking of the nation. Here is a description of this influence

India is a land of spiritualism. The economic, social, political and historical philosophy of this country is also centred on spirituality. The study and analysis of India's geographical location, boundaries, sources of history, social condition, political situation, evaluation of the impact of different types of attacks, various kinds of dynasties, methods of governance, states and their naming, rulers, commanders and ministers, etc. can be done only by co-relating them with spiritualism. This is what has been happening also. No matter on what subject a writer from any region of India writes, he always talks about Indian dharmic practices. Sometimes he looks at the image of the deity from the heart of beautiful nature while sometimes he experiences its radiance in its entirety. To describe a good ruler in his description of the state and the king, he instills the belief in the justice of the creator of the universe in him. Different poets have remembered the historical places of the country in their words not as broken bricks and stones but as the hubs of the seekers.

Kalhan's Rajtarangini is considered one of the most accepted

compositions of Indian history even by Western scholars. Its writing period is around 1148-49 AD. Kalhan has discussed many geographical places in the beginning of his writing as the concrete form of Indian dharmic practices. Many methods of worship have been respected in Kashmir since the beginning but worship of Lord Shiva has been the most prominent. Lord Buddha and his worship have also been described with reverence in Rajtarangini. The Mangalacharan of Rajtarangini is related to Lord Shiva. In the 30th, 31st and 32nd verses of the first Tarang, there is a description of the prosperity and beauty of Kashmir region and the 'darshan' of Umapati (Lord Shiva) in the form of wood. To the common reader, it may seem to be the manifestation of the reverence of a Shiva devotee, or a believer for that matter, but if we connect this devotion with the consciousness of Indianness, we would realise how Kalhan was only strengthening the emotional unity of India by making cultural India feel pure with the sacred water of Koteswar Kund (pond). Kalhan narrates that the whole of Kashmir is a shelter place like the Kuberपुरi

of Shankh, Padma, Naga etc. decorated with various gems and jewelleryes. Looking at the wall-like mountain ranges of the Kashmir region, it seems as if they are protecting the surrendered snakes punished by Garuda. In Papasudan Tirtha, by having 'darshan' of and touching the wooden form of Umapati, one gets the fruits of both mundane enjoyment and salvation. The verse goes like this:

*Bhukti Mukti Phal Praptih
Kasthrupamumapatim,
Papasudan Tirthantaryatra
Samsprushatam Bhavet.*

Raghunath Singh, the commentator of these verses, has written, "Shiva gave a boon (to Rishi Vashishtha), as a result of which Kapateshwar Kund remains full of water and God keeps appearing in the form of wood. Malwa king Bhoj had constructed the pond by spending a lot of money. The king himself used to bathe with the holy water from this pond every day. This was his vow. Water from Kapateshwar was sent from Kashmir to Malwa every day in a glass pitcher. Huge broken boulders of the pond built at that time are still lying scattered there around."¹

Important material is available from 'Kalika Purana' to understand the culture, literature and geography of North-East India. Poets have later used this book in their creative writings. The content of Kalika Purana enriches the sense of a greater India with its

narrative contexts and names of places. Many of the names of the rivers of India, which were in currency thousands of years ago, have changed. The names of some places have also changed while the names of some other places are used in corrupted form or the local names have become accepted. In this Purana, Parashuram Kund and Lohit river have been discussed in detail. Today, Parashuram Kund is situated on the banks of Lohit river in Arunachal Pradesh. The 'Mishmi' tribe resides in its catchment area. There are three types of Mishmis -- Idu Mishmi, Miji Mishmi and Digaru Mishmi. The story of Parashuram is also found in different forms in the folk literature of these tribes.

The story of Kalika Purana spread the glory of Parashuram Kund among the people. The Indian psyche accepted this story as religious, cultural and spiritual and absorbed it. Parashuram Kund is established as a revered pilgrimage site today. The ancient form of this pond was however destroyed in an earthquake in 1950. At the same site on the bank of the river, a stone figure has been accepted as Parashuram's axe and is being worshipped. It is considered that by taking a bath in that pond, one earns divine blessings. Today, there stands a grand temple on the hill above the pond, alongside a cowshed. It is the place of mediation for many great men. The Lohit river is said to be the son of Brahma. In the 'Kamarupa

Mahatmya Varnam' chapter of 'Kalika Puran', it is said:

*Sarvanadih Samaplavaya
Sarvatirthani Sarvatah
Lauhityo Brahmanah Putro
Yaati Dakshina Sagaram.*²

(Having fully absorbed all the rivers and all the pilgrimages in it, Brahma's son Lauhitya river still flows into the South Sea.)

This Lauhitya river is today known as Lohit in Arunachal Pradesh and as Brahmaputra in Assam. Even today, children in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are named 'Lohit' with reverence and sacredness. The description of the beauty and history of Kamarupa can be found in the devotional poetry of Assam. That history and aesthetic sense is that of India. All the mythological stories that have come to Assamese literature through Sanskrit are the presentation of the understanding of India in its entirety. Many poems were written in reference to the rivers and mountains mentioned in Kalika Purana.

Even before Shankardev the Great, many poets have written compositions on Vaishnava Bhakti (devotion to Lord Vishnu). In this context, the names of Hem Saraswati, Kaviratna Saraswati, Haribar Vipra, Rudra Kandali and Madhav Kandali are notable. The influence of the works of Vishnu Das of Assam can be seen on the later Assamese and Hindi poetry. Prof. Krishna Narayan Prasad 'Magadh' considers Vishnu Das as the first poet of Braji, Brajabuli and Brajavali.

Shankardev the Great wrote compositions based on Mahabharata, Ramayana and Shrimad Bhagwat. Many of his works are based on Puranas. He had studied the Puranas deeply. His major works are: Harishchandra Upakhyan, Rukmini Haran (poetry), Kirtan Ghosha, Bargeet, Bhakti Pradeep, Bhakti Ratnakar, Gunmala, Mahabhagwat, Totaya Aur Bhatima, Uttarkand (Ramayana), Patni Prasad, Rukmini Haran (drama), Keli Gopal, Kali Daman, Parijata Haran and Ram Vijay. Through these works, Shankardev was awakening the spirit of India in the greater Assam region. He did many experiments in the field of drama. In the adverse period, he spread Indian philosophy to the masses through Assamese and Brajbuli. He was presenting Vedic and Upanishadic mantras in a simplified form through dramas and devotional songs. Shankardev describes God as formless, blemishless, beyond qualities, indescribable, omnipresent and omniscient. He also accepts that worship of a 'Nirgun' (qualityless) god is difficult, hence he accepts worship of god with attributes and forms. Among Hindi poets, Surdas, Tulsidas etc. also worshipped the 'Sagun' (with characteristics) god and considered the incarnate god as their deity. The problem with Surdas was that "Niralamb kita dhavai" (How far can you run without support). Tulsidas, however, does not believe in the

difference between Nirgun and Sagun. For the devotees at large, Nirgun Brahma (god) remains in Sagun form. As Shankardev says:

*Nishchal Nirmal Roop Sukshm
Yito Swami,
Deve Na Janant Takam Kene
Jano Aami.
Apar Tomar Roop Jat Bhuj
Chari,
Pati Vastre Shobhe Shankh
Chakra Gada Dhari.
Sahise Murtika Aradhante
Devagane,
Takese Bhakat Sabe Chinte
Sarvakshane.*³

The devotional method developed by Shankardev to connect the society of that time with the whole of India does not have even a trace of untouchability. The society was unified through Krishna and Ram. For that, the popular drama method was adopted. Singing and playing became prominent social activities. Many experiments were done in the dramas. Vrindavan, Gokul, Mathura came alive in this devotion. The desire for its celebration strengthened the threads of tradition. The walls of language were broken. The simplicity of Brijbuli became the necklace of the people. Through his perseverance, Shankardev established that devotion to Shri Krishna provides worldly and spiritual happiness to everyone, and this devotion does not see any caste or religion. He writes: *Kirat, Kachhari, Khasi, Garo, Miri, Yavan, Kank, Gowal,*

*Asam Muluk, Rajak, Turuk, Kawancha, Mlenchha, Chandala. Aan Papi Nar Krushna Seva Kar Pavitra Hoy, Bhakti Labhiya, Sansar Tariya, Baikunth Sukhe Chalay.*⁴

Shankardev's devotion absorbed many tribes in the flow of devotion to Krishna and Ram. The 'Ekasharan' religion that Shankardev introduced was the best use of metaphysical philosophy in the folk language within the Sanatan tradition, which gave the power of devotion and struggle to a disorganised society. It provided a beautiful space to solve daily family and social problems. The concept of 'Namghar' and its application became the eternal basis of a beautiful, virtuous life within Sanatan. Madhavdev gave a strong foundation to the devotional path of Shankardev the Great and made it more widespread.

The oldest available literature in the Tamil language is 'Sangam Sahitya'. In this literature, while spiritual experiences have been narrated by one devotee to another, the prosperity of the Chola empire has also been described. The water of the Kaveri river has boosted the agriculture of the state, which is also prosperous from an industrial point of view. The Chola kings were prudent. This literature provides basic material to understand the history and culture of South India. The masterpiece of Tamil literature is 'Thirukkural' of Tiruvalluvar. It

has 1,330 couplets, divided into three parts. The three sections are: 1. Virtue, 2. State and citizenship, and 3. Love. Various colours of life are woven into it.

From the point of view of Tamil devotional literature, the four Acharyas (maestros) of Shaivism are called 'Nayanmar'. These four Acharyas are: Tirugynana Sambandhar, Tiruna Vakkarasar, Sundar and Manikya Vachagar. There are 12 Alvar saints, who were Vaishnavites. These saints were itinerants. They used to travel from one temple to another. They created thousands of compositions by establishing religion as love for God. In 'Tirumuraiyas' of Tirugynana Sambandhar, 3,000 verses are collected whose time period was seventh century, while another 3,000 verses of Tiruna Vakkarsar, the prominent saint of the time of Mahendra Varman I, are also collected in other three Tirumuraiyas. 'Periya Puranam' contains biographies of 63 devotees. Its author is Sekkilar. The name of this collection of 4,000 Vaishnava verses is 'Nalayirapa Prabandham'. Alvars also wrote a lot of literature. Among the 12 Alvars, Tirumangai Alvar and Nammalvar created the most compositions. The devotional trend of North and West India was influenced by the writings of Alvars. Rishi Kambar composed 'Kamba Ramayana' based on the story of Valmiki's original Ramayana.

Among the Alvars, Bhakt

Nammalvar belonged to the Shudra (lowest) caste, as per the caste system. He is famous by the name of Shathakopacharya. Establishing the importance of Nammalvar, Dr. Krishna Gopal has written, "Bhakt Nammalvar is called 'Divyakavi' (divine poet) in Tamil literature. It is said that Lord Sri Ranganath accepted the 'Ramayanam' composed by sage Kambar only when he composed 'Shathakoparantadi' in praise of the great devotee Nammalvar. He also became famous as 'Tamil Veda Vyas' or the 'Tamil Veda Praneta' (pioneer). The compositions of Bhakt Nammalvar are famous in the name of 'Dravida Veda Sagar'."⁵ Madhur Kavi Alvar was born in a Brahmin family. He became a disciple of Nammalvar, who was born in a Shudra family.

Among these Alvars was the devotee poetess Andal. She is also known as 'Goda'. She was the daughter of Periyalvar (Vishnu Chitta). Andal had accepted Sri Ranganath as her husband. Devotee Tiruppan Alvar, known as Munivahan, was also a Shudra. Devotee Tirumangai Alvar, known as Parakal, belonged to the Kallar caste, who manufactured and sold liquor. The people of this caste used to live in the forest. In 'Nalayir Divya Prabandham', known as Tamil Veda, most of the compositions are collected by Parakal Alvar. Ramanujacharya comes in the tradition of Alvars. Sri Periya Nambi, known as Mahapurna, was his guru. Ramanujacharya studied Nalayir Prabandham

from him. He belonged to a lower caste. Ramanujacharya's other guru was Sri Tirukkotiur Nambi, known as Gosthipurna, was also a Shudra. Mahapurna had sent him to Gosthipurna to understand Vaishnav Bhakti. Gosthipurna was the guru who gave Ramanujacharya the mantra 'Om Namo Narayanaya'. Ramanujacharya wrote many books. He travelled extensively and propagated Bhakti (devout) consciousness. He interpreted the 'Aarsha' scriptures of Sanskrit and spread its philosophy among the masses. Ramanujacharya accepted the 'Prabandham' of the Alvars as the basic material of Vaishnav Bhakti and established it.

This Bhakti flourished in North India with Ramanand. The difference between men and women vanished in the Bhakti movement of Ramanandacharya. He himself made people of all castes and classes his disciples. This method was followed by the later saint sects too. The writings and travels of the Acharyas refined the cultural flow by removing the defects in the great Indian tradition. Ramanandacharya spread the sense of Indianness among the masses. He established the fact that tradition does not mean inertia. It is a continuously flowing stream of life. So, there is a possibility of incessant refinement in it. These poets gave the sense of understanding India by connecting it with rivers, mountains, fruits, flowers, leaves, grass, food, water, planets and stars, along with the knowledge

of scriptures.

Acharyas have been successful in explaining that a holy place in any corner of India belongs to everyone and it is for everyone. Mantras of 'puja' (worship), 'aarti' (prayer) and 'stuti' (verses of praise) were written in different languages. The difference in their method of singing and playing music and the lack of understanding of the language could not reduce the sense of its sanctity and eternity. Along with the purity of sainthood and the greatness of the Acharyas, the words coming out of their mouth also became sacred and dignified, which were spread out among the masses. The pronunciation of mantras in any language purifies the hearing and affects the entire body. It also purifies the speech of the person who pronounces it. Along with oneself, the continuous pronunciation and listening of these verses purify the whole environment too.

The consciousness of the Acharyas reached the common people. Its resonance worked like beetles. Just as the children of a beetle start singing in the same tune due to her continuous humming, the reverberation of humming of the Acharyas started echoing throughout India. The feeling of self-respect taught us to love our land and soil. The feeling of nationalism and self-esteem resonated even in those books which were not written from the point of view of devotion.

Abdul Rahman is a famous poet of old Hindi. His work is 'Sandesh Rasak'. Its composition period is 11th century. Its story connects three places. The heroine is from Vijaynagar, Jaisalmer. Her husband works in Khambhat while the traveller is from Sambpur, Moolsthan. He is going to Khambhat via Vijaynagar. The heroine only asks him that "where are you coming from and where are you going?" In his reply, the traveller describes his city in detail with full pride. He says that "The name of my city is Sambpur. There, beautiful Prakrit (an ancient Indian language) verses are heard. There, the knowers of all the four Vedas interpret the Vedas. There are many temples. Stories of Nalacharit and Mahabharata are read there. Actors perform Ramayana there. Some people listen to banshi (flute), veena, kharil and muraj. There are different types of trees in the gardens there." Here, the poet has given a list of about 125 trees and plants. It contains the names of many Ayurvedic medicines. The most important thing Abdul Rahman says is that Sambpur is adorned with white tall walls. No fool is seen there. Everyone is a scholar. There the renunciant Brahmins give blessings. This is a city of 11th century India! It has been praised with pride by the first Muslim poet of Hindi. This beauty and prosperity of India can be seen in ancient devotional poetry.

Later when India became a

victim of invasions, loot and plunder, the poets then have given courage to people. The poetry of Tulsidas teaches to live with full strength and self-respect by remaining devoted to one's own religion. Apart from God, no one can snatch anything from anyone nor can anyone give anything to anyone. In 'Kavitavali', he says:

*Ko Bharihai Hari Ke Ritaye,
Ritavai Puni Ko, Hari Jaun
Bhari Hai.*

*Uthapai Tehin Ko Jehi Ram
Thapai, Thapihai Tehin Ko Hari
Jo Tarihai.*

*Tulasi Yah Jani Hiye Apane,
Sapane Nahin Kalahoon Te
Darihai.*

*Kumaya Kachhu Hani Na Auran
Ki, Jopai Janakinath Maya
Karihai.⁶*

In many adverse circumstances, such compositions of saints gave the suppressed, oppressed and exploited Hindu mass the strength to live under the long Muslim misrule. On one hand, while such poems were creating a self-respecting life, on the other hand, they were also creating strength for India to stand with full strength in every adverse situation. It is not accidental that Kumbhandas is challenging Fatehpur Sikri. All he had to do was to sing only one 'bhajan' (prayer). But he could not even sing a song to that ruler who was a tyrant, autocratic, violent, robber, idol breaker and hateful towards others' ways of worship. Forget about music and songs, the sad part is that he had to bow down to someone, seeing whose

face itself makes him feel sinful:
Santan Ko Kaha Sikri So Kam,
Aavat Jat Panahiyan Tuti, Bisari
Gayo Harinam.

Jakau Mukh Dekhen Dukh Lagai,
Takaun Karan Pari Paranam.

Kumbhan Das Lal Giradhar
Binu, Yah Sab Jhuthau Dham.

To awaken and protect the spirit of India, Shri Allam Prabhu, Basaveshwar, Akka Mahadevi, Sant Purandaradas and Sant Kanakdas of Karnataka roused people through their creations. Sant Basaveshwar created a well thought out system called 'Anubhav Mandap'. Persons of good character from every caste were allowed to enter it. People from many castes and professions were associated with Anubhav Mandap. Basaveshwar established the importance of physical labour and inspired people to do all kinds of work, in a virtuous way, for livelihood. He used to describe physical labour as 'Kailash' and consider it as worship of God. Basaveshwar propagated the message of belongingness.

Akka Mahadevi, associated with 'Anubhava Mandap', is a great poetess of Kannada literature. She was a worshipper of Lord Shiva. She kept searching for her beloved 'Chenna Mallikarjuna' in her works. She came to Srisailam for spiritual practice and became one with the idol of her beloved. She composed thousands of Subhashits that gave the message of harmonious life. Madhavacharya Swami became a

monk and transformed himself to become Sri Vidyaranya Swami. Saddened by the destruction of 'Malik Kafur', he started a new system in Karnataka. Hakka and Bukka, who had once embraced Islam after being converted by Mohammad Bin Tughlaq, were brought back into Hinduism and were renamed as Harihar Rai and Bukka Rai. Both of them formed an organisation of youth and did a great job as per the needs of the nation from military and social point of view.

Madhavacharya is the founding Acharya of Dvaita sect. He was born near Udupi. He wrote commentaries of many scriptures. In their tradition, Daskut tradition became popular. The devotees of this tradition were called 'Haridas'. From 13th to 15th century, these Haridas devotees worked for social harmony in Karnataka from the point of view of devotion. Later, it became popular by the name of 'Daspanth'. There were many poets in this sect who composed thousands of bhajans. Their 'kirtans' (devotional songs), with thousands of practical examples establishing the unity of God and the living beings, raised the society from inequality to a high level of harmony.

Sant Panchayatan is important in the Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra. The five main saints of Panchayatan are: Gyaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram and Samarth Guru Ramdas. Sant Namdev was a 'shimpi' (tailor) by caste. Sant

Gyaneshwar connects himself with the tradition of Adinath. He was a Brahmin. Nivriti Nath was there before Gyaneshwar in this tradition. Saints of the Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra, belonging to various castes and Varnas (professions), awakened the people for 500 years to make them understand the essence of India. The tradition set by the Warkari saints is still prevalent with the same rules and regulations. Vitthala seated in Pandharpur attracted the entire society. Sagun and Nirgun became one. Apart from Sant Panchayatan, Bisova Khechar, Sopandev, Muktabai, Chokhamela, Savatamali, Gora Kumbhar, Raka Mahar, Narhari Sunar, Janabai, Bahinabai, Kanhopatra, Bhanudas etc. enlightened the Indian society on the basis of theory and practice. Their works presented the bright side of Indian culture. Their company gave respite to people who were neglected due to various reasons.

Saint Sarala Das of Odisha called himself 'Shudra Muni'. He wrote 'Odia Mahabharata'. His other works are 'Vilanka Ramayana' and 'Chandi Purana'. Sarala Das, basically a farmer, made Mahabharata accessible to the common people in his own way. Dasiya Bauri was a devotee of Jagannath. He was a Harijan (lower caste). He sent coconut through someone to offer to Lord Jagannath. It is said that the Lord accepted it with his own hands. Even today, if a coconut

grows in someone's house, it is first offered to Lord Jagannath in the memory of Dasiya Bauri. In the 15th and 16th century, the Panchasakha saints of Odisha played an important role in social awakening. 'Jagmohan Ramayana' of Bhakt Balaram Das got a lot of fame and prestige.

The 'saint soldiers' also kept the spirit of India intact in their devotional poetry, through both scriptures and weapons. There had been a long tradition of saint warriors. Bade Sundardas established 'Nagapanth' in Dadupanth. Nagas fought many battles to protect the religion and culture. The Satnami rebellion is famous in our history. Jogidas fought against Aurangzeb on behalf of Dara Shikoh along with the Dholpur king. Describing the impact of the Satnami rebellion, Acharya Parshuram Chaturvedi, a renowned scholar of Sant Sahitya (saint literature), has written, "In those days, many kinds of beliefs about the Satnamis were prevailing among the people who used to consider their victory as a divine order. According to Khafi Khan, ordinary swords could not cut these Satnamis and neither could arrows or bullets harm them. They never missed their target and even their women used to fight on black horses."⁷

To understand the essence of Indianness established by Bhakti literature, the history of the Sikh Gurus of Punjab has to be read closely with devotional consciousness in the

context of literature and history. Many saints of Gujarat wrote in both Gujarati and Hindi languages. The glory of Indian consciousness can be seen in the literature of Sant Narsi Mehta, Bhakti Nidhi Liralbai, Sant Padmanabh, Sant Mandan, Sant Akha, Sant Mekaran Das, Swami Sahajanand, Swami Muktanand etc. Inspiring warriors and saints to serve the people, saint poet Mekaran Das writes:

*Shurvir Aru Sant Ko Van Mein Nahin Rahna,
Janaseva Ke Sath Ram Bhajan Karna.*

Most of the Nirgun saints in the Hindi Bhakti tradition adopted the life of a labourer saint. From agriculture to shoe making, they did every possible job but did not resort to sycophancy to fill their stomach. In the Gurukul system, apart from imparting education, the Acharyas also used to manage agricultural work, rear cattle etc. The medieval saints went two steps ahead and took their work out of the fixed framework and did not feel any inferiority in doing their traditional ancestral job. Due to this also, they remained self-respecting. The poetry between life and death was woven like a sari with the warp and weft of the loom. Scrapers were used not only to cut leather to make shoes, rather bondages were cut to set people free. It is not accidental that the saints were talking about 'Ajapa Japa' (chanting mantras involuntarily). While performing all the work, the chanting of

'Soham Soham' (I am He) also continued with every breath. A large amount of poetry on the sense of being Indian was written by Muslim saints too. From this point of view, Kabir, Rahim, Raskhan, Dariya Saheb, Taj Bibi, Rajjab, Vashana, Wajid, Baba Farid, Bhakt Karey Beg, Bhakt Saal Beg, Jayasi, Dara Shikoh etc. should be read again and again. ●

References:

1. *Rajtarangini* - Kalhan, commentator - Dr. Raghunath Singh, Hindi Pracharak Sansthan, Varanasi
2. *Kalika Purana* - Acharya Mrityunjay Tripathi, Navshakti Prakashan, Chowka Ghat, Varanasi, p. 1066
3. *Shankardev - Sahityakar Aur Vicharak* (litterateur & thinker), Dr. Krishna Narayan Prasad 'Magadh', Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 117
4. *Mahapurush Shankardev - Brajbuli Granthavali*, Dr. Lakshmi Shankar Gupta (ed.), Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag, p. 15
5. *Bharat Ki Santh Parampara Aur Samajik Samarasata* (India's saint tradition and social harmony), Krishna Gopal, Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy, Bhopal, p. 436
6. *Kavitavali*, Tulsidas, Geeta Press, Gorakhpur
7. *Uttar Bharat Ki Santh Parampara* (Saint tradition of northern India), Acharya Parshuram Chaturvedi, Sahitya Bhavan Private Limited, Allahabad, p. 383



Dr. Mahesh Kaushik

Arthayam: Economic Vision for World Welfare

The sustainable development that the West is talking about today, has been the root of the Indian economic vision since ancient times. Here is a comparative study between the two schools of economic thoughts

Improving the standard of living of the people has been accepted as the ultimate goal of economic development, because man has made maximum happiness the ultimate goal of his life, and for this, he keeps trying as much as possible throughout his life. To achieve this objective, different types of economic ideas have developed from time to time. While in the West, only happiness obtained from material things was given importance, in the Indian knowledge tradition, ways were also discovered to go beyond material pleasure and achieve spiritual happiness. In the West, two important ideas developed related to 'economics' -- 'capitalism' and 'socialism'. Both types of systems saw prosperity in the last three centuries but the world also saw the limitations of both these systems. After adopting the concepts of 'economic growth' and 'economic development' based on excessive exploitation of natural resources, the whole world today is trying to ensure long-term global development by setting 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs). But do global institutions really have any such idea or program that ensures

the welfare of the whole world? Do we find any such path of economic development in the Indian knowledge tradition that is beneficial for the entire human race? 'Arthayam' or economic dimensions, germinated in the soil of Indian culture, is one such economic idea that paves the way for human progress and happiness, keeping the society free from both the scarcity and influence of wealth.

Western Economic Thought: The Idea of 'Economic Growth'

In the West, till the 15th century, the influence of moral and religious ideas related to a particular sect on economic thoughts is quite visible. Considering charging interest on a loan as a sin and looking at trade and profit with suspicion are a few examples. But after the Renaissance and the period of colonialism, consumption of more and more goods and services came to be considered synonymous with happiness. In the late 18th century, the concept of economic growth was propounded by Adam Smith in his book "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations", which became the basis for rapid

growth in industrial production in the 19th century and became the central subject of economic analysis in the beginning of the 20th century. Then came the idea of producing more than required to generate more income and exploiting natural resources to the maximum to maximise production. This was accepted as 'economic prosperity', as propagated in "Wealth of Nations". Gradually, the importance of market-based economy started increasing. Initially, goods and services were supplied to meet market demand, but in a market-based economy, new markets were discovered to consume the excess production. Until the global recession of 1929, it was believed that "supply creates its own demand".¹

But J.M. Keynes, by writing the 'general theory' in his book "General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" in 1936,

propagated aggregate demand as an important weapon under macro-economics for achieving full employment equilibrium. Due to this, demand was increased through government intervention and consumers were motivated to consume goods without any unnecessary so that more products could be consumed in the market. As a result, the level of income and consumption could increase and the standard of living could improve, and this was called 'economic growth'.

According to the definition of economic growth accepted by various Western economists as well as the World Bank, the increase in the real production of a country in a fixed time period is called economic growth. "Economic growth means the increase in the real production of goods and services of a nation over time."² "Economic growth

is a continuous process through which the productive capacity of the economy increases over time, thereby increasing the level of national output and income."³

From 'Economic Growth' to 'Economic Development' and now 'Sustainable Development'

By the middle of the twentieth century, economists in the West had come to realise that only increasing the production of goods and services is not enough for economic progress. In 1936, J.M. Keynes underlined the high 'marginal propensity to consume' (MPC) and 'effective demand' as the best policy tools in overall economics.⁴ Under the concept of economic development, it was clarified that along with the increase in production, positive changes in the infrastructure of the country are also necessary. That is, along with the increase in production, there should also be improvement in education and health and technological advancement as well.

It was believed that the idea of economic development is more important for underdeveloped countries and the idea of economic growth is important for the nations which are considered 'developed' because they have already developed the necessary infrastructure. Therefore, they can only increase production. According to the popular concept of economic development, it is a continuous



process in which the real per capita income of the people living in a country increases in the long run. "Economic development is the process by which simple and low-income national economies transform into modern economies."⁵

But from the end of the 20th century, the rapidly depleting natural resources and increasing pollution started worrying Western economists and environmentalists. Now, the concept of 'Sustainable Economic Development' has evolved. That is, the economic development should be such that it can be maintained in the long run as well, in which, while improving the current consumption level, the consumption needs of the future generations need not be compromised and the degradation of the environment can be minimized by controlling pollution.

"Sustainable development is that development which fulfills the needs of the present in such a way that the ability of the future generations to fulfill their needs is not compromised."⁶

In summary, the concept of 'economics' in the West, which started with the increase in production, has now reached the stage of understanding the importance of natural resources and environment. Now, moving ahead from this, development since 2012 is being seen not only in the form of environmental balance but also in the form of 'Happiness Index' by linking it

with mental health and social cooperation. Currently, giving importance to the 'quality of life', the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) of the United Nations (UN) prepares the Global Happiness Index Report on the basis of six factors. "But even today, not only Western economists think so but also the whole economic system of the West is based on the infinite multiplicity of desires, and they believe that such a system not only carries more happiness arising from the satisfaction of desires but also increases it."⁷ Although from time to time people like Alfred Marshall, Robert Owen, Tolstoy, St. Thomas presented opposite views too, the Western world could not follow them. "Thus, the foundation of the Western economic philosophy was built on the basis of individualism and marketism."⁸

Indian Economic Philosophy: Nature-Centric Development

Undisputedly, Vedas are considered to be the first scriptures of the creation. The word 'economics' is not used anywhere in the Vedas, but there are views on the subject matter of economics like production, accumulation of wealth and its use for the welfare of the state, etc. Though Shruti is not available directly on these subjects but they are mentioned indirectly or impliedly, especially on subjects like agriculture, animal

husbandry and trade etc.

*"Yasyam bijam purushah paryavasyet, sa jato bhavati..."*⁹

It means that the one who sows seeds in the land is called the son of that land -- this shows the role of the farmer in the society.

*"Vanijo Yanti Samudram..."*¹⁰

It means that traders (businessmen) move towards the sea -- this gives an indirect indication of maritime trade.

"By economic ideas, we mean ideas connected with consumption, production, exchange and distribution of wealth. In this sense, economic ideas in India are as old as wealth itself. Agriculture and animal husbandry were the two most important occupations of the Aryans. It is clear that the economics of that time was confined to these two economic activities of the people. With the passage of time, trade, commerce, industry and banking also became important occupations and, in later times, these economic activities also found mentions in the Vedas and other Sanskrit works. For example, in the Atharvaveda there is a long prayer to Indra and Agni to make the trade routes safe so that traders can move around the country and earn money."¹¹

There are four 'purusharthas' (endeavours) in Sanatan Dharma -- Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. In the Indian knowledge tradition, 'Artha' (money or wealth) is considered an important part of life. "In ancient India, the term 'Arthashastra'

(science of wealth) was used to mean the art and science of administration, practical ethics and the study of the economic life of the individual and society. In those days, Arthashastra was not economics alone, as it is understood today, but was a combination of sociology, political science and administration, including the study of defence and economic life. It is written in 'Mahabharata' that Brahma (the Creator) composed a science which discussed various aspects of Dharma, Artha and Kama, and named it 'Trivarga', which is perhaps the oldest name for economics.

Originally, the science of Trivargahad one lakh chapters and included the three Vedas, Tarka Shastra, Varta (Arthashastra), Dandaniti and Rajadharma (which discusses the duties of a king). Later, it was condensed into 10,000 chapters by Lord Shiva and 5,000 chapters by Indra. Acharya Brihaspati, who was the first human to discover the science of Trivarga, later called it Arthashastra, further condensed it into 3,000 chapters and it was called 'Barhaspatya Niti Shastra' by later writers. Finally, Shukracharya reduced it to just 1,000 chapters for the benefit of the world.¹²

*Tato dhyaya Sahasranam
Shatam Chakre Swabuddhijam//
Yatra Dharmastathaivarthah
kamaschaivaamivanitah//
Trivarg Iti Vikhyato Gana Esha
Swayambhuva//*¹³

After this, Brahma with his wisdom composed a 'Shat' (Bahul) made of thousands of chapters, in which Dharma, Artha and Kama were beautifully described. This became famous by the name of Trivarga and its composer was Swayambhu (Brahma). Shukra, while defining economics, said, "Arthashastra is the science which discusses the duties of the king according to the scriptures. It also studies the methods of wealth accumulation... He has defined wealth and even given an initial analysis of the theory of value."¹⁴ In Shukra Niti, spending in the right amount is discussed.

*Uchitantuvvayayankalenarah
Kuryatrachanyatha,
Subharyamitrani
shaktayanasarakshayeadvanai//*

It means, "A man should spend appropriately at the right time, otherwise should not spend at all, and according to his capacity, he should protect his wife, son and friend with his wealth."¹⁵ At present, we study whether the expenditure incurred by the government and the people of the country, which is known as Public Finance, are in appropriate proportions or not.

Arthayam: Economic Principle for Welfare of the Universe

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay has explained 'Arthayam' (economic dimension) in his book 'Bharatiya Arthniti: Vikash Ki Ek Disha' (Indian economy:

A direction for development).¹⁶ In 'Arthayam', that direction of development has been presented which is in accordance with the Indian values, in which along with material prosperity, there is also spiritual, social and cultural upliftment. This approach also matches with today's concepts like "inclusive development" and "sustainable development", on which international organizations like UNDP are working these days.

"Upadhyay believes that the basis of consumerism, competitiveness and class struggle is uncontrolled consumption. The West allowed its old principle of more and more consumption to continue and did not consider it necessary to amend it. The reality is that the principle of more and more consumption has become the main cause of human sufferings."¹⁷ Hence, Deendayal Ji formulates the concepts of 'economic democracy' and 'decentralized economy' on the basis of "Integral Humanism". According to him, both capitalism and socialism practically negate 'democracy' and 'culture'.¹⁸

According to Deendayal Ji, "Wealth is essential for running of the society. We have given place in our scheme only to that much of wealth which enables a person to maintain himself and strive for the attainment of other superior values." He is against that kind of economics which neglects the social and psychological aspects of human life.¹⁹ To work

is the fundamental duty of a man. Similarly, ensuring this 'right to work' to man is the fundamental duty of the state. Hence, the right to work should be a constitutional right of a citizen.

Decentralized Economy: The Formula for Inclusive Development

Clarifying the idea of Arthayam, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay says that in the present conditions, the benefits of setting up big industries and centralization of capital are very less while the losses due to it are much more than that. The circumstances in which the Western countries established big industries were different as at that time, they had large markets in their colonies from where they were able to buy raw material at cheap rates and sell their finished goods at high prices in the markets of those colonies. Deendayal Ji believes that centralization of capital in big industries creates

such economic groups which influence the politics of the country in an arbitrary manner. This increases inequality in the society, which in turn gives rise to class struggle. Along with this, he does not consider economic development based on foreign capital to be auspicious for the long-term development, happiness and peace of the country. On the other hand, he believes that a decentralized political system is also necessary for a decentralized economy.

"... A decentralized economy is needed. A self-employed sector will have to be set up. The larger this sector is, the more man will be able to progress, humanity will develop, one man will be able to think about another man. By giving work to each man after considering his individual needs and characteristics, his qualities can develop. Only India can give this decentralized economy to the world."²⁰ Therefore, the Third World countries should adopt a decentralized economy

with village oriented small scale industries. But this does not mean that Deendayal Ji wants to completely prohibit big industries, rather he wants to make big industries dependent on small industries. In fact, in the present times, he shows you a path through which you can easily get the required amount of production and at the same time, easily provide employment to the large and growing labour force of your country. Along with it, this path also minimizes the possibilities of class struggle between workers and capitalists.

He says that "...Productive goods should be made by big industries and consumer goods should be made by small industries... Secondly, the goods used in the production of consumer goods should be made separately on a small scale level and assembled in a big factory; like in Switzerland, watch parts are made by small craftsmen, assembled and prepared in the form of a watch in a big factory. Many parts of big things like motors etc. are made in this way. A lot of work has been done in Japan in this regard. There, 77% of the material for making trains, 70% for making ships and 62% for making motors is produced and used by these small industries... Moreover, if the above mentioned two categories of industries are well established, the area of competitive industry will be very limited."²¹ Though these figures are from the time of Deendayal Ji, even today, small

Clarifying the idea of Arthayam, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay says that in the present conditions, the benefits of setting up big industries and centralization of capital are very less while the losses due to it are much more than that. The circumstances in which the Western countries established big industries were different as at that time, they had large markets in their colonies from where they were able to buy raw material at cheap rates and sell their finished goods at high prices in the markets of those colonies. Deendayal Ji believes that centralization of capital in big industries creates such economic groups which influence the politics of the country in an arbitrary manner

and medium industries contribute 70% in providing employment in Japan and more than 50% in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) directly or indirectly.

Deendayal Ji considers small and cottage industries to be the backbone of the decentralized economy. But while believing so, he does not ignore the big industries. "...Both economic scarcity and influence make consumption unrestrained. Hence, the economy should be such that it fulfills the 'Arthayam' (economic dimensions) of life."²² The West has considered the maximum possible exploitation of nature as the only means of development. The result of this is that today there is a shortage of natural resources and the countries considered 'developed' are conspiring and fighting to grab each other's resources. But in the Indian knowledge tradition, we see a path that paves the way for man's material happiness and spiritual bliss. That is the path of 'development while nurturing nature', that is, by making all the parts of the environment cooperative. In fact, this is the path on which the whole creation can remain happy and joyful for a long time.

Not Exploitation but Nurturing of the Nature

India has understood the importance of nature since the Vedic period. From the Vedic era itself, understanding the importance of all natural elements like water (rivers), trees

(forests), animals (mother cow, bull, etc.), air (clean atmosphere) and 'Agni' (fire), the sages gave the society a theory based on the concept of development of the whole creation. Along with this, they also thought about how people belonging to different castes and classes could connect with this idea and give adequate importance to nature and environment in their personal lives. This was the influence of Indian philosophy on economics. It was not just an idealistic economic philosophy; its practical importance was that India remained the leader in economic prosperity in the entire world for thousands of years.

"India contributed about one-third of the world GDP till 1000 AD, which remained between 22% to 29% between 1000 AD and 1700 AD, which underlines India's economic prosperity during this period."²³

It is also necessary to clarify here that India always respected prosperity and kept wealth in the four Purusharthas, but did not consider acquisition of wealth or money as the ultimate goal of life. "The essence of Indian philosophy lies in the fact that it recognizes the value and importance of this material world with all its powers and it does consider wealth as a reality, but it considers these things as a means to achieve higher purposes. In Indian philosophy, wealth was never an end in itself. We find that modern economic thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi

and Vinoba Bhave have also maintained this tradition in their economic thoughts."²⁴ Deendayal Ji also follows this path. "This system should not ignore 'humans', it should rather help in his development and protect the cultural and other life values of the society. This is the 'Laxman Rekha' (ultimate boundary), which should not be crossed by amassing wealth, under any circumstances."²⁵ In the West, the credit for putting up efforts to give wealth its rightful place in the society, can be assigned to Alfred Marshall.

Arthayam and the Concept of Economics of Sustainable Development

Infinitesimal or non-quantitative industrial policy: "Production sufficient to meet the requirement of consumption and expected savings is called impermissible production. This is the limit of production... Natural resources have a limit. They should not be exploited indiscriminately. There is an equilibrium in nature... Nature keeps compensating for the depletion in its own way. Humans are destroying it so fast that neither nature is able to compensate nor its equilibrium is able to last. Humans still lack the knowledge to consider the all-round consequences of every action. Therefore, production that violates the limits of natural resources has to be avoided."²⁶

Deendayal Ji says - "Both the scarcity and influence of

wealth make human consumption unrestrained. Therefore, the economy should be such that it fulfills all the economic dimensions of life.”²⁷ In India, ‘dharma’ (righteousness) is at the root of wealth, which is nurtured by the family and society on the basis of prescribed values. Therefore,

economic values based on dharma are passed from one generation to another through the family and society, due to which all units develop in a sustainable manner. Values like ‘Simple living, high thinking’, ‘God is present in every particle of nature’, ‘Nature should not be exploited but nurtured’,

‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (the whole world is one family) etc. have survived for thousands of years through family and social institutions. Today, these values are at the core of ideas like “One Earth - One Family”, which can lead the entire world on the path of sustainable progress. ●

References:

1. "It is production which opens a demand for products" -- Jean-Baptiste Say, A Treatise on Political Economy, Book - I, Chapter - XV, p. 138 (1821 English edition translated by C.R. Prinsep, edited by Clement Biddle)
2. Samuelson, P.A. & Nordhaus, W.D. (2010), Economics, 19th edition, McGraw-Hill Education, p. 474
3. *Arthik Vikash* (economic growth) (2015), 12th edition, Michael Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, p. 14
4. The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, Keynes, J.M. (1936), Chapter - 3 (Effective Demand) and Chapter - 10 (MPC & Multiplier)
5. Leading Issues in Economic Development (8th edition), Gerald M. Meyer and James E. Rauch, Oxford University Press, p. 7
6. Our Common Future (Brundtland Report, 1987), Chapter - 2: Towards Sustainable Development, World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), p. 43
7. Economic Ideas in India Before Kautilya (Published by Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, Bankey Lal Sharma, Archaeological Survey of India, Central Archaeological Library, New Delhi, p. 36
8. Tönnies, F. (1957), Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft) (C.P. Loomis, Trans.), Michigan State University Press. (Original work published in 1887) pp. 65 to 68
9. Atharva Veda 12.1 (Prithvi Sukta)
10. Rig Veda 9.112.2
11. Economic Ideas in India Before Kautilya (Published by Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, Bankey Lal Sharma, Archaeological Survey of India, Central Archaeological Library, New Delhi, p. 24
12. Ibid, p. 25
13. Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, 56.26 to 30
14. Economic Ideas in India Before Kautilya (Published by Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, Bankey Lal Sharma, Archaeological Survey of India, Central Archaeological Library, New Delhi, p. 39
15. Shukra Niti, Pandit Mihir Chandra, Published in 1847, p. 80
16. Upadhyay, Deendayal (1958), *Bharatiya Arthniti: Vikash Ki Ek Disha* (Indian economy: A direction for development), edited by Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma, 'Sampoorna Vangamay', Volume - 5, Published by Prabhat Prakashan
17. *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay: Kartrutva Evam Vichar* (works and thoughts), Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma, Prabhat Prakashan, p. 241-242
18. Ibid, p. 247
19. Ibid, p. 241
20. Ibid, pp. 253-254
21. Ibid, p. 254
22. Ibid, p. 258
23. The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective (2001), OECD Publishing, Angus Maddison, Appendix - B, Table - B-21
24. Leading Issues in Economic Development (8th edition), Gerald M. Meyer and James E. Rauch, Oxford University Press, p. 35
25. *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay: Kartrutva Evam Vichar* (works and thoughts), Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma, Prabhat Prakashan, p. 260
26. Ibid, pp. 257-258
27. Ibid, p. 258



Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma

State & Good Governance the Indian Paradigm

In India, a separate set of dharma has been assigned for each aspect of human life and the interpretation of dharma has been continuously refined and polished. Here is an insight into the perspective of good governance

Efforts to find the root source of the most modern concept of 'state' from the vast, detailed, comprehensive, all-touching, all-inclusive, amazing and unimaginable originality of the ancient texts of the world's most ancient culture and unique civilization, combined with a vision of world welfare, are quite rare but it is rewarding. It is inevitable to have a contagious feeling of natural respect for the treasure of knowledge in Indian cultural tradition combined with an impartial, unbiased and neutral as well as scientific and analytical interest in these scriptures. The same is expected to be present at the root of logical reasoning and intellectual exploration.

It is indeed not only a sacred duty but also a collective responsibility of all of us to take note of the Indian traditional collective intelligence which has many incredible specialties like the miraculous diversity and its natural acceptance present in the Indian societies of thousands of centuries ago, the unimaginable vision of world welfare, the strong expression of universal good

wishes, the wish for peace for all living beings, creatures and stars, the unbelievable symbiosis of agreement and disagreement, the universal salutation of intellectual excellence, the conduct of political-administrative agencies controlled by dharmic laws and limits of decorum, the unique divine feeling of godliness in every particle of the entire universe, the universally accepted excellence of learning and knowledge, the attachment of oneness with the entire community, the desire to speak with everyone, understand and know together, work and worship together, the same mantra, same aspiration, same desire in heart despite ideological diversity and multiplicity of languages, methods of worship, etc., the expectation of considering the entire earth as a family, beyond self and other, the sacred desire for the greater good of the large society, completely deferred by narrow-mindedness, the desire to sacrifice self-interest for the good of the whole, the feeling of self-respect towards all beings, etc.

The everlasting, intact, constant, unpolluted and joyful flow of

the ancient Indian knowledge tradition, the continuous flow of knowledge and ignorance combined, is a holy stream for all human beings. A mere intellectual exercise cannot mean submersing in it. Its simple analysis cannot be the logical basis of academic excellence. Its research alone cannot become the emotional ground of global excellence. Just discussing it cannot be the reason for the prestige of Indian logic. Its study only cannot be the adherence to the general thought process. Its sheer exploration cannot be a mere endeavour to establish the superiority of Indian thought. The outburst of any kind of intimacy can create obstacles in impartial evaluation and neutral analysis.

Therefore, it would be appropriate that an unambiguous presentation of the unshakable fundamentals of the eternal Indian knowledge tradition be made and due consideration be given to the contemporary applicability, relevance and usefulness of the elements from it that are appropriate to the age, country and time. Although, in the global scenario, the theoretical foundation of the concept of good governance is surprisingly completely devoid of philosophical dimensions. However, the academic acceptance of this business-dependent idea has brought about a compulsory transformation in the political

administrative systems of countries across the world.

As a result, there has been a necessary redefining of administrative agencies, structures, processes, expectations, responsibilities and goals. Along with this, unimaginable changes have also taken place in the form and scope of policy making, constitutional system, leadership, inter-party relations, citizen interactions, international organizations and new political designs. This scenario is not at all inconvenient for nations, societies, countries, civilizations and states that are relatively less known and have a limited history from a historical point of view. But this ideology is ordinary for the Indian cultural nationalism that has been constantly nourished by the knowledge of thousands of centuries, countless millennia and ages and eons of unavailable history.

The eternity of the ascetic speech of the sage, who proclaimed 'Sa Prathama Sanskritih Vishvavara'¹ in the Kathak Samhita of Yajurveda, is visible in the Vishnu Purana even in the imagination of the gods taking birth in India.² Associated with the desire for the welfare of all human beings,³ the all-round call of the all-pervading, all-inclusive, all-accepting, all-good desired idea⁴ in the view of the Vedic sage is the global clarion call of the Indian Arya tradition. This idea-welcoming system also

includes untested, emerging and unique ideas. A good wish is a prerequisite in it. There is no expectation of ideological similarity or uniformity. At the core lies the sentiment that despite the existence of many paths of research on truth, the uniqueness of truth is flawless.⁵

That is why, the natural acceptance of diversity in society, state, administration, ruler, man, animal, bird, water body, river, sky, air, rain, fire, earth, vegetation, medicine etc. is consequently only the physical manifestation of natural unity and hidden integrity in all. That is why, like the present societies, it is unimaginable to describe politics, administration, government, constitution etc. separately. The positive results of considering human life as synthetic and fundamentally bound to the whole universe have been reflected in the breadth of vision and coordination, cooperation, harmony and balance with the entire earth-ecology and biodiversity.

That is why, in the Indian knowledge tradition, division of subject, classification of disciplines and differentiation between areas of knowledge are generally absent. Indian social thought is available in its entirety. It is an important element of Indian knowledge tradition to consider all the dimensions of human life such as physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual etc. in the perspective of a broad

whole and to present desirable expectations in conduct and behaviour in the form of a formula as 'dharma'. In such a situation, the practice of generally considering 'dharma' as a synonym for 'religion' or 'way of worship' in the modern context has created intolerable confusion regarding the Indian concept of dharma, which is not only limited to ordinary citizens but is also equally present in the policy makers, administrators, public representatives, tribunals, universities and intellectuals.

One of its direct adverse effects is that the disastrous definition and obscene interpretation of that very thread -- which kept the Indian culture alive despite being continuously trampled, looted, traumatised by violence, harassment and forcible proselytisation by the extremely ferocious, oppressive, cruel, brutal, uncivilized, intolerant and repressive invaders from the Vedic period till today -- has become prevalent in the discussions, dialogues and research of the respected educational institutions of modern India. That is why, modern India deliberately ensured the absence of 'dharma' in its educational institutions, in the research subjects, schemes and projects, in the syllabus of social sciences. It blocked the vision of the common Indian student and strengthened the colonial slavery complex of the teachers.

It nurtured the dependency of the administrators on Western values and nourished the directionlessness of politics. Therefore, the exclusion of the ancient Indian knowledge and idea of dharma from the educational institutions became a common occurrence. In fact, even today, in the 'Amrit Kaal' (renaissance period) of Independence, inclusion of serious ideological research and academic expression on the contemporary useful elements of the ancient Indian knowledge tradition remains a task of considerable courage in universities and academic institutions.

In this background, it is a question worth considering whether the boundary marks of the state, governance and good governance -- which were marked by the Indian knowledge tradition, combined with a holistic global view of society and a proper, balanced and equitable analysis of the past, future and present -- should be presented once again in the modern contexts and perspectives or not. In fact, the post-Independence community of Indian social scientists has also carefully separated itself from the concerns and questions of the social scientists of the time of the national movement.

That is the reason why this question has also come into being. Otherwise, even during the period of colonial subjugation by the West, Indian

intellect churned the ocean of traditional knowledge as much as possible and to the best of its ability, and discovered many gems which are proving capable of illuminating our path even today. Forgetting the interruptions caused after achieving Independence, it would be appropriate to keep in mind that by providing continuity to that chain of thoughts, the Indian tradition of thought should be continuously delved into and the pearls useful for contemporary India should be presented for public discussion.

From this point of view, the basic elements of the Indian political thought tradition have also been highlighted in the context of various political and administrative systems. Along with this, it seems necessary to do a proper research-based study of the ancient Indian political thought tradition from the point of view of the modern concept of good governance. In essence, the idea of good governance as a modern concept is the aspiration for a simple, ethical, responsible, sensitive and transparent governance.⁶ Within its ambit are the principles of rule of law, equality, constitutionalism, governmental accountability, policy inclusiveness, institutional legitimacy, mass public acceptance and diverse symbiosis.⁷ The theory of all these instrumental elements finds its strongest expression in

the structure of consistent and sustainable development goals.⁸

During the period of the First and Second World Wars, the overreach of imperialist immoralities saw the deliberate destruction of traditional regionalisms as a result of colonial oppression and exploitation. At the same time, the deliberate disregard of civilizations led to the emergence of insecure states and countries. Hence, the systems of most newly independent countries have been faltering for the last 6-7 decades till today. But the ideological and intellectual identity of India remains undisturbed till date. Though there is no time to review the reasons for this, it would be appropriate to say that the inner consciousness of India could remain completely untouched by attacks, assaults and oppression and could remain awake like a continuous upward light because it neither desired nor needed any state patronage, royal power shelter

or administrative protection. It keeps proclaiming the wisdom of India in the form of a point of flow infused in the inner stream of dharma.

That is why it is also necessary to understand that in India, all human behaviour like politics, society, spirituality, philosophy, economy, commerce, trade, business, governance, administration, teaching, study, enjoyment, etc. could only be driven by dharma, restricted by dharma, controlled by dharma, influenced by dharma and accepted by dharma. Therefore, a separate set of dharma has been assigned for each aspect of human life while continuous discussions and debates on it did not allow it to remain static but to get continuously refined and polished. Apart from that, no dimension of life was considered separate but the whole life was viewed in totality and the journey of human life was considered as a journey of dharma.

The concept of '*Purusharth*

Chatushtaya' (quadrat of actions) gave a wonderful coordinating principle of various aspects of human life. This idea is also credited with the birth of India's unique principle of '*Yogkshem*' (prosperity and its protection). The concept of *Yogkshem* has first been presented in the strongest form in the Vedic national anthem of Shukla Yajurveda where the sage of the Vedas presents the best possible conception of good governance in the entire nation through a prayer. He wishes for the all-round development, grandeur, prosperity, happiness, affluence and strength of the nation. This is basically the root source of the Indian concept of good governance.

The prayer goes like this: "O Brahma! In our country, there should be learned men endowed with '*Brahma Tej*' (radiance of the god) and resplendent with the knowledge of all the scriptures. The rulers should be mighty, proficient in weapons, valiant, great warriors and those who trouble the enemies. There should be brave men prepared to fight against internal and external enemies and to protect the nation. There should be abundant milk-yielding cows. There should be load-bearing bulls. There should be swift horses. There should be women who are intelligent and skilled in defence. The youth of this industrious nation should be skilled in managing

The concept of '*Purusharth Chatushtaya*' gave a wonderful coordinating principle of various aspects of human life. This idea is also credited with the birth of India's unique principle of '*Yogkshem*'. The concept of *Yogkshem* has first been presented in the strongest form in the Vedic national anthem of Shukla Yajurveda where the sage of the Vedas presents the best possible conception of good governance in the entire nation through a prayer. He wishes for the all-round development, grandeur, prosperity, happiness, affluence and strength of the nation. This is basically the root source of the Indian concept of good governance

congregations, victory-oriented and progressive. There should be children who are youthful, educated and skilled in defending the nation. There should be rain in the nation as per the requirement. Medicines should be fruitful. Food should be ripe and ready for consumption. Every citizen should have sufficient for his consumption and welfare. Our goal 'to get things what we need and to protect what we have' should be accomplished."

This holistic noble thought is the source of the Indian philosophy of state and politics. This is a matchless gift of India to the world. This is India's wonderful vision of world welfare. This is the initial clarion call of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the whole world is one family). This is the citizen's charter of demands or collective community expectations from the government. This is the wish-letter of India's ancient wisdom. This is the guideline of governance. This is the desired outcome of rules and techniques. This is the Indian mantra of good governance.

Vedic literature has been reflecting this very thought in its contemporary institutional structures, administrative processes, political instruments, legal systems and hierarchical schemes. The continuous active presence of Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha, Janapada, Gramani, Vish etc. is a proof of the

appropriate acceptance given to the creation of agencies to ensure good governance in the Indian Vedic tradition. In the later period, despite the divine respect given to the kingship, the inevitability of social responsibility being combined with the dignity of dharma is an assurance of good wishes to transform the governance into the best desired governance.

Despite its miraculous spirituality and metaphysicality, the Upanishadic period was not averse to society. Therefore, the abundant description and mention of the knowledge-centricity, truth-seeking, compassion for others, sensitivity, accessibility to all and compassion of the kingship is the supportive evidence of the Indian concept of good governance. The mirror-like presentation of the Indian social structure in the epics is an unforgettable reflection of the history, philosophy, skill, craft, war, religion, dignity, conduct, institution, politics, administration, public opinion, education, learning, Gurukul, Sabha, business, commerce, etc. of India. This is also the source of presenting India's most approved, expected, desired, revered and accepted state governance system in the form of the concept of 'Ram Rajya'. After inquiring about his well-being, this was actually the concluding point for the forest dweller Ram to ask Kosal king Bharat questions about

proper justice being delivered to the subjects.¹⁰

In the 100th canto of Ayodhya Kand, Ram asks Bharat many questions related to politics, from which we come to know what kind of conduct was expected from the kings. He asked, "Do you wake up on time? Do you think of ways to achieve wealth in the last quarter of the night? Do you discuss secret matters in privacy or with more people? Do the secret mantras you discuss about get spread across the entire nation? Do you start a task, whose means are very small but the result is very big, immediately after deciding on it? Or do you delay them? Do other kings come to know about all your tasks only when those tasks are completed or are about to be completed? Is it possible that they already know about your future programs? Do other people come to know about your thoughts and decisions through logic and reasoning even if you or your ministers do not reveal them? Do you and your ministers keep getting to know about the secret thoughts of others? If the enemies whom you have expelled from the kingdom return, do you ignore them considering them weak? Do all the people engaged in work approach you fearlessly? Or do they always stay away from you?"

"Adopting the middle position is the only way to

achieve wealth. Don't you keep away from these 14 defects of kings -- atheism, giving false speeches, anger, accepting offerings, not keeping company of wise men, procrastination, laziness, being under the influence of the five senses like eyes etc., thinking about the state affairs all alone, taking advice from fools who have negative intellect, not starting the decided works soon, revealing secret consultations, not performing auspicious rituals and attacking all the enemies at once? Do you really pay attention towards all these things -- Dashvarga, Panchvarga, Chaturvarga, Saptavarga, Ashtavarga, Trivarga, three Vidyas, six Gunas, sense control, divine and human obstacles, the righteous acts of the king, Vinshativarga, Prakriti Mandal, Yatra (attack on the enemy), Dand Vidhan (formation of arrays) and treaty and war?"¹¹

This is the same detailed teachings on 'Rajdharmā' (royal duties) that Bhishma

Pitamah (grandfather) gave to Yudhishtira while lying on his arrow-ridden deathbed in the battlefield waiting for the 'Uttarayani Surya' (movement of the sun towards the North) to occur. It is also a public declaration of the limits of the rulers in India. It is also a revelation of the latest hidden aspects of all the concepts of good governance. It is a timeless proclamation of Indian political administrative thought too.

The legitimacy of governance was a very important point in ancient Indian thought. This legitimacy was based on widespread public consensus and acceptance of decisions by the larger society. The need for the propriety of the government system has also been prominently accepted in Vedic literature. The government system did not derive its legitimacy from heredity or traditional power establishment but from the acceptance given by the common people to the government orders, policies,

rules, orders and activities. Therefore, the prayer that 'the common people should desire for governance' has also been made in the Vedas.¹²

In ancient Indian social thought, the rule of law has been given the utmost importance. The supremacy of law has been underlined by all important thinkers. The proper use of law and determination of punishment for violation of law was considered the main responsibility of the government system. Also, the absence of discrimination in the application of law, special place and respect for the constitutionality of governance among the subjects, instructions to all to comply with the government decisions and acceptance of government instructions in all ways, etc. are evidence of the presence of the rule of law everywhere. That is why the above expectations have been included in the description of the qualities of an ideal king.¹³

Valmiki Ramayan expects from the rulers to ensure good governance that includes control of senses, control of mind, forgiveness, righteousness, patience, valour, truth, punishing the criminals as these are the qualities of a king. The kings should not be autocratic. It is not right for them to use policy and humility, punishment and grace indiscriminately. They should avoid unnecessary narrow-mindedness and violence. Detailed descriptions of

The legitimacy of governance was a very important point in ancient Indian thought. This legitimacy was based on widespread public consensus and acceptance of decisions by the larger society. The need for the propriety of the government system has also been prominently accepted in Vedic literature. The government system did not derive its legitimacy from heredity or traditional power establishment but from the acceptance given by the common people to the government orders, policies, rules, orders and activities. Therefore, the prayer that 'the common people should desire for governance' has also been made in the Vedas

the selection, appointment, coronation, oath-taking etc. of the king are available in the Indian tradition of politics. In all this, a systematic, determined and conditional form is visible. Apart from the king, the minute and broad details of the appointments, qualifications, disqualifications, hierarchy, responsibilities and areas of work of the ministers, secretaries and other bureaucrats are also found in ancient Indian thought.¹⁴

We come to know what qualities ministers should have from the advice given by Ram to Bharat at Chitrakoot. He said, "Have you appointed only such capable persons like you, who are brave, scholars, self-controlled, noble and can understand the thoughts of the mind through their external gestures, as ministers? Good advice is the means of victory for kings. The king is well protected only by the best ministers who are experts in ethics and maintain the secrecy of the mantras. If there is even one minister who is intelligent, brave, clever and wise, he can help the king or the prince to acquire a lot of wealth. Brother, you must have appointed the people of top level in top level posts, the middle level people in the middle level jobs and the people of the lower level in the lower level tasks only, right? Also, to execute the best of the tasks, you must have appointed such ministers who

have been tested well, who have been working since the time of the forefathers and who are pure and good from inside and outside."

The ancient Indian state thinking is democratic in its basic nature, character and temperament. The use of the word 'democracy' is also available at many places.¹⁵ The Rajdharma has been associated with the exigency of public contentment. The responsibility of protecting democratic values is present in the form of the superiority of dharma.¹⁶ The greatest imagination of everyone's happiness, everyone's benefit, everyone's welfare and everyone's peace is present at the root of Indian political thinking.¹⁷ Indian social thinking never allows the political and administrative system to become arbitrary or uncontrolled. In both the epics, it has been ensured that the entire government is made accountable at every level.¹⁸

The king and all the state officials are controlled by dharma, morality, public conduct, tradition, society, dignity of laws, etc. Therefore, the government is always aware of its institutional and personal responsibility towards the larger society. The people of the society who are wise, educated, old, experienced and respected often keep asking direct questions to the system and keep reminding them of their own dharma.¹⁹

That is why, anywhere anybody, whether he or she is a graduate of Gurukul or a forest dwelling ascetic or a woodcutter walking on the road or a weaver summoned to a Sabha or a priest or a saint or even a woman offering water, can ask questions authoritatively to any ruler. In ancient Indian thought, detailed descriptive provisions of various institutional tools of the political system are also available. Detailed mentions about the Sabha and Samiti existing in the literature of the Vedic period are available too. Systematic descriptions of their decisions, processes, rights, areas of work and limits are also available. Apart from these, Vidatha, Gramani, Vish, Janapada etc. have also been mentioned here and there. The stratified hierarchy of the Council of Ministers and secretaries etc. is also described. Therefore, the governance was never a one person-centric affair in ancient India.²⁰

Collective decision and collective responsibility were then the prevailing values. Proper separation of policy making powers of the government is also present in the Indian state policy knowledge tradition. Separate provision of tribunals, unimaginable autonomy of centres of governance and education, independent activities under the rules and regulations of commerce and trade but under state supervision, special

Ancient Indian 'Dand Niti' is considered to be the most important among the four disciplines -- Anvikshiki, Trayi and Varta being the other three. It derives its importance and superiority from the total prohibition of anarchy.

This importance emanates from the broad objective of establishing dharma, achieving 'yogkshema' and the goals of attainment of Purusharth Chatushtaya. That is why, Dand Niti is a method of achieving the unachieved, enhancing the achieved, preserving the enhanced and distributing the preserved among the deserving

attention and favour of the state towards the poor, the weak, the orphan, the helpless, the old, the child, the woman, the sick, the afflicted, etc., non-interference in religious activities and rituals, etc. -- such clear formulas of separation of powers are available in Indian thought. A well thought out, clear and well organised hierarchy also exists in the Indian knowledge tradition regarding the state, politics, Rajdharma, penal policy, governance, administration, policy making, decision making, justice, behaviour, law, etc.

The 'Saptang' theory is the proof of the fact that the seven organs of the state have separate existence, identity and role. They are supplementary and complementary to each other, but no one is subordinate to anyone. They are mutually dependent but not at the mercy of others. They are colleagues but not competitors. They are limbs of a whole body. They are part of an organic whole. They are a collective

presentation of an integrated state institution. The tradition of Indian Rajdharma also makes the governance transparent and collectively responsible. That is why, decisions taken singularly or in isolation have been clearly prohibited. The necessity of collective decision making is a strong proof of transparency. There is also a provision to make capable, expert, learned, skilled and accomplished persons a part of the decision making process.²¹

Ancient Indian 'Dand Niti' (penal policy) is considered to be the most important among the four disciplines -- Anvikshiki, Trayi and Varta being the other three. It derives its importance and superiority from the total prohibition of anarchy. This importance emanates from the broad objective of establishing dharma, achieving 'yogkshema' and the goals of attainment of Purusharth Chatushtaya. That is why, Dand Niti is a method of achieving the unachieved, enhancing the achieved, preserving the enhanced and distributing the preserved

among the deserving.²² This method is considered to be the best among all the disciplines, among all sacrifices, among all dharma and indispensable for the establishment of all imaginations.²³

In ancient Indian thought, the subject of determining, operating and promoting foreign relations has also been discussed in detail. Under this, many thinkers and scholars have presented a clear and well-organized analysis on 'Shadgunya Niti' combined with Sandhi, Vighraha, Yana, Asana, Sanshraya, Dvaidhibhav, etc. Shadgunya Niti is actually the basic foundation and starting point of modern study on diplomacy. Ram Rajya of Valmiki Ramayan is India's pre-eminent concept of best state. The characteristics of the best king are visible in the description of the qualities of Ram. He was self-restraint, valiant, brilliant, patient, self-controlled, wise statesman, eloquent, brave, eliminator of enemies, righteous, truth lover, successful, full of knowledge, pious, yogi, always engaged in the welfare of the people, well versed in the Vedas and Vedangs, philosophical, expert in Dhanurveda (skill of using bow and arrow), protector of his own religion, protector of his own people, glowing skinned, majestic, wide chested, long armed, auspicious, deep as the ocean, enduring like a snowman,

sacrificial, truthful, dharma oriented and had a beautiful figure. Valmiki Ramayan expects these characteristic traits from a good king.²⁴

It is also expected from the king in it that he should protect his subjects, suppress the bandits and provide security to the gentlemen.²⁵ The king should entertain his subjects in a righteous manner.²⁶ In Valmiki Ramayan, the king is expected to be knowledgeable about dharma, grateful, expert in the rules of the state, intelligent and popular among all.²⁷ In the Indian thought

tradition, the determination of the superiority of the ruler for good governance is amazing. That is why the king is considered to be the doer, the defender, the protector, the father of the whole world, the form of time, the factor of the era and the representative of the entire public.²⁸

The king should select his ministers very carefully. Ram collected the detailed information about Bharat's ministers.²⁹ Valmiki's Ramayan prescribes the qualifications of the royal servants, officials and nobles with sufficient

caution.³⁰ Because the Council of Ministers is the beneficial institution of the king.³¹ It is also the basic mantra of victory.³² In such a situation, the pinnacle of good governance can be seen in which everyone in the Ram Rajya was living a happy life with a pious spirit.³³ Looking at Ram and following him, they were living in a cooperative spirit. This is the concept of Indian good governance. Many of its elements are still fundamentally useful, from which the contemporary political system can take cues. ●

References:

1. Yajurveda, Kathak Samhita
2. *Gayanti Devah Kil Geetikani Dhanyastu Te Bharatbhoomi Bhage, Swargapabargaspada Margabhutah Bhavanti Bhuyah Purushah Suratvat.* Vishnu Purana - 2.3.24
3. *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramayah, Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu Ma Kashchid Dukhbhag Bhavet.* Upanishad
4. *Aa No Bhadra Kratavo Yantu Vishvatah, Adabdhaso, Aparitaso Udbhidah.* Rigveda
5. *Ekam Sad Viprah Bahudha Vadanti.* Rigveda
6. The concept of modern good governance has also been coined by the acronym 'SMART' (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent).
7. The main elements and points of good governance have been enumerated in the modern sense in this manner.
8. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicated by the United Nations which are not only accepted by almost all the nations as Centenary Goals but they have also made them the basis of their respective policy making processes.
9. *Om Aa Brahman Brahmano Brahmanavarchasi Jayatām. Aa Rashtre Rajanya Shoorah Ishavyo'tivyaadhi Maharatho Jayatām Dogdhridhenurvodhanamvanashuh Supti Purandhiryosha Jishnu Ratheshthah Sabheyo Yuvasya Yajamanasya Veero Jayatām. Nikame Nikame Nah Parjanya Varshatu Falvatyo Nah Oshadhayah Pachyantam. Yogakshemo Nah Kalpatam.*
10. Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100
11. Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100/ 17-21, 37, 52, 65-70
12. *Vishastva Sarvah Vachchantu.* Rigveda - 10/173/1
13. *Sama Danam Kshama Dharmah Satyam Dhritiparakramau, Parthivanam Guna Rajan Dandashchapyapakarishu, Nayascha Vinayashchobhau Nigrahanugrahavapi, Rajavrittirsankirna Na Nripah Kamvrittayah.* Valmiki Ramayan - 4 (17) 29-32
14. Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100/ 15-6, 24-6
15. *Yudhishtir Dhritirdakshyam Deshkala Parakramah, Lokatantra Vidhananamesh Panch Vidhovidhih.* Mahabharat - 3.162-1
16. *Dharmamacharato Ragyanah Sadbhishcharitamaditah, Vasudha Vasusampurna*

- Vardhate Bhutivardhini.*
Vidur Niti - 2 (28)
Dharmena Rajyam Vindeta
Dharmena Paripalayet,
Dharmamulam Shriyam Prapya
Na Jahati Na Hiyate.
Vidur Niti - 2 (31)
17. *Lokah Samastah Sukhino*
Bhavantu.
18. *Na Sa Sabha Yatra Na Santi*
Vriddhah Na Te Vriddha Ye Na
Vadanti Dharmam,
Nasau Dharmo Yatra Na
Satyamasti Na Tat Satyam
yachhalenabhyupetam.
Vidur Niti - 3 (58)
19. *Prajnavridham Dharmavridham*
Swabandham Vidyavridham
Vayasa Chapi Vridham,
Karyakarye Pujayitva Prasadya
Yah Samprichchenna Sa Muhyet
Kadhachit.
Vidur Niti - 8 (23)
Yah Kakamanyu Prajahati Raja
Patre Pratishthapayate Dhanam
Cha, Vishesha Vichhrutavan
Kshiprakari Tam Sarvalokah
Kurute Pramanam.
Vidur Niti - 1 (109)
20. *Paurakaryani Yo Raja Na Karoti*
Diney Diney,
Sanvritte Narakey Ghorey Patito
Natra Sanshayah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 7/53/6
21. *Janati Vishvasayitum*
Manushyan Vignyatadosheshu
Dadhati Dandam, Janati Matram
Cha Tatha Kshamam Cha Tam
Tadrisham Shrirjushate Samagra.
Vidur Niti - 1 (110)
22. The definition of penal policy given by Kautilya is found in various forms in all the ancient Indian literature. According to the penal policy of Kautilya:
- Alabdhalabhartha, Labdha*
Parirakshini, Rakshita Vivardhini,
Tirthashu Vridheshu Pratipadini
Cha.
23. *Sarve Dharmah Rajdharmeshu*
Proktah.
24. *Niyatma Mahaviryo Dyutiman*
Dhritiman Vashi,
Buddhiman Nitiman Vagmi
Shriman Shatrunibarhanah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/89
Dharmagyanh
Satyasandhashcha Prajanam
Cha Hiteratah,
Yashasvi Gyansampannah
Shuchiravashya Samadhiman.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/12
Rakshita Swasya Dharmasya
Swajanasya Cha Rakshita,
Veda Vedanga Tattvagyon
Dhanurvedey Cha Nishthitah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/14
Vipulanso Mahababuh
Kambugrivo Mahahanuh.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/9
Mahorasko Maheshvaso
Gudhajatrurrindamah,
Ajanubabuh Sushira Sulalat
Suvikramah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/10
Samah Samavibhaktangah
Snigdhavarnah Pratapvan,
Pinavaksha Vishalaksho
Lakshmivan Shubhalakshanah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/11
Vishnuna Sadrisho Virye Somvat
Priyadarshanah, Kalagni
Sadhishyah Krodhe Kshamaya
Prithivisamah,
Dhanadena Samastyage Satye
Dharma Dwivaparah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/18
Samudra Iva Gambhirye
Dhairiyena Himvaniv.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/17
25. *Rakshitavya Praja Ragyan*
Rakshitavya Dwijatayah,
Dasyavasch Nihantavya
Paripalyascha Sadhavah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 5/100/33
26. *Raja Api Dharmanev Tada*
Rajyan Sunayai Prajah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/17/20
27. *Sarvlokpriyah Sadhurdinatma*
Vichakshanah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/1/14
Dharmagyanscha Kritagyanscha
Rajdharm Visharadah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 5/52/7
28. *Raja Karta Cha Gopta Cha*
Sarvasya Jagatah Pitah,
Raja Kalo Yugam Chaiva Raja
Sarvamidam Prajah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 2/7/4
29. *Kachchidatmasamah Shurah*
Shrutavanto Jitendriyah,
Kulina Chengitgya Cha Kṛitāste
Tatamantrīṇah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100/15
30. *Sandhivigraha Tattvagyan*
Prakritya Sampadanvitah,
Mantrasvarane Shaktah Shaktah
Sukshmasu Buddhishu,
Niti Shastra Visheshagyan
Satatam Priyavadinah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 1/7/18-19
Kushalah Vyavahareshu
Sauhridesu Parikṣitah.
Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100/26
31. *Hitam Mantrayate Ragyanstena*
Mantri Nigadyate.
Valmiki Ramayan - 5/100/8
32. *Mantro Vijayamulam Hi Ragyan*
Bhavati Raghav.
Valmiki Ramayan - 2/100/16
33. *Sarvam Muditamevasit Sarvau*
Dharmaparobhavatam,
Ramamevanupashyanto
Nabhyahimsan Parasparam.
Valmiki Ramayan - 6/128/100



Prof. Vishwanath Mishra

A Deliberative Document of Nation and Nationalism of India and Europe

Like in India, the idea of nationalism has been present in Europe as well from the time of the Greek civilization. However, in this respect, Europe could not keep its original ideological and philosophical template intact. An analysis...

The following research paper is an attempt to understand the nationalism of both India and Europe on the basis of facts and their analytical review, in which nationalism has been regarded as a pre-modern idea. The postulate of this particular paper is that like in India, nationalism has been prevalent since the era of the Greek civilization. But Europe, owing to three partitions of its self, has not been able to keep its original nationalism intact. Political nationalism based on the state arose in Europe after the Enlightenment, the myriad ill-effects of which were seen and felt in the world. In contrast to this, even in the period of downfall and debilitation, India did not ever lose sight of its original nationalism, and constantly kept alive its humanist form and outlook.

In Sanskrit, from the point of view of grammar, the suffix “shtran” added to the consonant “raj” makes the word “rāshtra”. From the point of view of meaning of words, the term “rāshtra” can also be conjugated as *rajaté*, *divyaté*, *shobhaté* and *prakashaté*, etc., reflecting a similar meaning.

In this meaning, a *rāshtra* is an entity that is illustrious by itself. But the etymological meaning of this word by no means conveys its realizational import. In order to further explore the meaning of this term therefore, one would have to enquire as to why a nation is self-illustrious. one may infer the answer to the question as a directive cultural meaning as “*Rājaté Shobhaté Dharmārthakāmamokṣhānām Iti Rāshtraḥ*”. Meaning, *rashtra* is the unified community (or conglomerate) for the realization of the four *purusharthas* (values) of *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (prosperity), *kāma* (gratification of desires) and *moksha* (liberation). In the light of this meaning, *rashtra* or nation, is denotive not of a race, community, class, lineage or geography, but of unity of values. If we go back to the period before Panini’s grammar, the first mention of the word *rashtra* is found in the Vāgdevī Sūkta of the Rigveda, which imparts a greater meaning to the term than is expounded by the grammar of Panini. The Rigveda’s exposition of the term *rashtra* goes thus: *Aham Rāstrī Sangamanī Vasūnām Chiktuṣī Prathamā Yajniyānām*.

*Tām Mā Devā Vyadadhuhu
Purūtrā Bhūristhātrām
Bhūryāvēshayntīm.*

The perceiver (i.e., composer) of this *sūkta* is the daughter of the sage Ambhrīna, Vāk, who, after her realization of the Brahma, i.e., the Ultimate One, expresses her all-encompassing outlook (seeing God in all, animate, inanimate, mortal and immortal beings and entities). Here, the term *rashtra* has been used as an adjective, meaning, one who resides in a nation. It is verily I (i.e., Goddess Parāmbā) who resides in the nation, which is a spiritual experience that Vāk has manifested in the Vāgdevī Sūkta. Here, it has been clearly stated that is I who infuse myself in the bodies of beings in the form of life. Owing to being situated in the form of the entire universe, whatever anyone does is all me (*Bhūristhātrām Bhūryāvēshayantīm*). There is no division of “us and them” in this concept of the *rashtra*, as is denoted in the concept of the nation, believed to have originated by the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, and is explained by the terms ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’.

In reality, the Rigvedic context of the nation and nationalism is an expression of the ideal which we can arguably say is the non-dual Vedantic idea of the nation and nationhood. “*Aham Brahmāsmi*” contains the expression of the self (swa) but has no room for the ‘other’.

“*Tattvamasi*” (*Tat Tvam Asi*) means “I am the Brahman” and you too are the same. This is a great and lofty ideal of nationhood that humankind has yet to attain. The level of consciousness expected to reach this stage is attainable only by yogis who have reached the state of realization. It is only in India that in Sanskrit literature, when discourse about the *rashtra* traverses beyond the period of the Rigveda, it does not retain its original form and frame. In the *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, one can find mention of the word ‘*Shrīrvairāṣtram*’, which means well-being and renown are the nation. The *Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa* contains the phrase “*Raṣtranivai Vishah*”, which means people alone are the nation. The *Shukra Nītisār* has the description “*Sthāvaram Jangamamvāpi Rāṣtra Shabdena Gīyatē*”, which means that both the immovable or inanimate (*sthāvara*) and moveable or animate (*jangama*) elements are conveyed by the word *rāṣtra*. In the *Manusmṛiti* and Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, the *rashtra* is stated to be one of the seven parts of the state; the nation here is used in the sense of *janapada*, i.e., the region inhabited by the people. The phrase “*Gaudīya Janpadēṣu*” appears in the Bhaemi commentary of Panini. Here, ‘*Gaudīya*’ denotes ethnicity while ‘*Janapada*’ denotes an administrative unit. From this description, it is clear that the

word *rashtra* has been used in many meanings in the classical texts of India. If one looks at the arguments of Adi Sankara’s commentary on the Gita, the word *rashtra* has also been used for the body. However, if the meaning of the word *rashtra* mentioned in Sanskrit literature is adjusted to its meaning formed by joining it with any particular ideological bent of thought, it is associated with ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’. Whereas on the other hand, the nationalism of the West is associated with individualism and a political unity that is based on the state’s power and reach.

The use of the word nation as an ethnicity and administrative unit becomes synonymous with the Greek city-state. However, an outcome like the way Greek civilization disintegrated due to external invasion and reappeared in the form of the Roman Empire did not happen in the Indian civilization. The republics of the Mahajanapada period were political units and being as such, they also had a strong idea of geographical unity, which was often opposed to the expansionist proclivities and/or policies of other similar republics. Certainly, even in those times, the citizens of the republics professed loyalty to the king, but their loyalty was indicative of their preference for the (respective) dynasty. Loyalty then was not an indicator of nationalism. Loyalty to the monarch (or central ruler) was

widely forged as an indicator of nationalism in the modern era by the Fascists and Nazis. The loyalty that the citizens of the republics in ancient India had can be considered a factor of identity, but their cultural and spiritual devotion or loyalty was also towards a larger unit, which we call sacred geography or cultural geography in today's terminology.

It has been the peculiarity of Indian history that the process of indigenous empire-building here did not work to change cultural and spiritual beliefs, nor did it work to erase the attachment to sacred geography or cultural geography from political beliefs. Rather, the goal here was to bind even sacred geography or cultural geography associated with territory, into political unity. The very symbol of that goal lies in the notion of the Chakravarti emperor. Consequently, there has also been the very clear idea of boundary perception in India.

The resultant annexation of the Mahajanapadas, first to the Magadhan empire and then to other later empires was nothing more than a change in political identity as citizens. This process of empire-building in India altered the nature of political loyalty. This shifted the trend of regional and ethnic political loyalties to mass (civic) political loyalties and it gradually began taking strides toward acquiring an all-India form. As the entire process involved neither pressure to change cultural allegiances nor thereby change in ethnic identity, it did not take long for this political transformation to take root. The important reason for this has been that the micro dynamics of society in India have always been more influential than the macro dynamics of politics, which has to do with the fundamentally apolitical nature of India's culture. Even when this apolitical form of culture served as a catalyst for greater

political unity, it chose a path of combining physical force and spiritual force in which spiritual force predominated, and it is in the combined form of these two that the nation has flourished. The truth of this is also affirmed by the following mantra of the Atharva Veda:

*Bhadramicchanta
Riṣayaḥ Swarvidastapo
Dīkṣhāmupaniṣeduragre |
Tato Rāṣtram Balamojaścha
Jātam Tadasmai Devā
Upasannamantu ||*

Meaning, the austerities performed by the self-realized sages at the beginning of Creation revealed a sense of strength, service, creation and energy towards the nation. Let us therefore, serve the nation with humility. This national consciousness can also be called the national consciousness of organic society, which is by its very nature different from the nationalism of mechanical societies. For example, the answer to why we should serve the nation is:

*Mātā Bhūmīḥ Putroham
Prithivyāḥ Parjanyaḥ Pitā Sa
U Naḥ Pipartu |
Yasyām Vedim
Parigrihanannita Bhūmyām
Yasyām Yajnam Tanvaté
Vishwakarmaṇaḥ ||*

The above shloka means the earth is our mother and we are its progeny, and she is also the altar of sacrifice for energy. The earth is therefore worthy of worship. This feeling towards motherland (territory)

It has been the peculiarity of Indian history that the process of indigenous empire-building here did not work to change cultural and spiritual beliefs, nor did it work to erase the attachment to sacred geography or cultural geography from political beliefs. Rather, the goal here was to bind even sacred geography or cultural geography associated with territory, into political unity. The very symbol of that goal lies in the notion of the Chakravarti emperor. Consequently, there has also been the very clear idea of boundary perception in India. The resultant annexation of the Mahajanapadas, first to the Magadhan empire and then to other later empires was nothing more than a change in political identity as citizens

is not inherent in the attributes of citizenship in mechanical societies. The reason for this is that the citizenship of modern mechanical societies is authoritative and hence territory is treated as something to be consumed, i.e., exploited.

If a comparative analysis of Indian nationalism is done with that of the West, it would be easy to underscore the uniqueness of both. To begin with, Europe (Greek society, for that matter) is an organic society and there too, like India, there are several ideas and examples of national consciousness. A strong example of nationalism prevalent in Greek society is the funeral oration given by Pericles (495-429 BC) in which he calls upon people to keep the image of the Greek goddess in their hearts. But in the process of going through its three self-divisions, Europe has not been able to maintain the essential nature of its national consciousness. Rather, it suffers deviations again and again in defining itself. On the contrary, despite going through many storms of history, India does not deviate from the path of its original nationalism and the concept of '*Aham Brahmāsmi*'. The understanding of this change comparatively with the transformation of Greek society might hold the answer to some other puzzles as well. There has been a continual movement from polytheism to monotheism in India. Here, polytheism is not

opposed to monotheism. Rather, monotheism too becomes a component of polytheism. Believing in monotheism along with polytheism creates a mindset in which regional loyalties can merge into a pan-India loyalty and a regional model of pan-Indian loyalties can also be forged. The Greeks did not have this ease of mind or a mental structure of this kind. The religious reason behind sentencing Socrates to death is associated with the fault of introducing the idea of a new god among the polytheists, which supposedly would have led to monotheism. But, the Greek mind considers that one new god to be opposed to polytheistic belief. Such a mind does not quickly give up a regional loyalty and accept a heterogeneous and widespread loyalty.

As a result, the Greek mind longs for loyalty to the unity of the empire and ideologically, takes refuge in natural law. In Cicero's thinking, an attempt has been made to achieve this goal by describing the state as a collective institution. When Cicero says that the public is formed when a sufficient number of people come close to each other, his saying so is indicative of the feeling of the nation itself. This sentiment can also be seen in the efforts of Tiberius Gracchus, although his efforts were not successful. On the other hand, empire-building in India made it easier

for the common people to reach the country's pilgrimage sites and sacred rivers from the point of view of security. This is because it is easier to travel under political protection in an empire than to travel through various *ganas* (republics). As a result, a tradition of Jal Tirtha, Vaishnav Tirtha, Shakta Tirtha, etc., developed, which did not allow the fabric of attachment to sacred geography and sacred culture and the imagined community associated with it to sunder even during the period of disintegration of empires.

The Twelve Tables that were created under the concept of natural justice during the time of Tiberius Gracchus in the Roman Empire are an important basis for imparting a civic character to the various nationalities in the Roman Empire by drawing them out of their ethnic confines. Similarly, the eternal dharma discussed in the Smriti texts of India gives a civic character to the nationalities by drawing them out of their ethnic background. Before the Roman Empire, the ideas of establishing unity had started emerging in the Greek civilization as well, though this was more the voice of civic unity than ethnic unity. When in the beginning of the fourth century, Gorgias of Leontinoi gave a famous speech during the Olympian Games and appealed for unity saying that Greek separatism was becoming a threat to the political life of

Greece, the feeling of being a nation was there. In 388 BC, this issue was discussed by Lysias as well, and Isocrates too appealed for unity.

However, those voices of Greece could not find any Kautilya and Chandragupta. These voices also have not only a sense of pride towards heritage and past but also a desire to keep it intact. This desire does make them a nation, but in the matter of political preservation and the stability of that preservation, the Greek longing got stuck between Alexander's lust for empire and his eventual failure. In India, on the contrary, when the republican faith morphed into imperial loyalty, it obtained long-term political safeguarding.

Although Buddhism appeared as a social resistance against the violence and injustice arising from the influence of empire-building and settled life in India, it was not an escapist sect like the Cynics of Greece. Cynic thought did not take on the form of any organisation, whereas Buddhism in India developed an organizational structure as well. Buddhism also resists the cultural violence of the very institution of empire which patronized this organizational structure. That non-violence is the greatest creed has been an influential and important voice of Sanatan Dharma as well. As a result, Buddhism too did not give birth to any totally new belief system and neither

did it pose any challenge to loyalty to empire. Had the belief system of Buddhism had become a challenge to imperial loyalty in India, an initial obstacle could have arisen in the way of the evolution of national consciousness in India. Precisely the same obstacle emerged when the Roman Empire was transformed into the Holy Roman Empire. The latter divided the individual's loyalty. From there on, the individual fell under the control of two power structures, due to which nationalities remained intact but their nationalism became enmeshed in confusion. This is because nationalism is not the realm of a divided consciousness. As a result, when religion was pushed out of this world during the period of Enlightenment in Europe (secularism), a nationalism arose that merely adhered to the bodily encumbrance. This is because secularism provided them with the logic through which the West could claim to keep the faith of the individual towards one authority constant, although this was an illusion. And it was from this illusion that sovereignty-based state-centric nationalism arose in the West.

But this was an awakening of nationalism in Europe that had many contradictions, the first of which has been mentioned in the lines above. Its second contradiction was that when the West was defining (and

also shaping) the modern man as an egoistic and self-centred being, it was also constructing its nationalism at the same time. In such a situation, the question arises as to why would an egoistic and self-centred being want to associate itself with the concept of collective unity of nationalism. There is only one logical answer to this and that is for the fulfilment of its own selfish interests. The collectiveness of self-fulfilment makes the nation only a material unit. The irony is that this unit of the nation-state, which is in essence more apt to be termed a state-nation unit, became the model of modernity, colonialism and development of science and technology. And, it universalized such a worldview in a way that pushed the life and worldview of other civilizations into the background.

All this was not possible without violence. Due to this, a large body of knowledge was created that changed our perspective towards violence. Now, we often look upon violence as a symbol of power, whereas power is a symbol of unity and service. It is after looking such state-based nationalism of the West that Maharshi Aurobindo had said, "Today's organized states are neither the supreme mind of the nation nor are they the holistic energy of the group. Rather, they suppress and discourage the organized functioning of the group. They also prevent such

thinking minds from flourishing which can prove to be the best in the present and can give a new direction to the future. In fact, the collective ego of the state is a low-level collective ego and does not have the moral strength like the society. The force that the state possesses is the power of military. Unfortunately, this force, whose intellectual and morality is also incomplete and undeveloped, tries to impose its half-baked morality and knowledge on the society. This is the internal character of the states and when they introduce this character at the international level, they look like a huge animal (huge beast). Expecting a person to sacrifice through such a state is exactly the opposite of higher ideals. When the state has not taken the form of nature of mind, it has become a machine, then it cannot be entitled to have the

same desire as Nature of mind.

If we base our thinking on Hobsbawm's ideas, he believes that the first explosion of nationalism was in the French Revolution, and believing nationalism to be a modern and elite conflict-based ideology, he says that it is nationalism that creates a nation. The nation does not create nationalism and state; rather, it is the state that creates nationalism. If this argument is accepted, then nationalism can be seen in the aggressive coming together of the people against monarchy in the West. This way, nationalism becomes a mantra that empowers the people against the established ruling system. But soon, the structural use of democracy in the West made nationalism a powerful means of legitimizing entrenched power. This use of nationalism reveals the most distorted form

of power.

Tagore, while defining the nationalism of the West, has drawn our attention to three important facts. First, the nation is a mechanical partnership of the political and economic union of the people. Secondly, on the contrary, the organisation of society does not have any indirect objective like nation but it is self-evident. Thirdly, society is a natural system of human relations as a natural manifestation of human relationships, it also has a political aspect but it is only one side whose purpose is its preservation. It has no human ideal of its own. But this side developed amazingly when this political part got the support of science, expertise and prosperity. This development of the political side increased jealousy and fear towards neighbouring communities in such a way that it acquired the power of governance in the role of selfishly motivated domination. As a result, it also took the power of self-control of the society under its control. It broke the natural controlling tendencies of co-relations and established the mechanical system of control. The politics that functions as a part of the society, occupying all the parts of the society, gives rise to a competition in which, first of all, women's subordination is increased. Because in this new type of politics, the man was a

Tagore, while defining the nationalism of the West, has drawn our attention to three important facts. First, the nation is a mechanical partnership of the political and economic union of the people. Secondly, on the contrary, the organisation of society does not have any indirect objective like nation but it is self-evident. Thirdly, society is a natural system of human relations as a natural manifestation of human relationships, it also has a political aspect but it is only one side whose purpose is its preservation. It has no human ideal of its own. But this side developed amazingly when this political part got the support of science, expertise and prosperity. This development of the political side increased jealousy and fear towards neighbouring communities in such a way that it acquired the power of governance in the role of selfishly motivated domination

professor, he became a symbol of power by being an income earner. In this change, both men and women had understood the meaning of their existence. Now they were in such a condition that the gaseous fluid had to come out from a very tight tube under pressure in which both (men and women) could keep their relation until this pipe burst. If we see this in a larger context, today the nation which is the mechanical form of political and economic partnership, destroys individual humanity in the laboratory of politics. Politics and business, whose second name is the nation, the day when it will become more powerful than the harmony of humanity, it will be the most inauspicious day for humanity.

Gurudev says that the rule by the nation is neither British

nor anything else but it is an applied science. It is used the same way everywhere. The method of hydraulic pressure that is completely impersonal is effective. The nature of pressure depends on the shape of the machine (in the sense of nation), but their elemental or abstract form is the same. Many foreign regimes have been established so far in the history of human civilisation and especially in India. All of them have some form of machine. But the difference between the form of other governance and the form of governance by the nation is that the rule of others has been like the handloom and the rule by the nation is like the power loom. Handloom like rule means that the former British rule in India maintains association with live sensations and music of life. Whereas power loom like ruling nation

makes the society consistent (this should be understood in terms of uniformity) and life-less.

This does not mean that there cannot be any alternative or other model of nationalism in the West. But for this, they would have to go back to the homogeneous vacant period before the Christian era and free themselves from all three of their self-divisions. However, in order to attain this, Europe itself needs to rewrite its history in such a way that it can keep itself free of the influence of Darwinism. Also, if India has to present its nationalism as a model, then it will have to keep nationalism steadfast on its basic principle, in which nationalism makes the resolve of ‘*Sarvabhūtahitēratāhā*’ (engaged in the welfare of all), the mantra for running society, state and economy. ●

References:

1. Here, one might ask why only a connotation of illustriousness of culture alone should be applied. The answer to this is that culture illuminates us it is culture that liberates us from organic bondages. A linguist, or a scholar of the scriptures might object, pointing out that it has been said “*Sā Vidyā Yā Vimuktayē*” (that which liberates is knowledge) and not “*Sā Sanskriti Yā Vimuktayē*” (that which liberates is culture). However, this difference is merely procedural. The outcome that knowledge produces is after all, culture. It is thus proved that to make an entity cultured is also to illuminate.
2. *Rigveda*, 10,125,3-11
3. Kalidasa expresses this by saying: *Astyuttarasyām Dishi Devatātmāhā Himālayo Nāma Nagādhirājah. Pūrvāparau Toyanidhiva Gāyayahsthitaḥ Prithivyā Iva Mānadaṇḍah* (In the northern direction are the Himalayas, the king of mountains and the soul of the gods The east and the west are like the treasures of water, standing like the standard of the earth; Kalidasa, *Kumārasambhavam*, 1/1). This account not only mentions the territory from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean but also presents it with faith and pride as the benchmark on earth. Nationalism is believed to have originated from such collective faith and sense of pride in a particular territory.
4. Friedrich Barth is associated with this concept in Western political thought.

5. In the *Vishnu Purana*, the boundary perception of Bharat the nation has been spoken of by stating: **Uttaram Yat Samudrasya Himādréschaiva Dakṣiṇam; Varsham Tad Bhāratam Nāma Bhāratī Yatra Santatihi** (The north of the sea and the south of the Himalayas is the country called Bharata whose progeny is Bharati, i.e., of Bharat).
6. *Atharvaveda*, 19/41/9
7. *Atharvaveda*, 12/1/12-13
8. "I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become field with the love of her glory; and when you are impressed by the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it, who in their hour of conflict had the fear of dishonour always present to them, and who, if ever they failed in an enterprise, would not allow their virtues to be lost to their country, but freely gave their lives to her as the fairest offering which they could present at her feet". Sabine, J.H.; *A History of Political Theory*, New Delhi; Surjeet publications, 1987, p. 11, Hindi translation, (Vishwaprakash); New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1987; p. 11
9. Sabine, J.H.; *History of Political Philosophy*, Hindi translation, (Vishwaprakash); New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1987; p.153
10. Ibid
11. It is noteworthy that Benedict Anderson has used the concept of imagined community to understand nationalism and its timeless influence in understanding nationalism is also acknowledged. Its implication reveals the association in which we feel connected to those people of the past and present, with whom we may not interact directly. Pilgrimages have also played an important role in this regard and it is found in almost every community of the world in some form or the other. But the way the pilgrimage tradition has developed in India is unique. See Benedict Anderson (2016), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London
12. Ibid, page 118
13. Cynicism is an ancient Greek philosophical school, whose proponent was Antisthenes. It has a feeling of disregard for society and rejects the dominance of society over the individual.
14. Here, the division of allegiance is related to the division between Pagan allegiance and Christian allegiance. The nature of Pagan allegiance was adherence to both the sentient and inanimate, like that of India. it was for this reason the nature of original Greek nationalism was also indicative of spiritual resolve. But in Christian allegiance, there was such a division between this world and the other world in which the worldly order denotes a realm devoid of divinity. The modern state of the West that emerged from the medieval concept of a Christianity devoid of divinity, later on formed the background of modern nationalism. From this point of view, while the body of the nation is present in the nationalism of the West, it is devoid of a soul.
15. Ghosh, Aurobindo: *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publications, 1919; p. 24.
16. Ibid
17. Hobsbawm, E.J.; *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.10
18. Tagore, Rabindranath: *Nationalism in Japan*, in Omnibus, Part-3, New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2005, p. 35
19. Ibid
20. Ibid, p. 36
21. Ibid
22. Ibid, p.37
23. Ibid, p.40
24. The first self-division is the poisoning of Socrates; the second self-division is the elimination of Pagan faith by Christianity, and the third self-division is the adoption of secularism in the Enlightenment.
25. Vishwanath Mishra (2023), *Bharatiya Rashtravad: Rashtravad Ka Avadharnatmak Vi-Aupnivesheekaran*, D.K. Print World, New Delhi.



Dr. Chandra Prakash Singh

Indian Spirit & the Sects

Spirituality is the pillar of Indian culture, which is known for its unity in diversity. The entire emphasis of this spirituality is on the all-round development of the individual. Here is an analysis of this issue in the context of our varied philosophical and religious sects

Indian culture, which is full of diversities, is undoubtedly the oldest living culture of the world. The diversity in Indian culture is not only reflected in the external forms like attire, language etc. but also in the religious field in the form of different philosophies and the sects based on them. It is natural for a person ignorant of the basic elements of Indian culture to ask that despite various types of diversities, what are those basic elements that have kept the unity of Indian culture intact right from the Vedic period till today. This question arises very often these days because taking advantage of this ignorance, disruptive forces want to achieve their selfish ends by creating differences in the Indian society. Therefore, in the present environment, it seems not only necessary but also inevitable to draw everyone's attention towards those basic comprehensive principles of Indian culture.

The way of thinking of any society is greatly influenced by various factors like civilization, culture, geographical environment, climate etc. This is the reason that despite some differences in the

opinions generated at different times and at different places within a nation, some points of similarity remain inherent, which are indicative of the continuity of the culture. Despite some external differences in Indian religious sects, such points of uniformity are visible in their sentiments and principles, which are equally acceptable in every thought system of India from the Vedic period till today.

Spirituality is the pillar of Indian culture. From the Vedic period itself, the fertile green land of the country, rivers full of clean water, atmosphere filled with cool and gentle breeze have automatically led people towards spiritual knowledge. Therefore, spiritual tendency is the basic characteristic of Indian society. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the supreme form of Indian ideology, which has permeated its entire culture and which has provided a special type of structure to all its thoughts, is its spiritual tendency. Spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history.¹ While in religions of other countries like Islam and Christianity, the words of an angel or prophet are considered

the basis of religious conduct and ethics, in India, spiritual experience is the pillar of the religious conduct and ethics. This is the guiding principle of all internal and external actions and behaviour of the people of India.

Every human being has his own personality. Personality is that which he expresses in public life through his mind, intellect and body, i.e. the way he thinks, decides and behaves physically -- all these things form his personality. The search for the foundation behind the factors that helps express this personality is spirituality.

If a man has mind, intellect and body, then undoubtedly, he will do something or the other. What he should do, how he should do it and why he should do it has been a matter of contemplation for the wise men, because whatever he does will have an impact not only on him but also on the whole society. In Indian thinking, there has never

been a thought of restricting the original personality of a person. It has never been said that “leave the idea of mental exercise and intellectual orientation to us and you just do the physical activities as we say.” Rather, complete development of the personality of a man has always been propagated, so that he himself can be perfect in thinking, deciding and behaving in the best way. Indian thinking never says that a man should be kept in any ideological cage and that he should think what we think and do what we decide. It rather says there should always be inquisitiveness in a man.

The scriptures say that a man's life is not only meant for the satisfaction of sensual desires or for sex and pleasure, rather there should be a desire to know about the fundamental truth and purpose of life.

*Kamasya Nendriyapritilabaho
Jivet Yavata,*

*Jivasya Tattvajigyasa Nantho
Yashcheh Karmabhih||²*

Religionism is completely opposite to this. It puts the right of a person to think and decide on his own under lock and key and tells him that “Whatever we have said is the final decision and you must consider it as the ultimate truth. Independent reasoning and thinking more than that, is a crime.” Religious beliefs frustrate the mental and intellectual personality of a person and turns him into a caged animal.

It is unfortunate that today ‘sect’ is seen as a synonym of religionism and as an organization of individuals. On the other hand, religion does not emphasize on the spirituality of an individual but focuses only on its followers getting united, as an organization is seen as a physical force. Because an organized force, whether religious or otherwise, appears successful on the physical plane for some time on the basis of its physical strength, no matter how dreadful its long-term consequences may be.

Organizationalism is only a reactionary form of religionism, which wants to put the entire society in its enclosure -- not in an atmosphere of natural harmony with the society in mutual reciprocity, but by standing in a fragmented form in the mode of a concentric structure. There is no aspect of development of personality in it, but the only objective is to make the individual compatible with the objective set by oneself,

If a man has mind, intellect and body, then undoubtedly, he will do something or the other. What he should do, how he should do it and why he should do it has been a matter of contemplation for the wise men, because whatever he does will have an impact not only on him but also on the whole society. In Indian thinking, there has never been a thought of restricting the original personality of a person. It has never been said that “leave the idea of mental exercise and intellectual orientation to us and you just do the physical activities as we say.” Rather, complete development of the personality of a man has always been propagated, so that he himself can be perfect in thinking, deciding and behaving in the best way

whatever the objective may be. A person may have a thousand flaws from a social point of view, but if he fulfills the purpose of an organization or a religious purpose, then according to them, that is the specialty of his personality and that is his personality development. On the other hand, the basis of sects is not only organization but also the method of imparting knowledge. Its base is more mental and intellectual than physical. In fact, religious sects are related to the method of thinking about the essence of curiosity (school of thought). The method of imparting knowledge in any field in a proper manner defines a sect. Hence, there are not only religious or philosophical sects but there are also sects in all fields of knowledge and art. For example, there are six sects in the poetics of Sanskrit literature -- Rasa sect, Alankar sect, Riti sect, Vakrokti sect, Dhvani sect and Auchitya sect.

There are many 'traditions' of Indian religious sects, which can largely be divided into Vedic and Shramana traditions. Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnava, Santmat sects mainly come under the Vedic tradition. Even under these four sects, there are many different traditions. On the other hand, there are four main traditions under Shaiva sect -- Shaiva Siddhanta, Veer Shaiva, Kapalika and Kashmir Shaiva. The tradition of Dashnami sect established by Shankaracharya is also included

in Shaiva sect, but Shiva is not the only deity worshipped here. Shankaracharya has prescribed 'Panchayatana' worship system, in which Vishnu, Shakti, Surya and Ganesh are also worshipped along with Shiva, whereas from a philosophical point of view, Shankaracharya has propounded Advaita sect.

Similarly, there are four main sects among Vaishnavas -- Shri, Hans, Brahma and Rudra sects, whose 'Acharyas' or main propagators are Ramanujacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Madhvacarya and Vallabhacharya respectively. Apart from these, there are also Gaudiya Vaishnava sect started by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Radhavallabh sect started by Hitaharivansh Ji, Mahapurushiya sect started by Shankardev etc. Santmat also has many sects and cults including Udasi, Nanakpanthi, Kabirpanthi, Malukdasi, Ravidasi, Dhanna, Pipa, Sen etc. Similarly, there are differences in sects in both Buddhists and Jains of Shramana tradition. For example, there are two main sects in Buddhism -- Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana while four main philosophical sects are Swatantrik, Vaibhashik, Vigyanvaad (Yogachara) and Shunyavaad (Madhyamik). Likewise, there are two main sects in Jains -- Shvetambara and Digambara. There are different sects among them too, like Taranpanth, Terapanth, Sthanakvasi etc.

Most of the Indian sects accept the existence of an eternal element beyond this mortal body and the existence of God as the creator and controller of this animate-inanimate universe. The difference in them is only about the nature of the soul and the Supreme Soul and their mutual relationship, not about the existence of the soul and the Supreme Soul. In Vedic literature too, His nature has been described in many ways, on the basis of which many sects have propounded their views. The reason for this multifaceted description is that the Vedic sages were describing an experienced truth which is not possible to describe through words. The more subtle and vast an object is, the more difficult it becomes to describe it. For example, if we try to describe the sky, it will be extremely difficult. Then how is it possible to describe in words the Supreme Reality which is even greater than that?

The other side is that no action can express its own cause in full. So, the senses, mind and intellect do not have the capability to express the cause behind this world. When the existence beyond the senses is expressed through the senses, something or the other will definitely remain incomplete in it. Therefore, Upanishad says -- "Who knows that bliss of 'Brahma' from where speech returns without achieving anything and from where the

mind also returns astonished after reaching there! It means, it cannot be described through speech etc.”³ Therefore, whenever an attempt is made to express the Supreme Being in words, it is natural to have diversity in it. Vedic sages realized the truth that “Truth is one, but wise people call it by different names.”⁴

The description of God and the soul may have been done in different ways in Indian beliefs, sects and cults, but everyone is unanimous on this subject that it is not possible to describe God and the soul completely through words. That is why, everyone has given spiritual importance to the experience. In view of this problem, Mahatma Buddha thought it appropriate to remain silent on these questions, which was later defined by his followers as nihilism, scientism, etc.

Along with place, time and situation, the mental and intellectual acceptance of the person propagating a particular philosophy also has a major role behind the diversity of Indian beliefs, sects and cults. Our sages knew it clearly that the same philosophy or the same method of worship cannot be prescribed for people of different intellectual and mental levels at every place, at every time and in every situation. Keeping these diversities in mind, different Acharyas started different sects for people of different mental and intellectual levels

Along with place, time and situation, the mental and intellectual acceptance of the person propagating a particular philosophy also has a major role behind the diversity of Indian beliefs, sects and cults. Our sages knew it clearly that the same philosophy or the same method of worship cannot be prescribed for people of different intellectual and mental levels at every place, at every time and in every situation. Keeping these diversities in mind, different Acharyas started different sects for people of different mental and intellectual levels in different places, times and situations, but their aim was one -- to grow out of narrowness, to move from ignorance to knowledge, to harmonize the individual with the whole and to convert from the imperfect into the perfect

in different places, times and situations, but their aim was one -- to grow out of narrowness, to move from ignorance to knowledge, to harmonize the individual with the whole and to convert from the imperfect into the perfect. Whoever is wherever, in whatever way and on whatever level, he should find the path of expansion there, in the same way and from the same level -- this is the beauty inherent in the diversity of Indian sects. Pushpadant expresses this feeling in Shiva Mahimna Stotra -- “Just as different rivers merge into the ocean through different paths, similarly people with different interests and paths also ultimately merge into you (God).”⁵ Swami Vivekanand Ji used to say -- “It will be a golden day for humanity when every person will have his own sect according to his intellectual and mental state, through which he can uplift himself.”

Similarly, ‘Karmaphal’ or

results of one’s own deeds and ‘Punarjanma’ or reincarnation are two such principles which have been accepted by almost every ideology born in India, except the Charvak school of thought. These are the two principles that have influenced Indian culture the most, whose impact has been reflected in the daily work and public behaviour of the people of India for ages. A person may or may not have any knowledge about any philosophical doctrine, but he has no doubt in the concepts of Karmaphala and Punarjanma. Even in the Indian Vedic philosophical sects, there are two philosophies -- Purva Mimamsa and Sankhya -- which do not believe in the existence of God, but impliedly accept the doctrines of Karmaphala and Punarjanma.

Moreover, these two principles are interrelated. The very basis of reincarnation is the ‘Karma’ (deed or action) of

life. It is believed that according to his deeds, a living being takes birth and rebirths in different species and suffers or enjoys the consequences of his deeds. Whatever a living being does as a doer, he has to suffer the consequences. The reason for the present state of a living being is his deeds done in the past. Karma theory is the basis of the moral order of the world, which proves that any kind of feeling -- happiness or sorrow -- experienced by a living being does not happen without a reason. The deeds done by the living being in the past are now present behind it as the reason. The meaning of Karma theory is that nothing in this world is accidental or without a reason, the empire of moral order exists everywhere, which is known as 'Rita' or truth in the Vedas. The basic basis of Karma theory is Vedic literature and all ideologies have adopted this principle from there.

Karma and reincarnation theory is such a specialty of Indian sects that everyone accepts it equivocally and it makes the entire Indian philosophy different from any other philosophies in the world. This is the regulating principle of Indian culture. It has such a wide influence on Indian society that it does not matter which philosophical doctrine a person follows, but what is important is what kind of deeds he does. This is the reason why all Indian sects have given equal importance to

almost all the same moral values and noble qualities like truth, non-violence, celibacy, control over senses, renunciation, non-stealing, cleanliness, contentment etc. Some 'Vamachari' or unorthodox sects ignored this and never got wide acceptance in the society and today they are endangered.

In Indian culture, more importance has been given to a person's conduct than his thoughts. This is why there may be differences of opinion in sects, creeds and sects, but almost the same system of social conduct is found in all of them. No one has said that lying, committing violence or stealing is fine. No one has said that ambushing and killing those who do not accept our beliefs is right or that those who do not accept our beliefs do not have the right to live on earth. Rather they said that whether someone understands our philosophical beliefs or not, accepts them or not, but if he follows the moralities, lives in harmony with the universe and his actions are in harmony with the society, then he is spiritual, because he is working in accordance with the power of retention of the universe. He is upholding religion, so religion will protect him, because the definition of religion in our scriptures is considered to be like "Religion is called religion because it has the power to hold. Religion holds the people or society, i.e. it establishes harmony, balance and unity.

This means that whatever has the capacity to hold is religion, this is certain."⁶

An important feature of the Indian way of thinking is that every philosophical thought begins with the purpose of forever getting rid of the sorrows and imperfections reflected in the practical life of a man. The impermanence of the temporal world, the diseases prevalent in it like illness, grief, death etc. and the tendencies of anger, hatred, greed, attachment, violence etc. prevalent in social behaviour leaves the inner consciousness of the man dissatisfied. So, he starts thinking about a state which is free from all these sorrows that in turn is complete and everlasting. Therefore, the specialty of the thinking of every Indian sect is that it starts from the dissatisfaction and incompleteness of the present life and ends with the spiritual peak of perfection and satisfaction.

The Upanishads believe that happiness is that when there is nothing greater than it, which is Bhuma, that is, infinite; so there is no happiness in littleness.⁷ That means, Vedic philosophy shows the path of climbing from the littleness of a person to perfection. The littleness of a person is the cause of all diseases -- this feeling is reflected in every Indian sect. The reason for this littleness has been addressed by the names of Maya (illusion), Avidya (lack of education), Ajnan (ignorance),

Mal (residual psychosis) etc. This is the only reason for all the bondages in the world. It is because of ignorance that a living being in this world becomes a victim of many sorrows and falls into the cycle of births and deaths. As soon as this is removed, a person realizes his complete nature and he becomes completely free from all kinds of sorrows. Some philosophical schools do not accept happiness in the state of freedom from suffering, but all of them consider the ultimate removal of suffering as the ultimate goal of life.

Even Buddhists, who do not accept Vedic authenticity, have described sorrow, cause of sorrow, cessation of sorrow and means of cessation of sorrow as the four noble truths, in which ignorance is considered the root cause of sorrow and freedom from ignorance is accepted as the cessation of sorrow or 'Nirvana'. In Indian philosophy, freedom from sorrow and realization of the true nature

is the ultimate goal of life, for which everyone accepts equally that the removal of ignorance or obliviousness from the living being is necessary.

To remove this ignorance or Maya, emphasis has been given not only on faith but also on contemplation. Self-education, deep contemplation and regular meditation, i.e. continuous practice, are the specialties of the Indian sects. Contemplation is the basis not only of the path of knowledge, but also of the path of devotion and path of action. A wise man contemplates on the principles and a devotee contemplates on God while a Karmayogi (one who acts as per the Karma theory) contemplates on the difference between what should be done and what should not be done. None of these indulges in any practice without contemplation, because without contemplation, it is not possible to understand the right path, so contemplation is a unique characteristic of human beings. Indian sects never impose

restrictions on the contemplation of a person, rather encourage it.

The Brihadaranyak Upanishad clearly declares that the soul is worth seeing, that is knowing, worth listening, worth contemplating and worth practicing, that is meditating.⁸ Seeing or knowing, listening, contemplating and practicing on the basis of experience are all necessary to understand the element of soul. It is not the tradition of Indian sects to accept what we say without contemplation. So here, most of the things are accepted through debate and not forced to accept through weapons.

The combined form of different sects that emerged in India based on the unity of these basic principles has been called the 'Hindu' paradigm for centuries. It is believed that foreign invaders have called us Hindu, but whoever called us Hindu had called all the religions, sects and cults flourishing on the entire Indian soil as 'Hindu', without excluding any particular one. Their existence as a set gives birth to a culture, which is called Hindu culture, in which no one is more Hindu, no one is less, all are equally Hindu. 'Hindutva' or Hinduism is like an ocean and different sects in the form of rivers come and merge in it. On merging, they become a part of the ocean, and by waving in the form of different waves, they enhance the beauty of the ocean and declare its importance. All of

The combined form of different sects that emerged in India based on the unity of these basic principles has been called the 'Hindu' paradigm for centuries. It is believed that foreign invaders have called us Hindu, but whoever called us Hindu had called all the religions, sects and cults flourishing on the entire Indian soil as 'Hindu', without excluding any particular one. Their existence as a set gives birth to a culture, which is called Hindu culture, in which no one is more Hindu, no one is less, all are equally Hindu. 'Hindutva' or Hinduism is like an ocean and different sects in the form of rivers come and merge in it

them together start representing the whole ocean. Hence, Hindu is the name of a great culture, and not of any particular sect.

Hinduism is the name of an ideal Indian way of life full of generosity, nobility, tolerance, coordination and universal brotherhood, which has been binding the entire Indian society in one thread for centuries with these basic theoretical similarities. Under the broad concept of Hindutva, all traditions like Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnava, Bauddha (Buddhists), Jain, Sikh, saints, Arya Samaj, Vanvasi-Girivasi (forest dwellers) are equally assimilated. Hence, Hindutva cannot be called a particular sect, but it can be called the nationality of India, whose origin, development, devotion, faith and belief are all connected to the holy land of India.

Over the course of time, many sects have been born and vanished, many are still being born and destroyed while many more will be born and vanished in the future too. But the inner consciousness of Indian culture,

which is called Hindutva, is above all these and is immortal. It could never be destroyed nor is it going to be destroyed ever because here, a person or the society is free from all kinds of pressures and moves forward in the direction of discovering its identity. Whenever the questions like 'who am I', 'what is my existence', 'what is this world', 'what is our relation with it' etc. will arise in the mind of a person and in a situation where he does not get the answers to these questions from any outside person or the world, he will obviously try to find them within himself. Then only the Hindutva within him will blossom and he will rise above the differences of language, place and time etc. and will be filled with the feelings of universal brotherhood and world welfare. On the contrary, as long as a person will search for the solution of the above questions in any other person or in the outside world, till then he will see only differences and conflicts everywhere.

This art of solving these questions within oneself

by himself is known as 'spirituality', which is the essence of the Vedas. This is the soul of Indian culture, this is Hindutva and this is nationalism in India. It cannot even be thought of ending this tendency from Indian society. It is the result of the foundation of spirituality that the nation faced many attacks, many races came from outside, new empires were founded, ancient dynasties were destroyed, society had to face many kinds of hardships, but the flow of Hindu culture could not be obstructed by these attacks and upheavals. There was no impact on the inner life of Hindu society. Ages passed, but the main stream of Indian culture is the same till date -- through a life of self-purification, sacrifice and penance. It has been singing the same tune "Walk from untruth to truth, walk from darkness to light and walk from death to immortality; keep walking, keep walking, or Charaiveti, Charaiveti."⁹ This is the sole aim of the consciousness of Indian culture and the sects that emerged from it. ●

References:

1. *Bharatiya Darshan* (Indian philosophy), Dr. Radhakrishnan, Volume - 1, p. 34
2. *Shrimad Bhagwat Purana* - 1/2/10
3. *Yato Vacho Nivartante Aprapya Manasa Saha* - 2/9
4. *Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti*, Rig Veda - 1/164/46
5. *Ruchinam Vaichitriyadrjukutil*
6. *Nanapathjusham, Nrināmeko Gamyastvamsi Payasamarnav Iva*, Shiva Mahimna Stotra - 7
7. *Dharanat Dharma Ityahuh Dharma Dharayati Prajah, Yāḥ Syāt Dharān Samyuktāḥ Sa Dharma Iti Nishchah*, Mahabharata - 12/109/11
8. *Yo Vai Bhuma Tatsukham*
9. *Naalpe Sukhmasti Bhumaiva Sukham*, Chhandogyopanishad ~ 7@23
8. *Atma Va Arey Drashtavyah Shrotavyo Mantavyo Nididhyasitavyah*, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad - 2/4/5
9. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* - 1/3/28



Prof. Mazhar Asif

Etymology: Hind and Hindustan

Across history, India has borne several names, notably Hind and Hindustan; tracing their changing meanings reveals key shifts in cultural identity and historical context

The terms 'Hind' and 'Hindustan' have been integral to the identity of the Indian subcontinent for centuries. Their origins are deeply rooted in ancient languages, geographical references, and cultural interactions. This section explores the etymological journey of the term 'Hind and Hindustan', beginning with their linguistic roots and early usage. The genesis of the terms 'Hind and Hindustan', can be traced back to the Sanskrit word *Sindhu* (𑀲𑁆𑀭𑀸𑀓), which primarily referred to the Indus River. In ancient Indian texts, particularly the *Rigveda*, 'Sindhu' denoted not only the river but also the region surrounding it. The *Rigveda* mentions *Sapta Sindhavah*, meaning 'the land of seven rivers.' It highlights the significance of the Indus and its tributaries in early Vedic civilization.

While adding the Persian suffix *-stan* (meaning 'land') to *Hindu* formed *Hindustan* (land of the Hindus). This is similar to the Sanskrit *-sthāna*, which also means 'place', which also highlights the linguistic ties between Persian and Sanskrit language. The term *Hindustan* began to appear in historical records and inscriptions. Inscription of *Naqsh-e-Rustam* of Sassanid Emperor, Shapur I in 262 CE

also refer to the region as *Hindustan*. Additionally, in the *Avestan* texts of Zoroastrianism, the term *Hapta Hindu* is mentioned, corresponding to the Rigvedic *SaptaSindhavah*. With the expansion of Islamic influence, Arabic speakers adopted the term *Al-Hind* to refer to the Indian subcontinent. This term was used in various Arabic texts, including the 11th-century *Tarikh Al-Hind* ("History of India") by Al-Biruni. Over time, 'Hind' and 'Hindustan' became part of many local languages and dialects.

In Hindi and Urdu, 'Hindustan' became a common term to refer to the country. The term also found its way into patriotic expressions and slogans, such as '*Jai Hind*' (Victory to Hind), which became popular during India's struggle for independence. The etymology of 'Hind' and 'Hindustan' reflects a rich tapestry of linguistic evolution, cultural exchange, and historical significance.

Historical Aspect

The evolution of the term 'Hind' and 'Hindustan' gradually acquired political and cultural significance. Following the Arab conquests in the 7th and 8th centuries CE, Arab geographers and chroniclers began referring to the Indian

subcontinent as Al-Hind. When Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh in 712 CE, the chronicles of the Umayyad Caliphate described the conquered region as “*Al-Hind*.” In Arab geographical literature, such as that of Al-Masudi and Al-Idrisi, *Al-Hind* came to represent a broader geographical and cultural zone stretching from Sindh to Bengal ([*Al-Masudi, Muruj al-Dhahab, vol. I, p. 329*]). Arab scholars and travelers, such as Al-Biruni, documented the customs, religious practices, and intellectual traditions of Bharat naming it 'Al-Hind'. Al-Biruni's *Kitab fi Tahqiq ma li'l-Hind* (c. 1030 CE) contains a detailed ethnographic study of the Indian subcontinent. Notably, he did not equate 'Hind' with any single religion or political unit but used it to describe a culturally complex and pluralistic region ([*Al-Biruni, Kitab fi Tahqiq ma li'l-Hind, tr. Edward Sachau, vol. I, p. 5*]).

During the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), Persian replaced Arabic as the primary language of court and administration. With this shift, Hindustan emerged as the common designation for the Sultanate's dominions. The Turko-Afghan rulers, such as Iltutmish, Alauddin Khalji, and Muhammad bin Tughluq, used the term 'Hindustan' to refer specifically to the Indo-Gangetic plain and surrounding regions under their control. Significantly, Ziauddin Barani, a 14th-century historian, consistently uses 'Hindustan' in his *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* to describe the Muslim-ruled territories. For example, when areas beyond

the control of Sultanate when the Deccan or Benga rebelled, Barani would exclude them from 'Hindustan', suggesting that 'Hindustan' was not just a land but also an ideological space of Muslim sovereignty ([*Barani, Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi, tr. H.M. Elliot & Dowson, vol. III, p. 177*]). Thus, under the Delhi Sultanate, 'Hindustan' became a term not just of geography but of governance and political legitimacy.

The Mughal Empire (1526–1857) brought a more expansive conception of Hindustan, both territorially and culturally. The Mughals inherited the Persian administrative vocabulary of the Delhi Sultans but gave it a new aesthetic and integrative meaning. In *Baburnama*, Babur refers to the land he conquered as Hindustan, often comparing it with Central Asia (e.g., Ferghana). He distinguishes Hindustan from Khorasan and Transoxiana not just by geography but by climate, vegetation, and social customs ([*Babur, Baburnama, tr. A.S. Beveridge, p. 469*]). His grandson Akbar, and particularly his court chronicler Abu'l-Fazl, further expanded the scope of the term. In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abu'l-Fazl refers to the entire subcontinent under Akbar's rule as *Hindustan*¹, describing it as a “perfect world” blessed with abundance and diversity. Importantly, he asserts that *Hindustan* is a “dar-ul-aman” (abode of peace), challenging the traditional Islamic classification of non-Muslim lands as *dar-ul-harb* (abode of war) ([*Abu'l-Fazl,*

Ain-i-Akbari, tr. H. Blochmann, vol. I, p. xxv]).

During the Mughal period, European travelers began arriving in greater numbers. Travellers like Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Francois Bernier, and Niccolao Manucci referred to the subcontinent as 'Indostan' or 'Hindoustan'. In many travelogues, 'Hindustan' referred to the prosperous northern plains under Mughal administration, especially the Delhi-Agra-Lahore axis. For example, Bernier uses 'Hindoustan' to describe the grandeur of the Mughal court and its military apparatus ([Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, tr. A. Constable, p. 12*]). This adoption into European lexicon marked the global recognition of 'Hindustan' as a political and cultural unit.

Under British rule, the term 'Hindustan' was used but gradually replaced by an Anglicized term 'India'. It derived from Greek 'Indos', which came from Sindhu. British administrators and surveyors such as James Mill, William Jones, and Mount Stuart Elphinstone continued to use 'Hindustan' in official correspondence and geographic descriptions. For example, in his *History of British India* (1817), Mill refers to the Mughal Empire as the “empire of Hindustan” ([*Mill, The History of British India, vol. I, p. 104*]). However, by the mid-19th century, British cartographers began using India as the standard term, and 'Hindustan' was increasingly associated with the Hindi-speaking north only not

the whole subcontinent.

Cultural Symbolism

During the 19th and 20th centuries, under colonial rule and growing nationalism, *Hind* and *Hindustan* gained symbolic meaning. They came to represent the spirit of a people seeking identity, unity, and freedom. These terms appeared in Urdu and Hindi poetry, nationalist slogans, reform movements, and anti-colonial struggles. Poets often used *Hindustan* as a word for the homeland.

In Persian poetry, which remained influential until the 19th century? Poets like Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) expressed affection for Hind in terms of its cultural richness:

*Falak guft her che az zameen
kishver Aamad
Az Aan jumle Hindustan bertar
Aamad)*

On another place he says;
(*Chun man Tutiye Hindam raast
pursi
Az man Hindavi purs taa taghz
guyem*)

Khusrau, a symbol of Indo-Persian syncretism, took pride in being a “Hindavi” poet, fusing Persian and local vernaculars. Above mentioned his famous verses from the masnavi 'Nu Siphir' glorifies Hindustan (Hind) reflect not just geographic pride but cultural plurality as well. Later, in Urdu poetry, Mir Taqi Mir, Ghalib, and particularly Allama Iqbal invoked 'Hind' and 'Hindustan' to shake emotional and nationalistic resonance. Iqbal's

celebrated poem, *Tarāna-e-Hindi* (composed in 1904), begins:

(*Better than the entire world
is our Hindustan; we are its
nightingales, and it is our garden.*)

Here, 'Hindustan' is transformed into a poetic metaphor for national unity. Iqbal's early pan-Indian vision later evolved, but in this phase, he used the term 'Hindustan' to evoke anti-colonial solidarity and cultural pride ([Iqbal, *Kulliyat-e-Iqbal*, 1936, p. 94]). The Arya Samaj movement, founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1875, contributed to a Sanskritized, religiously marked version of the term 'Hind'. Dayananda rejected the term 'Hindu' as a foreign imposition and attempted to redefine Hindustan as a land of Vedic dharma. In his work *Satyarth Prakash* (1875), he refers to India as “Aryavarta” and calls its people *Aryas* rather than *Hindus*, challenging the Persian and Arabic etymology of 'Hind' ([Dayananda Saraswati, *Satyarth Prakash*, tr. Choudhary, 1915, p. 42]). However, popular usage of Hindustan continued even in these circles, showing the deep-rootedness of the term in Indian cultural. Hindu revivalists often merged 'Hindustan' with the idea of Bharat Mata, giving rise to a spiritual-political nationalism.

British administrators used 'Hindustan' in the early colonial period to refer to the northern Indian plains, especially the Hindi-speaking regions. The term appeared in several official gazetteers and maps produced by the Survey of India during the

18th and 19th centuries. However, the British increasingly preferred India over Hindustan, viewing the latter as old and less representative of their political structure. The shift was not merely linguistic—it was ideological. 'India' was seen as a singular administrative unit under the British Raj, while 'Hindustan' was associated with earlier Muslim and Mughal polities. For example, the Government of India Act 1858, which transferred power from the East India Company to the British Crown, never used the term 'Hindustan', instead choosing the Latin-rooted term 'India' ([*Metcalf & Metcalf, A Concise History of India, 2006, p. 112*]).

Nationalism

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, *Hindustan* had become a powerful symbol for Indian nationalists. It appeared in slogans, newspapers, and speeches by leaders of the Indian National Congress, revolutionary groups, and the Gandhian movement. Groups like the *Hindustan Socialist Republican Association* (HSRA), founded by Bhagat Singh and his comrades in 1928, used the term to express both love for the homeland and a vision of political freedom. The name *Hindustan* was chosen to reflect an inclusive, anti-colonial identity that united all Indians. In his writings, Bhagat Singh often used the slogans “*Inquilab Zindabad*” and “*Hindustan Zindabad*,” blending his socialist beliefs with the emotional appeal

of the word Hindustan ([Bhagat Singh, *Selected Writings*, ed. S. Irfan Habib, p. 158]). Mahatma Gandhi also used both “*Hind*” and “*Hindustan*” in his speeches and articles to refer to the people of India. In journals like *Young India* and *Harijan*, Gandhi stressed unity among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others, saying that *Hind* belonged equally to all communities. His use of these terms aimed to challenge both British colonial views and the rising religious divisions.

“I am proud to belong to Hind, where men of all religions live together peacefully.”

—Gandhi, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, p. 142

After 1947, the Constitution of India officially adopted the name India, with “Bharat” as its Hindi equivalent. The word Hindustan was omitted from official usage, perhaps due to its religious ambiguity and colonial entanglement. However, popular culture—songs, films, and journalism—kept the word alive. In patriotic songs like:

“Aao bachchon tumhen dikhayen Jhanki Hindustan ki ...”

—Film: *Jgruti* (1954)

the term ‘Hindustan’ remained emotionally potent. It evoked belonging, sacrifice, and love for the motherland. Even today, people often use ‘Hindustan’ instead of ‘India’ in everyday walk of life, usually to add a more emotional or poetic touch. Over the centuries, the words Hind and Hindustan have grown beyond just being names of a place—they have come

to stand for culture, pride, identity, and resistance. From old empire ideas shaped by Persian influence to freedom movement slogans, and from poetry to films, these words have shown how the heart of the subcontinent has changed. In a country as mixed and many-sided as India, the lasting power of the word Hindustan comes from its deep and changing meanings—it is never fixed and always open to new meanings.

Tradition, Nuance, and Modern Meaning

The terms Hind and Hindustan, covered with history and significance, have traveled across centuries, languages, dynasties, and ideologies. What began as geographical signifiers—reinterpreted through Persian and Arabic tongues—gradually became far more than mere place names. They emerged as powerful metaphors for identity, land, civilization, and cultural memory. The story of these terms is not only one of linguistic curiosity but also of profound sociopolitical evolution. By the time the Mughals had fully established their rule in the subcontinent; ‘Hindustan’ was no longer simply a reference to the northwestern plains of the Indus or Ganga but had become a self-conscious designation of a vast imperial realm. Babur, in his *Baburnama*, refers to ‘Hindustan’ in a variety of contexts, describing its people, landscapes, and customs with both curiosity and critique. His usage, however, still implied a loosely defined

cultural-geographic area rather than a precise political boundary. Over time, especially under Akbar and his successors, ‘Hindustan’ came to represent a more unified imperial identity—symbolic of a diverse but administratively coherent space. In Persian literary culture, both courtly and mystical, “Hind” carried rich connotations. It was not uncommon for poets to use the word metaphorically, to symbolize exotic beauty, richness, or even spiritual longing. For example, in Persian ghazals, “Hindu” was at times used as a metaphor for a captivating beloved or a thief of hearts—bearing no ethnic or political implications, but rather literary charm. In this poetic universe, “Hind” could be a rose-scented metaphor as much as a geographic marker. Yet, poetry was not the only realm in which these words flourished. With the arrival of European colonial powers, especially the British, the discourse surrounding the name of the land began to shift once more. British cartographers, administrators, and Orientalists initially retained the word “Hindustan,” especially in the 18th century when Mughal influence was still considered legitimate in some circles.

For the Indian freedom struggle, ‘Hindustan’ became more than a name; it became an invocation. Nationalist leaders, poets, and revolutionaries employed the term with great deliberation. In patriotic songs, resistance slogans, and underground literature, ‘Hindustan’ was presented as a

motherland, a beloved, a dream worth dying for. Even Gandhi, who often used both “Hind” and ‘Hindustan’ in his writings, chose to keep the meanings inclusive. For him, the essence of Hindustan was not merely in its physical territory but in the unity of its people—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, and all others—living in harmony. Gandhi’s ethical imagination of Hindustan was rooted in pluralism, where religion did not determine belonging. In a 1921 issue of *Young India*, he wrote:

“I do not want India to be wholly Hindu, wholly Muslim, or wholly anything. Hindustan belongs to all who are born here and who live on this sacred land.”

(Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 19, p. 267)

Yet, not everyone agreed on this vision. As the politics of the 1940s unfolded, especially with the rise of communal ideologies, the term ‘Hindustan’ began to be contested. Jinnah and other leaders of the Muslim League started to refer to ‘Hindustan’ as a Hindu-majority land, implicitly contrasting it with the idea of a separate Muslim homeland, Pakistan. This marked a significant shift: what was once a unifying term now risked becoming a marker of division. After Partition in 1947 and the emergence of India and Pakistan as separate nations, the term ‘Hindustan’ largely disappeared from official discourse. The Indian Constitution adopted the name “India” in English and “Bharat” in Hindi. Yet ‘Hindustan’ refused

to vanish from the collective imagination. It survived—and continues to survive—in popular culture, journalism, poetry, and public speech. Newspapers like *Hindustan Times* and *Dainik Hindustan* still use the term prominently. Bollywood films regularly include it in dialogues, songs, and titles—reflecting both nostalgia and national sentiment. One may note the continued usage of the term in patriotic songs like; *“Chodho kalki baatein, kalki baat purani, naye daur mein likhenge mil kar nayi kahani, hum Hindustani”*

This represents a vision of a new India, inclusive and forward-looking, yet grounded in a sense of belonging to ‘Hindustan’. Despite its poetic richness and historic significance, the term is not without its contemporary controversies. In recent decades, certain political groups have attempted to associate ‘Hindustan’ exclusively with Hindus, playing on etymological confusions and using it to assert majoritarian cultural identities. Such appropriation stands in stark contrast to the term’s pluralistic history. The historical ‘Hindustan’ was never a religiously exclusive idea; it was always a tapestry woven from many languages, faiths, and cultures. In linguistic terms, ‘Hindustan’ is a classic example of how borrowed words evolve within new cultural and political contexts. Originally shaped by outsiders to describe a region by a river, the word was reimagined by the people of the land to describe them. It is at once

a gift of geography, a residue of empire, and a repository of memory.

From a philological perspective, the progression from *Sindhu* to *Hind* to *Hindustan* illustrates the remarkable adaptability of language and the ways in which identity can be refracted through changing tongues. The term’s multiple meanings—geographic, political, poetic, and spiritual—highlights the layered nature of South Asian identity itself. Much like the subcontinent, the word Hindustan defies easy categorization. It is as much a metaphor as it is a name.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey of “Hind” and ‘Hindustan’ reflects a deeper story: the story of how names are never just names. They carry the sediments of empires, the echoes of poetry, the dreams of freedom fighters, and the burdens of history. Whether on the lips of a Mughal emperor, a colonial administrator, a nationalist poet, or a modern-day citizen, the word ‘Hindustan’ has never meant only one thing. Its richness lies in its ambiguity, in its ability to be all things to all people—and still remain anchored in the soil of its origin.

Emerging from the ancient civilization around the Indus River, these names have traversed through time, shaped by diverse influences—Persian, Arab, Turkic, and later European—that enriched their meanings and connotations. Initially descriptive of a land, the terms gradually

evolved into potent symbols of identity that encapsulates the region's complex and pluralistic heritage. During the medieval period, especially under Muslim rule, *Hindustan* came to signify not just a territory but a cultural and political concept that united a mosaic of ethnicities, languages, and religious communities under a common historical umbrella. The evolution of these terms also mirrors the shifting power dynamics and cultural exchanges that have shaped the subcontinent's history. Under colonialism, the

word *Hindustan* was reinterpreted and politicized, becoming an emblem of nationalist sentiment and collective resistance against foreign domination. It emerged as a rallying cry for unity and self-determination, evoking a shared sense of belonging that transcended regional and communal differences. Even after the partition and the formation of separate nation-states, the cultural and emotional resonance of *Hindustan* continues to persist in literature, political discourse, and popular imagination.

Ultimately, the journey of *Hind* and *Hindustan* reflects the layered and multifaceted identity of the Indian subcontinent—an identity marked by diversity, syncretism, and resilience. These terms remind us how names of places are not static but dynamic, carrying within them the stories of peoples, their struggles, and their aspirations. Understanding this evolution enriches our appreciation of the subcontinent's rich historical narrative and highlights the power of language as a tool for cultural memory and political expression. ●

References:

1. Abu'l-Fazl. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Translated by H. Blochmann. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1873.
2. Alam, Muzaffar. "The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan." In *Literary Cultures in History*, ed. Sheldon Pollock. University of California Press, 2003, pp. 131–198.
3. Al-Biruni (Biruni, Abu Rayhan). *Al-Hind: The Real India*, trans. Edward Sachau. London: Kegan Paul, 1910, Vol. I, pp. 5–10.
4. Ali, Daud. *The Definition of India in the Early Medieval Period*. In *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1999.
5. Andre Wink. *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. I. Brill, 1990, pp. 90–94.
6. Babur. *Baburnama*, trans. Annette Beveridge. London: Luzac & Co., 1922.
7. Babur. *Baburnama*. Translated by A.S. Beveridge. London: Luzac & Co., 1922.
8. Barani, Ziauddin. *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*. Translated by H.M. Elliot & John Dowson. Vol. III. London: Trübner & Co., 1867.
9. Bernier, Francois. *Travels in the Mughal Empire*. Translated by Archibald Constable. Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1996.
10. Bhagat Singh. *Selected Writings of Bhagat Singh*. Edited by S. Irfan Habib. New Delhi: Left Word Books, 2007.
11. Bosworth, C.E. "The Name of India in Arabic Sources." *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1966), pp. 113–127.
12. Chandra, Satish. *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*. Har-Anand Publications, 2007, Vol. I, pp. 122–130.
13. Dayananda Saraswati. *Satyarth Prakash*. Translated by G.L. Choudhary. Allahabad: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1915.
14. Elliot, H.M., and John Dowson. *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. I. Trübner & Co., 1867, pp. 12–19.
15. Gandhi, M.K. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 19. Publications Division, Government of India, 1965.
16. Habib, Irfan. "The Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (1975), pp. 3–23.
17. Iqbal, Muhammad. *Kulliyat-e-Iqbal*. Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1936.
18. Jalal, Ayesha. *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
19. Majumdar, R.C. *Ancient India*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1952, pp. 10–15.
20. Metcalf, Barbara D., and Thomas R. Metcalf. *A Concise History of Modern India*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.



Shri Ramanand Sharma

Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyata

Sri Aurobindo's vision, crafted a century ago, reads almost prophetic today. His philosophy of Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyata offers a visionary framework for India's spiritual and cultural identity. This paper explores his conception of Sanatan Dharma as a universal, life-affirming spirituality, as seen in his Uttarpara Speech, Bande Mataram, Essays on the Gita, and The Secret of the Veda. It examines Bhartiyata as India's cultural essence which is rooted in Vedic traditions positioning India as Jagat Guru. Aurobindo's blend of spiritual nationalism and Vedantic universalism is analyzed for its relevance to contemporary debates on Hindu identity and cultural nationalism. The paper concludes that his inclusive philosophy provides a timeless guide for India's resurgence and global spiritual leadership while fostering unity and harmony in a diverse world.

Keywords: Aurobindo, Sanatan Dharma, Bhartiyata, Jagat Guru, Hindu, Culture, Nationalism etc.

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) was a revolutionary nationalist turned

spiritual philosopher whose ideas have profoundly influenced the discourse on Indian national identity and culture. The concepts of Sanatan Dharma (literally “eternal dharma” or eternal religion) and Bhartiyata (“Indianness” or the essence of being Indian) are central to his thought. His ideas emerged in the early 20th century amid India's struggle against British rule, when he led the nationalist movement. Later, during his philosophical period in Pondicherry, he expanded these concepts within a universal spiritual framework. This paper explores Aurobindo's vision of Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyata in both political and spiritual dimensions, analyzing how he used them to envisage India's national destiny.

Sanatan Dharma in common understanding refers to the fundamental spiritual law or religion that underlies Hindu tradition. However, in Aurobindo's usage, it is the fundamental, eternal spiritual law that underlies and animates Hindu tradition without reducing it to sectarian creed¹. Bhartiyata, as per him, encapsulates the distinctive cultural-spiritual temperament

Sri Aurobindo's Thought is a Philosophical Formulation of the Indian Soul's Eternal Consciousness. An Analytical Study

shaped by that Dharma. Unlike purely political notions of nationality, his Bhartiyyata is rooted in a spiritual view of nationality. Just as an individual has a soul, Aurobindo believed nations possess a soul expressing divine purpose². India's national soul, he argued, is distinguished by a persistent quest for the eternal and the spiritual, giving Indian culture its unity and continuity.

Aurobindo's vision synthesizes philosophy and politics. He viewed India not simply as a geopolitical entity but as a civilizational state with a timeless spiritual mission. In his nationalist writings (1906–1910), he proclaimed that India's nationalism is rooted in Sanatan Dharma. As per him, Indian nationalism is Sanatan Dharma³. After withdrawing to Pondicherry in 1910, his later works (such as *The Renaissance in India and Essays on the Gita*)

reiterated that India's role is to embody and impart spiritual knowledge for humanity's progress⁴. Thus, Sanatan Dharma forms the core of Aurobindo's concept of Indian nationhood, and Bhartiyyata is defined by allegiance to this spiritual core.

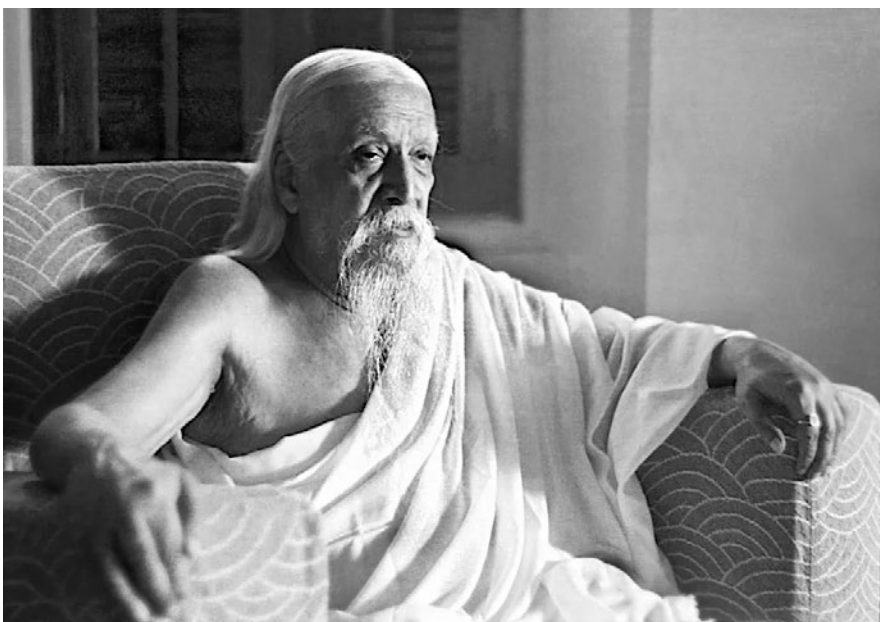
Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyyata in Sri Aurobindo's Thought

His first public demonstration regarding Sanatana Dharma comes in his seminal Uttarpara Speech (1909). It was delivered soon after his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case where he reflected on what he had realized about Sanatan Dharma during his year of imprisonment and deep meditation. "We speak often of the Hindu religion, of the Sanatan Dharma," he said, "but few of us really know what that religion is. Other religions are fundamentally religions of faith and profession, but the

Sanatan Dharma is life itself; it is a thing that has not so much to be believed as lived"⁵. This powerful statement encapsulates Aurobindo's definition. Sanatan Dharma is an experiential and lived truth, not confined to dogma or ritual. It is the eternal law of life and being, a way of life meant to be realized in every aspect of existence.

Aurobindo therefore describes Sanatan Dharma as a universal and eternal religion that "embraces all others," recognizing the infinite Reality and accommodating diverse paths. Far from a system of dogmas, it is an evolving treasury of spiritual experiences discovered by Indian sages for humanity's uplift. Every sphere of life be it social, political, intellectual, artistic, or spiritual can be informed by this Dharma. Thus, Sanatan Dharma is not a matter of mere belief; it is a matter of living realization. Accordingly, Bhartiyyata is inseparable from Sanatan Dharma. "It is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism... with it, [the nation] moves and... grows," he declared. If the Dharma perished, he warned, the nation would perish; its resurgence is therefore synonymous with spiritual resurgence.

Aurobindo did not equate this vision of identifying Indian culture with Sanatan Dharma with a theocratic or exclusivist Hindu state. He consistently presented Sanatan Dharma as inclusive,



“including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy,” and embracing all sincere paths to the Divine. Though preserved chiefly by Hindus, it “is not circumscribed by the confines of a single country,” having been entrusted to India to conserve for the world. Thus, Hindu here is a civilizational, not doctrinal, marker; Sanatan Dharma is India’s gift to humanity rather than a possession to be guarded for itself alone. In essence, Sanatan Dharma is the lived, universal spiritual truth at the wellspring of India’s civilization, and Bhartiyata is the cultural expression of that truth across millennia. These definitions form the foundation for understanding Aurobindo’s political and spiritual vision of India, to which we will turn in this article.

The recent political storm over Sanatan Dharma, triggered by a 2023 remark from a Tamil Nadu leader comparing it to a disease⁶, exposed deep divisions in how the term is understood. Critics see it as a cover for caste oppression, while defenders call it the foundation of India’s cultural identity. Sri Aurobindo offers a balanced perspective here. He acknowledged flaws within Hindu society and urged honest reform, insisting that true Sanatan Dharma is rooted in truth, human dignity, and spiritual strength. His vision separates the eternal spiritual core from social injustices, allowing

both reform and cultural pride. Aurobindo also reminds us that invoking Sanatan Dharma to justify hate or violence betrays its true essence, which is about unity, courage, and seeing the divine in all.

Sanatan Dharma as the Soul of India

Sri Aurobindo’s writings and speeches during the first decade of the 20th century reveal how he applied Sanatan Dharma and Bhartiyata to nationalist thought in detail. As editor of *Bande Mataram*, the leading nationalist newspaper in Bengal, Aurobindo penned numerous articles that framed the Indian independence movement in terms of Dharma⁷. One striking example is his critique of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (an orthodox Hindu organization) in March 1908. Rebuking them for seeking the British Viceroy’s patronage as “Defender of the Hindu faith,” Aurobindo reminded them of the true foundations of Hinduism: “the foundations of Hinduism are truth and manhood by invoking a Sanskrit phrase “*eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*”. Hinduism is no sect or dogmatic creed, no bundle of formulas, no set of social rules, but a mighty, eternal and universal truth that does not lie in outward conformity or political loyalty to an empire. It has learned the secret of preparing man’s soul for the divine consummation of identity with the infinite existence of God”⁸. Such statements show

Aurobindo’s effort to reform and elevate contemporary Hinduism to its ideal, in order to energize it as a force for national rejuvenation⁹.

In the same article, Aurobindo extolled the ethical ideals of Sanatan Dharma. “The first formula of belief is *satyān nāsti paro dharmah*, there is no higher law of conduct than truth”¹⁰. He then chastised the Mahamandal for violating this principle by their sycophantic behavior towards the British authority. This incident illustrates Aurobindo’s usage of Sanatan Dharma as a moral-political benchmark. In effect, he was yoking patriotism to spiritual discipline. To fight for India’s freedom was, in his eyes, to fulfill one’s Sanatan Dharma by defending truth and justice. His writings in *Bande Mataram* frequently urged the youth to see political action (e.g. boycott of foreign goods, resistance to unjust laws) as a yoga – a selfless service and sacrifice offered to the Motherland, who was equated with the Divine Mother. The very title “*Bande Mataram*” (Hail to the mother) signified this fusion of nationalism with spiritual devotion.

In another piece from that era, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, he wrote “The object of all our political movements and therefore of passive resistance is the spiritual and moral regeneration of the people”¹¹. He emphasized that Indians must resist foreign

rule *not out of hatred*, but as a duty to the truth of their own being and culture. This idea of linking resistance to Dharma elevated the political struggle to a higher plane of ethical and spiritual responsibility. As per him, politics must serve a moral-spiritual end, i.e. the awakening of India's soul. By 1907–1908, Aurobindo openly declared that *nationalism was a form of religion for Indians*. Early in 1908, he delivered a speech, “Nationalism cannot die because it is Sanatan Dharma”. Although this appears to echo his later Uttarpara pronouncement, it shows that even before his imprisonment, Aurobindo was promulgating the view that *nationalism is the outward political expression of India's eternal Dharma*. To him, the Indian nation was essentially a spiritual collective as *Shakti* of the Divine Mother. The Shakti which was striving to manifest its inherent divinity in the form of freedom, unity, and rejuvenation.

The Uttarpara Speech (1909) and Revelation of India's Mission

This speech stands as a cornerstone for understanding his vision of Sanatan Dharma and nationalism. Delivered at Uttarpara (a town near Kolkata) on his public welcome after release from jail, this speech combined autobiographical testimony with prophetic pronouncements on India's destiny. It was in this speech that Aurobindo most clearly conveyed the spiritual realization he had during confinement: the realization of Vasudeva (God in all) and the divine mandate for India. He recounted how, in jail, he turned to the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*, and underwent profound spiritual experiences that affirmed the truths of the Hindu religion¹². The core message he received was that India's freedom struggle was part of a divine plan to spread Sanatan Dharma for the upliftment of the world.

Aurobindo told the gathering:

This speech stands as a cornerstone for understanding his vision of Sanatan Dharma and nationalism.

Delivered at Uttarpara (a town near Kolkata) on his public welcome after release from jail, this speech combined autobiographical testimony with prophetic pronouncements on India's destiny. It was in this speech that Aurobindo most clearly conveyed the spiritual realization he had during confinement: the realization of Vasudeva (God in all) and the divine mandate for India. He recounted how, in jail, he turned to the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*, and underwent profound spiritual experiences that affirmed the truths of the Hindu religion

“He (the Divine) said to me, ‘I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. ... When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great’”¹³. This extraordinary declaration portrays Aurobindo as receiving a direct *adesh* (divine command) identifying India's rise with the rise of Sanatan Dharma. According to Aurobindo, God revealed to him that India had always existed for the world, not for herself, and that her upcoming freedom was not for simple self-assertion but for the service of humanity¹⁴. “India has always existed for humanity and not for herself”¹⁵, he reminded, “and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great”. These lines encapsulate Aurobindo's idea of India as a *Yogini* among nations, renouncing any imperial ambitions and dedicating herself to the spiritual welfare of mankind.

He declared that India shall be free and great in order to fulfill God's work, which is to disseminate the eternal Dharma. He further urged to understand Hindu religion in its deepest and truest sense. He clarified, “This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy”¹⁶. In effect, he

presented Sanatan Dharma as the answer to both Western materialism and sectarian dogmatism. He saw it as a religion as universal as science, yet as personal and experiential as mysticism. Towards the close, he openly proclaimed: “it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism”¹⁷. This statement is remarkable in that it reverses the usual formulation (“religion is our nationalism”) to “nationalism is our religion,” then refines it to “our nationalism is Sanatan Dharma.” In Aurobindo’s eyes, one could not separate being a good Hindu from being a patriot. Because to serve the divine in India was an expression of Sanatan Dharma. Patriotism became a sacred duty. He warned that if Indians ever abandoned their Sanatan Dharma, their nation would lose its life-force¹⁸. Conversely, every step taken to free and uplift India was a step in the service of Dharma.

The Ideal of the Karmayogin and Spiritual Nationalism

After the Uttarpara Speech, Sri Aurobindo launched a weekly journal called *Karmayogin* in June 1909, where he continued to expound his ideas until he withdrew from active politics in 1910. It was an application of the Bhagavad Gita’s Karma Yoga doctrine to nationalist activism. In the inaugural issue of *Karmayogin*, Aurobindo wrote an editorial titled “The Ideal of

the Karmayogin,” he begins by asserting that the task before Indians is “not mechanical but moral and spiritual. We aim not at the alteration of a form of government but at the building up of a nation”¹⁹. Politics, he says, is only one part of that task; equally important is the cultural and spiritual awakening of the people. He then makes a crucial pronouncement:

“We shall devote ourselves not to politics alone... but we include all these in one entity which we believe to be all-important, the dharma, the national religion which we also believe to be universal. There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary.

*...For the religion of India is nothing if it is not lived. It has to be applied not only to life, but to the whole of life; its spirit has to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character...”*²⁰

In this remarkable passage, he laments that under centuries of foreign domination (political and cultural), India had lost the living presence of that Dharma, holding on to its outer forms but not its spirit. The remedy he proposes is integration of spirituality with every aspect of modern life: bringing the spiritual ethos of Sanatan

Dharma to bear on social reform, political governance, artistic expression, scientific inquiry and so forth. This holistic application is what makes it *Sanatan Dharma*, a dharma relevant “to the whole of life”²¹.

Through *Karmayogin*, Aurobindo continued to press the theme that Nationalism = Sanatan Dharma in practice. For instance, in one article he responded to critics who cautioned nationalists not to be carried away by passion. Aurobindo wrote in reply: “Our position is that Nationalism is our faith, our dharma, and its realisation the duty which lies before the country at the present moment. If so, it is a thing which must be done and from which we cannot turn merely because the forces are against us”²². By framing political action as dharmic duty, Aurobindo was able to imbue the freedom movement with the fervor and dedication ordinarily reserved for religious pursuits. Aurobindo often likened the struggle against British rule to a Kurukshetra where Indians must do their duty (fight oppression) without attachment to consequences drawing a direct parallel to Krishna’s teaching of *Nishkam Karma* in the Gita²³. This Gita-centric interpretation was shared by contemporaries like Bal Gangadhar Tilak (who wrote *Gita Rahasya* in 1915 advocating Karma Yoga as the message of the Gita).

Bhartiyata and India's Spiritual Destiny as Jagat Guru

A central pillar of Sri Aurobindo's thought is that India has a spiritual destiny to become *Jagat Guru*. This notion, however, was not new in Aurobindo's time. Swami Vivekananda and others had previously spoken about India's spiritual leadership. Aurobindo fully embraced this view and gave it a more precise articulation grounded in his philosophy of spiritual evolution. He identified India as the nation where the deepest secrets of the spiritual evolution (Yoga, meditation, realization of the Divine) had been cultivated and preserved. Thus, as the rest of the world becomes ready to seek higher consciousness (often after the bankruptcy of materialist ideologies becomes evident), India would be looked to for guidance²⁴. In his August 15, 1947 Independence Day message (often called the "Five

Dreams" speech), Aurobindo explicitly included as one of his five visions the dream of India's gift of spirituality to the world. Aurobindo foresaw this interest "inevitably increase" as the world, ravaged by wars and crises, would search for deeper answers that materialism could not provide.

Aurobindo believed that India's spiritual influence could guide not only individuals but also be "the central movement" in the next step of collective evolution of humanity. He spoke of a "step in evolution" to a higher consciousness and suggested that if such an evolution is to happen, "the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers"²⁵. His argument was simple. Because Indian civilization has always valued spiritual realization above worldly achievement, it has accumulated a vast treasury of

inner knowledge. This makes India uniquely positioned to address the spiritual hunger of humanity. Aurobindo often contrasted this with the West's strength in material organization and science. He did not deny the importance of material progress. He welcomed Western science and rationality as complements but argued that materialism alone leads to a dead end of emptiness or conflict. A balance must be struck, and that balance would come from integrating spirituality (Indian strength) with material knowledge (Western strength). He envisaged a future world where East and West cooperate for a balanced world-order. India as Jagat Guru does not imply domination; rather, it implies service and guidance: "India for humanity" was his motto²⁶.

Importantly, Aurobindo did not see the Jagat Guru role as a form of cultural one-upmanship, but as a burden of responsibility that required India to perfect herself. He knew that to credibly be a teacher, India must address her own weaknesses such as social divisions, economic poverty, etc. Thus, he championed internal social reforms and communal unity as prerequisites. In his view, Bharatiyata must evolve and it could not remain stuck in medieval forms. True Sanatan Dharma, as he conceived it, was never incompatible with progress. In fact, it demanded continuous renewal of society

Aurobindo believed that India's spiritual influence could guide not only individuals but also be "the central movement" in the next step of collective evolution of humanity. He spoke of a "step in evolution" to a higher consciousness and suggested that if such an evolution is to happen, "the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers". His argument was simple. Because Indian civilization has always valued spiritual realization above worldly achievement, it has accumulated a vast treasury of inner knowledge. This makes India uniquely positioned to address the spiritual hunger of humanity. Aurobindo often contrasted this with the West's strength in material organization and science

to reflect higher truths. In a 1907 talk at the Bengal National College, he advised students: “*Train yourselves body and mind and soul for her [Mother India’s] service... Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice*”²⁸. This spirit of self-abnegation for the Motherland’s sake was cast almost in ascetic terms, reminiscent of a *sadhana*. The implication is that Indians must discipline themselves and unite as one body²⁹ to set an example to the world. Only by demonstrating unity in diversity, spiritual idealism in practice, and dynamism in action can India genuinely fulfill the *Jagat Guru* role.

In modern terms, Aurobindo might endorse what is sometimes called “positive secularism” (like the original concept of *Dharma-nirpekshata*, religion-neutrality, rather than hostility to religion). Meaning the state respects all faiths but is itself guided by broad ethical-spiritual values derived from the collective culture. India’s constitution, for instance, enshrines ideals like justice, equality, and fraternity, which can be seen as secular expressions of dharmic principles (*sama-darshana, vasudhaiva kutumbakam*). Aurobindo’s insistence that Sanatan Dharma is universal could support a framework where Hindu cultural symbols (like yoga, Ayurveda, the flag’s chakra symbolizing dharma)

Finally, we assess whether Aurobindo’s vision offers a unifying spiritual foundation for India that can transcend ideological divides today. The answer is both hopeful and challenging. On one hand, Aurobindo provides a conceptual framework where Hindu, Muslim, Christian, all identities can be subsumed under a larger unity of Dharma. If Sanatan Dharma is interpreted as eternal truth and ethics, then a Muslim practicing compassion, honesty, and prayer is in effect upholding Sanatan Dharma (even if called Islam). As Aurobindo might say, he follows his *swadharma* which is a path to the same Divine. Similarly, a Christian following love and faith embodies the Dharma

are part of national life without making the Republic theocratic. In fact, many aspects of Indian public culture today like national holidays for religious festivals of all communities, yoga being promoted by the UN, etc. reflect a civilizational approach that need not conflict with secular governance.

The Unifying Spiritual Foundation, How Real

Finally, we assess whether Aurobindo’s vision offers a unifying spiritual foundation for India that can transcend ideological divides today. The answer is both hopeful and challenging. On one hand, Aurobindo provides a conceptual framework where Hindu, Muslim, Christian, all identities can be subsumed under a larger unity of Dharma. If Sanatan Dharma is interpreted as eternal truth and ethics, then a Muslim practicing compassion, honesty, and prayer is in effect upholding Sanatan Dharma

(even if called Islam). As Aurobindo might say, he follows his *swadharma* which is a path to the same Divine. Similarly, a Christian following love and faith embodies the Dharma. In Aurobindo’s philosophy, all religions are partial expressions of one Truth, evolving towards a future spiritual synthesis. This idea could theoretically ease inter-religious tensions: instead of “majority vs minority,” all can see themselves as partners in a civilizational journey, each contributing.

This inclusive civilizational approach resonates with some modern thinkers who call for a return to “Indic civilizational values” of pluralism and dialogue, contrasted with imported Western constructs of nation-state that led to partition and communal competition. Aurobindo’s emphasis on the soul of India could indeed unify by shifting focus from narrower markers (religion in the limited sense) to a shared spiritual ethos

– like respect for diversity, family values, spiritual seeking – which arguably many Indians of all faiths share. For example, Sufi Islam and Bhakti Hinduism have interfaced in India, Christian and Sikh teachings align with karma-yoga ethos of service; these can be emphasized as common ground of Dharma.

On the other hand, achieving such unity in reality is challenging. Many people interpret terms like Sanatan Dharma as specific to Hinduism and feel excluded or suspicious. There is also the issue of political misuse: lofty concepts can be co-opted by power-seekers and stripped of depth. Aurobindo's vision demands sincere spiritual development, which cannot be manufactured by law or propaganda. It requires education, dialogue, and mutual goodwill cultivated over time. In the short term, ideological polarization may prevent people from even appreciating what Aurobindo meant by Sanatan Dharma. For instance, a left-leaning secularist might dismiss it as "Hindutva in disguise," whereas a right-leaning hardliner might pay lip service to it while harboring animosity contrary to its spirit.

Thus, Aurobindo's vision can indeed offer a unifying spiritual foundation if approached in the right spirit: as a philosophy of national life that transcends religions while honoring them. It requires moving beyond

the binary of "theocratic vs. secular" to a new paradigm: Dharmic secularism, meaning a state and society guided by universal dharma values like truth, compassion, justice, self-realization. These values, though drawn from the civilization's heritage, are still neutral to specific sects. This is essentially what Aurobindo proposed in his own language. Realizing it is a work in progress, but his writings remain a beacon, reminding India that her true unity lies in the Spirit, in the Sanatan Dharma that lives in many forms in the hearts of her people.

Spiritual Nationalism and Vedantic Universalism

Sri Aurobindo saw Sanatan Dharma as India's beating heart. His vision fuses spiritual nationalism with Vedantic universalism, offering a roadmap for India's resurgence that resonates as powerfully today as it did a century ago. His bold declaration, "the Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism," reframes Indian identity as a spiritual mission, not just a political or territorial claim. This is no ordinary nationalism; it's a call for India to awaken its ancient wisdom and lead humanity toward a higher evolution. Aurobindo's framework speaks to timeless human yearnings. He takes every aspect in factor: meaning, ethical politics, unity amid

diversity, and balance between material progress and spiritual depth. By marrying spirituality to nationalism, he guards against narrow chauvinism. By grounding lofty ideals in practical nation-building, he ensures they don't drift into abstraction. This synthesis which neither rejects modernity nor abandons tradition, offers India a path to thrive in a fractured world.

For Aurobindo, India's *punarutthaan* (resurgence) transcends economic or military might. It's a renaissance of the spirit, a return to eternal principles reshaped for today's challenges. India must innovate while staying rooted in its civilizational ethos, a delicate dance that defines its 21st-century opportunity. As *Jagat Guru*, a world teacher, India shifts from rivalry to service, sharing dharmic values that counter global crises³⁰. The worldwide embrace of yoga and meditation echoes Aurobindo's prescience, hinting at India's potential to pioneer sustainable, soulful living. Internally, his vision heals division. Sanatan Dharma, as universal truth, unites beyond religious lines, inviting all Indians to a shared heritage while honoring diversity. This Vedantic lens of seeing the One in the Many could dissolve sectarian strife, recasting differences as vibrant expressions of a single Spirit. Imagine India as a garden where every flower, distinct yet

rooted in the same soil, blooms in harmony.

Aurobindo's integral ideal is breathtaking even in this modern era. His material growth pairs with spiritual ascent, individual liberty with collective good, and national pride with global

duty. It's a lofty challenge, demanding enlightened hearts and minds. Yet, as India rises, this vision is its North Star. His words, "For what is a nation? ... It is the Shakti of the millions"³¹, ignite a question. Will India's power reflect raw

ambition or compassionate wisdom? Aurobindo dares us to choose the latter, to be modern yet timeless. In a world craving direction, his call endures: an India awakened to its spiritual core, guiding humanity's next leap forward. ●

References:

1. Sri Aurobindo. (1909, June). *Uttarpara Speech. Karmayogin*.
2. Mehra, B. (2025, April). *Sanatana Dharma and Indian Nationalism (Part 1)*. Renaissance. Retrieved June 18, 2025, from <https://renaissance.aurosociety.org/sanatana-dharma-and-indian-nationalism-part-1/>
3. Sri Aurobindo. (1909, June). *Uttarpara Speech. Karmayogin*
4. Aurobindo, S., & Ghose, A. (2000). *Essays on the Gita*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Dept.
5. Ibid
6. Daniel, S., & Mishra, S. (2023, September 3). MK Stalin's Son's "Eradicate Sanatana Dharma" Remark Sparks Huge Row. www.ndtv.com; NDTV. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/udhayanidhi-stalin-mk-stalin-sanatan-dharma-like-dengue-malaria-mk-stalins-son-triggers-row-4354704>
7. Sarkar, S., Bhattacharya, N., & Chakrabarty, D. (1973). *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (pp. 307-8). New Delhi: People's Publishing House.
8. Sri Aurobindo (1908). "No sect or creed, but a universal truth." *Bande Mataram* (16 March 1908). Reproduced in *Bande Mataram: Early Political Writings (CWSA Vol.6-7)*
9. *Bande Mataram* (CWSA) - by Sri Aurobindo : Read book online <https://motherandsriaurobindo.in/Sri-Aurobindo/books/bande-mataram/>
10. Ibid
11. The Incarnate Word <https://incarnateword.in/cwsa/6/the-doctrine-of-passive-resistance-conclusions>
12. Sri Aurobindo (1909). *Speech at Uttarpara (Uttarpara Speech)*. Karmayogin, June 1909. (Published in Karmayogin and later in Speeches)
13. Sri Aurobindo (1909). *Speech at Uttarpara (Uttarpara Speech)*. Karmayogin, June 1909. (Published in Karmayogin and later in Speeches)
14. Sri Aurobindo (1909). *Speech at Uttarpara (Uttarpara Speech)*. Karmayogin, June 1909. (Published in Karmayogin and later in Speeches)
15. Sri Aurobindo (1909). *Speech at Uttarpara (Uttarpara Speech)*. Karmayogin, June 1909. (Published in Karmayogin and later in Speeches)
16. Ibid
17. Ibid
18. Ibid
19. Sri Aurobindo (1909). "The Ideal of the Karmayogin." *Karmayogin*, 19 June 1909. (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives) <https://www.sriaurobindoashram.org/sriaurobindo/downloadpdf.php?id=24>
20. Ibid
21. Ibid
22. Ibid
23. Ibid
24. <https://aurosociety.org/society/index/1947%2C-August-15th-Message>
25. Ibid
26. Ibid
27. Sri Aurobindo. (1909, June). *Uttarpara Speech. Karmayogin*.
28. <https://aurosociety.org/society/index/1947%2C-August-15th-Message>
29. Hindus and Muslims of India Must Unite" – Sri Aurobindo – The Spiritual Bee <https://www.spiritualbee.com/posts/hindu-muslim-unity-sri-aurobindo/>
30. Sanatana Dharma and Indian Nationalism – 1 - Beloo Mehra <https://renaissance.aurosociety.org/sanatana-dharma-and-indian-nationalism-part-1/>



Dr. Upasna Tiwari

Feminine in Bhartiyyata

A Discourse

In Indian thought, women are regarded not as subordinates but as vital, dynamic forces of creation and sustenance. A vision of inherent dignity and power

Stritatva, the essence of womanhood, holds a foundational place in the Indian civilizational ethos—Bhartiyata. Unlike Western feminist frameworks that often emphasize individualism and rupture from tradition, Stritatva is deeply rooted in a holistic, spiritual worldview where the feminine is integral to cosmic, social, and moral order, womanhood is not only a biological category but a multidimensional symbol of power (shakti), creation (janani), wisdom (vidya), and continuity (sanskriti). Indian thought reveres the feminine not as subordinate but as Shakti—the dynamic force of creation, wisdom, and sustenance. From Vedic seers like Gargi and Lopamudra to divine archetypes like Saraswati and Durga, Indian tradition celebrates feminine strength, intellect, and spiritual autonomy.

The concept of Ardhanarishvara symbolizes the unity of masculine and feminine energies, reflecting balance, not conflict. However, Stritatva has faced historical disruptions through invasions, colonialism, and patriarchy. Yet, Indian women—through Bhakti, resistance, and domestic resilience—

have continually reclaimed space as nurturers, thinkers, and leaders.

Bhartiyata embraces the feminine not through binaries of oppression and liberation but through a relational identity rooted in duty, compassion, and spiritual purpose. In modern times, the challenge is to integrate gender justice with civilizational continuity. Thus, Stritatva in Bhartiyyata is both a celebration of timeless ideals and a call for their contemporary realization—where womanhood is not contested, but harmonized with cultural, moral, and spiritual belonging.

womanhood is not only a biological category but a multidimensional symbol of power (shakti), creation (janani), wisdom (vidya), and continuity (sanskriti). Here we are analyzing the Stritatva in the Indian context not only through scriptural, historical, and literary lenses but also through contemporary socio-political realities. It seeks to answer critical questions : What does it mean to be a woman in the Indian civilizational continuum? How can Bharatiyyata embrace both its ancient reverence for the feminine and the modern demands of gender justice? Thus, “Stritatva in Bharatiyyata

: A Discourse” is not just an exploration of womanhood in India, it is an invitation to reimagine Indian identity itself through the lens of the feminine, both timeless and timely.

Shakti: The Divine Feminine in Indian Spiritual Traditions

The feminine principle—*Stritva*—has remained central to the Indian spiritual and cultural imagination since its earliest expressions. At the heart of this principle lies the concept of *Shakti*, the divine feminine energy that drives creation, sustains life, and governs transformation. Unlike linear historical narratives that often marginalize women, the Indic civilizational lens—*Bhartiyata*—offers a multidimensional view of femininity, deeply embedded in both cosmic order and societal

structures.

Traces of goddess worship can be found as early as the Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1300 BCE), where figurines and fertility symbols suggest a reverence for the female form as life-giving and sacred. This early veneration transitions into the Vedic period with subtle shifts. While male deities gained prominence during the Rigvedic era, goddesses like *Usha*, *Saraswati*, *Aditi*, and *Prithvi* retained symbolic importance. *Saraswati*, initially a river goddess, evolved into the goddess of knowledge, while *Aditi* embodied infinity and the cosmic mother principle.¹

Significantly, women were not mere adjuncts to the male-centric Vedic pantheon. They played active roles as *Rishikās*, female seers and composers of Vedic hymns. Over 25 women—such as *Lopamudra*, *Apala*, *Ghosha*,

and *Vak Ambhrini*—contributed nearly 266 hymns to the *Ṛgveda*, demonstrating the high intellectual and spiritual agency granted to women. *Apala*'s transformation from a diseased outcast to a revered sage through penance is symbolic of *Stritva* as a force of resilience and self-realization.

The *Devi Sukta* (*Ṛgveda* 10.125) represents one of the most powerful declarations of divine feminine selfhood, where *Devi* herself proclaims:

"I am the Queen, the gatherer-up of treasures... Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them."

This verse encapsulates the feminine as *Brahmavidya* (supreme knowledge), *Annapurna* (nourisher), and *Moksha-pradayini* (grantor of liberation).

As Vedic thought matured, the concept of *Shakti*—female cosmic energy—gained theological centrality, especially within *Shakta* and *Tantric* traditions. In Indic metaphysics, especially in the *Shakta* and *Tantric* traditions, the feminine is revered as *Shakti*—the primordial energy without which no form or function can manifest. The *Devi Sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* (Mandala 10.125) is a declaration by the goddess herself:

"I am the Queen, the gatherer-up of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship... Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them."

(*Rigveda* 10.125)



Here, goddesses were not just consorts but the essence of divinity itself. The evolution of figures like Ambika, Uma, Durga, and Kali—initially tribal or local deities—into powerful members of the mainstream pantheon shows how Indic spirituality absorbed and elevated feminine archetypes.²

This spiritual integration culminates in the concept of Ardhanarishvara—the half-male, half-female form of Shiva and Shakti. It is a symbolic affirmation of cosmic balance: Shiva without Shakti is Shava (a corpse); Shakti without Shiva is chaos. This image, also tied to Sāṃkhya philosophy, portrays Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (creative nature) as co-dependent forces of the universe.

Champeya Gaurardha

Sharirakayai,

Karpura Gaurardha

Sharirakaya,

Dhammillakayai Cha

Jatadharaya,

Namah Shivaayai Cha Namah

*Shivaaya.*³

The verse poetically captures this divine union, representing Shakti not as “other,” but as the inseparable and equal essence of divinity. The Ramayana and Mahabharata further enrich this narrative by portraying women as central agents of dharma, not passive figures.

Sita symbolizes pativrata dharma, unwavering moral integrity, and inner strength. Kaikeyi, while controversial,

exemplifies political agency and decision-making power. Draupadi, in the Mahabharata, becomes a symbol of dignity and justice; her public humiliation catalyzes the entire war, placing her at the epic’s moral center. Rukmini and Satyabhama, Krishna’s consorts, show emotional autonomy and intellectual engagement. Savitri, through sheer will and wisdom, defeats Yama and rewrites fate itself. These narratives elevate Stritva as the embodiment of courage, wisdom, and transformative energy in both private and public realms.

According to scholar Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya, many goddesses like Ambika, Uma, Kali, and Durga were not part of the early Vedic religion. They were worshipped by different tribes and later included in Vedic beliefs. These goddesses were also connected to Shiva Pashupati, a non-Vedic god believed to have been worshipped by the people of Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley Civilization.⁴ Durga, also known as Durgi, is a mountain goddess connected with the Himalayas and is described as a virgin in early texts like the Taittiriya Aranyaka and the Mahabharata. Vindhyavasini is another goddess who is also seen as a virgin in many scriptures.⁵

Authors like Sudha Murty modernize these ideals in accessible forms. Her portrayal of the Tridevi—Saraswati (knowledge), Lakshmi (prosperity), and Shakti/

Durga (power)—reaffirms the Indian reverence for feminine archetypes.⁶ Moreover, these ideals persist in everyday Indian life. Festivals like Navaratri and Durga Puja celebrate female divinity as both warrior and nurturer. Rural women worship Grāmadevatas and village goddesses for health, rain, and fertility, blending local culture with spiritual symbolism.

In Bhartiyaata, womanhood is not defined solely through biological determinism or societal roles but through metaphysical significance. It harmonizes individual dignity with social responsibility, strength with grace, and autonomy with interdependence. While Western feminism often frames empowerment in terms of rupture—from patriarchy, tradition, and social structures—Indian feminism (rooted in Bhartiyaata) emphasizes harmony, relationality, and cosmic purpose. At the same time, it’s critical to recognize that historical forces—such as foreign invasions, colonialism, and feudal patriarchy—contributed to the erosion of this feminine visibility and power. Yet, even within these constraints, Indian women have asserted agency—through the Bhakti movement, freedom struggle, and contemporary grassroots activism—redefining Stritva within evolving frameworks.

Stritva, in the Indian civilizational framework, is neither submissive nor

confrontational. It is creative, sustaining, transformative, and liberating. From Vedic Rishikās and goddesses to modern thinkers and artists, the feminine is celebrated as Shakti—the primal energy that shapes the universe. Reimagining womanhood through Bhartiyaata allows for a context-sensitive, spiritually rooted, and culturally relevant understanding of femininity. It neither rejects tradition nor blindly accepts modernity but integrates the best of both in a vision of balanced, harmonious empowerment.

Dharmashastra and the Gender Order: Prescriptions and Realities

The evolution of gender roles as reflected in the Dharmashastra literature presents a nuanced picture. While it is often easy to view these texts through a modern lens and find them regressive, a culturally sensitive interpretation grounded in Bhartiyaata reveals deeper civilizational values, intentions, and societal structures.

The concept of Dharma—central to Indian thought—must be understood not as rigid law but as a fluid and contextual ethical system, where duties were defined in accordance with age, gender, varna, and ashrama. In this framework, the treatment of women in Smriti texts—particularly the Manusmriti and Yajñavalkya Smriti—was not merely about control but also about order, stability, and protection.

In Indian civilization, the emphasis on order (Rita) and dharma has always been paramount. The Smritis were not created in isolation but were responses to changing societal needs—urbanization, invasions, clan consolidations, and challenges to Brahmanical authority. In such an environment, the role of women as the moral and emotional anchor of the family became even more emphasized.

The dictum in Manusmriti that “Even a husband who is devoid of virtue should be treated as a god”⁷ is not a literal endorsement

of male tyranny. Rather, it reflects a societal aspiration for feminine tolerance, restraint, and ethical steadfastness—virtues highly regarded in the Indian ethos. Women were seen as the custodians of familial dharma, and their primary role was to maintain moral continuity, just as men were responsible for societal protection and economic provision. This idea aligns with the Indian philosophical understanding of complementarity, not competition, between genders—purusha (consciousness) and prakriti (energy)—which together uphold cosmic balance.

The often-cited verse from Manusmriti:

Yatra nāryastu pūjyante
ramante tatra devatāḥ | Yatra
tastu na pūjyante sarvāstatrāfalāḥ
kriyāḥ.⁸

“Where women are revered, there the gods rejoice.” is not a contradiction of other restrictive passages, but a declaration of sentiment central to Bhartiyaata. It speaks to the Indian reverence for the sacred feminine, manifest in goddesses like Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, and Durgā, and reflected in cultural practices such as Kanya Pujan, and the worship of river goddesses.

Reverence and discipline were not mutually exclusive in ancient Indian thought. Just as a Brahmachari had to follow rigorous vows to achieve wisdom, women, too, were given a prescribed framework of

The evolution of gender roles as reflected in the Dharmashastra literature presents a nuanced picture.

While it is often easy to view these texts through a modern lens and find them regressive, a culturally sensitive interpretation grounded in Bhartiyaata reveals deeper civilizational values, intentions, and societal structures. The concept of Dharma—central to Indian thought—must be understood not as rigid law but as a fluid and contextual ethical system, where duties were defined in accordance with age, gender, varna, and ashrama

duties to ensure personal dignity and collective harmony. The emphasis on chastity, obedience, and family-centric roles was not a rejection of women's individuality but a civilizational attempt to harmonize private virtue with public order.

While the Vedic period celebrated the intellectual autonomy of women—as seen in the examples of Gargi, Maitreyi, Lopāmudrā, and Ghoshā—the Smṛiti period shifted focus due to pragmatic concerns. With the decline of Vedic ritualism and the rise of statecraft, property laws, caste stratification, and external threats, preserving social stability became a primary concern. The Smṛitis aimed to codify behavior to prevent moral and cultural disintegration. In that light, the gender prescriptions must be seen as preventive structures, not inherently oppressive. The woman's role as mother, wife, and moral anchor was elevated as a civilizational ideal, not degraded as inferiority.

The Yājñavalkya Smṛiti, while often categorized alongside other patriarchal texts, contains progressive elements that reflect the adaptive capacity of Indian dharma.⁹ The provision that a woman may choose her own husband in the absence of a guardian is a recognition of individual agency, couched within dharmic propriety.¹⁰ The elaboration of Strīdhan as a woman's own property shows the Smṛiti's concern for women's economic security, which, in

essence, protected her from exploitation in marital or post-marital life.¹¹ The detailing of her rights to gifts from her natal and marital families, including in cases of second marriage, is a culturally sensitive provision rooted in compassion and justice, not control. These examples show that even within the framework of patriarchy, the Smṛitis retained flexibility, responsiveness, and cultural continuity.

To critique the Smṛitis without recognizing the larger spiritual and cultural matrix of Indian civilization risks distorting their intent. In Bhartiya: Women are seen as Shakti (power), the dynamic energy of creation, whether as Durga vanquishing evil or as Sita exemplifying steadfastness under trial. Marital fidelity, self-sacrifice, and emotional intelligence were not signs of submission but of spiritual excellence—attributes even men aspired to in roles like Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. Even modern icons like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo drew inspiration from these civilizational ideals—not to oppress women, but to restore the dignity that dharmic womanhood offered. The gradual exclusion of women from Sanskrit education and Vedic rites was not due to inherent misogyny but due to:

- 1 The ritual specialization of knowledge
- 2 Temple-centric Brahmanical orthodoxy,
- 3 political instability under

foreign invasions.

However, education for women never entirely vanished. In Tamil Nadu, women poets like Andal flourished. In Maharashtra, women saints like Muktabai and Jnaneshwari's influence are testimonies to resilient feminine spirituality within the Bhartiya tradition.

To understand Dharmashastra through the lens of Bhartiya is to recognize that Indian culture has always balanced reverence with prescription, restraint with responsibility, and roles with respect. The Smṛitis may not reflect modern liberal ideas of gender equality, but they do embody a deeper civilizational ethic—one that sought to stabilize society, elevate virtue, and protect feminine dignity through culturally relevant frameworks. What is needed is not wholesale rejection, but a thoughtful reinterpretation of these texts that respects their spirit, questions their rigidities, and reclaims the lost balance between Shakti and Dharma—a balance that once empowered women to be rishikas, debators, creators, and spiritual exemplars.

Feminine Voice in Bhakti Traditions

The Bhakti movement reflects a profound spiritual current within Bhartiya—that of inner freedom, devotion beyond form, and dignity of the self (atman) beyond societal identity. Examining the feminine voice in Bhakti through this civilizational

lens reveals how Indian tradition is not a monolith but a dynamic space that accommodates dissent, reformation, and transcendence without abandoning its spiritual root. Traditional Indian structures—like those prescribed in Manusmriti—defined women's roles through obedience and chastity.

However, Bhakti offered a reimagined dharma based on personal devotion (bhakti), not social obligation, aligning with Bhartiya's deeper emphasis on individual spiritual evolution over rigid orthodoxy. Saints like Mirabai and Akka Mahadevi renounced marriage and status, not as rejection of Indian values, but as affirmation of inner dharma, a concept deeply rooted in Indic thought. Andal, while embracing bridal mysticism, reclaims bodily expression not in rebellion but through sacred surrender, consistent with the Bhartiya view of divinity as immanent.

Bhartiyata thus allows reinterpretation of dharma, not

as fixed code but as living inner truth (*swadharma*), enabling women to reclaim voice without severing from tradition. In the Bhakti tradition, God is male, but not patriarchal. He is a beloved, a companion, a divine equal. The female saint is neither submissive wife nor rebellious outsider—she is a seeker who uses the language of love to transcend worldly roles. Karaikal Ammaiyar, becoming a ghost-like ascetic (preta), and Avvaiyar, shedding sexuality, express a sacred withdrawal that's not rejection of Bhartiya but deep alignment with its ascetic, renunciate strand. Conversely, Andal and Akka Mahadevi express Tantric Bhartiya, where the body itself becomes the path to divine union, echoing ancient Shakta traditions. These contrasts show that Bhartiya includes both ascetic withdrawal and embodied devotion, enabling diverse feminine expressions of the sacred.

The use of vernaculars—Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, etc.—in Bhakti poetry

aligns with Bhartiya's ethos of lokadharma (people's path), where wisdom flows through folk idioms, not elite Sanskrit. Saints like Janabai, Muktabai, and Gangasati wrote for all of society, not just women, embodying the Bhartiya principle of spiritual democracy. Women were integrated in guru parampara, highlighting that Bhakti didn't just tolerate women—it absorbed them into living traditions, as seen in the Varkari movement where Sant Janabai was treated as equal to male saints. Bhartiya here is not exclusionary—it is resilient, pluralistic, and accommodating to spiritual merit irrespective of gender or caste.

Bhakti poetry often blurs gender, with male saints adopting the feminine voice ("bride of God") and women saints transcending the sexualized view of the female body. Daisiyamaya's reflection—"the self that hovers in between is neither man nor woman"—directly draws from Vedantic non-duality, central to Bhartiya. Akka Mahadevi's nakedness is not shameful rebellion but assertion of self beyond form—echoing the Upanishadic truth that na ayam atma jivam anushasti (this Self is not controlled by any being). Bhakti here isn't western feminism—it is Indic transcendence, where gender is illusion (maya) and bhakti is liberation.

Though many Bhaktins rejected norms—ghungroos in public, solitude over marriage—

Bhartiyata thus allows reinterpretation of dharma, not as fixed code but as living inner truth (*swadharma*), enabling women to reclaim voice without severing from tradition.

In the Bhakti tradition, God is male, but not patriarchal.

He is a beloved, a companion, a divine equal. The female saint is neither submissive wife nor rebellious outsider—she is a seeker who uses the language of love to transcend worldly roles. Karaikal Ammaiyar, becoming a ghost-like ascetic (preta), and Avvaiyar, shedding sexuality, express a sacred withdrawal that's not rejection of Bhartiya but deep alignment with its ascetic, renunciate strand

they did not abandon Indian spiritual worldview. Their rebellion was not anti-Indian but deeply Indic, drawing on the same cultural frameworks that once restricted them. Mirabai's refusal to worship her in-laws' goddess in favor of Krishna is a bold, individual act of choice within Hindu pluralism. The absence of overt protest in their poetry does not mean compliance—it reflects the Bhartiya path of transformation through devotion, not confrontation.

Feminine Agency in Ancient and Medieval India

According to Dr. Jamal A. Badawi, the status enjoyed by women in contemporary times was not conferred upon them through the generosity of men or as a natural by-product of societal evolution. Rather, it was the result of a prolonged struggle, marked by resilience and sacrifice, through which women asserted their rights and agency. Importantly, society only began to acknowledge women's contributions when it faced acute economic and demographic demands, notably during the World Wars and the technological revolutions that followed. This acknowledgment was more utilitarian than transformative, often driven by necessity rather than ideological progress.¹²

In contrast, early Indian civilization, particularly during the Rig Vedic period, presents a markedly different ethos. Women

occupied a dignified and integral position in both intellectual and spiritual domains. They had access to formal education, actively participated in metaphysical debates, and some even attained the status of Rishikās—female sages who authored hymns in the R̥gveda. The participation of women in religious rituals, philosophical discourse, and household governance during this period reflects a civilizational structure that viewed women as co-creators of Dharma, not merely its beneficiaries.

Moving into the Mauryan period, while the structural complexity of society increased, certain administrative and security roles for women emerged. Historical records indicate the presence of female bodyguards, spies, and bureaucratic positions such as Stri-Adhyaksha Mahamatras (officials for women's affairs). These appointments suggest that women's capabilities were acknowledged in statecraft and public administration, particularly within elite and royal circles.

However, with the composition and eventual codification of Smṛiti literature, particularly the Manusmṛiti, a more rigid and hierarchical model of gender roles began to dominate. Manu's assertion that a woman must be under the guardianship of her father in childhood, husband in youth, and son in old age, marked a philosophical and socio-

legal shift from the autonomy recognized in Vedic thought to a patriarchal family structure.¹³ This evolution was not reflective of Bhartiya's core, but rather a reaction to growing political centralization and emerging socio-religious orthodoxy.

The onset of Islamic invasions beginning in the 11th century further influenced gender dynamics in the Indian subcontinent. Many invading powers brought with them social norms rooted in Middle Eastern patriarchy, where women were largely perceived as the property of their male guardians, devoid of independent legal or spiritual identity. These attitudes gradually permeated the Indian social fabric, especially in northern regions. In response to the threat of abduction, violence, or dishonor, Indian families began adopting the purdah system (female seclusion), a practice previously foreign to Indic traditions.¹⁴

The implications of this defensive cultural adaptation were profound. Girls came to be seen as liabilities, leading to a proliferation of child marriage, restrictions on female education, and practices like Jauhar (ritual mass self-immolation) and Sati (self-immolation on the husband's funeral pyre). These practices, though now condemned, arose out of complex intersections of social fear, honor-based values, and declining women's autonomy.¹⁵ Such transformations represented

a significant departure from the holistic and empowered vision of Stritva seen in earlier Indic traditions.

During the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods, the position of women remained generally circumscribed, though not uniformly so. The focus of Islamic chroniclers was primarily on Muslim societies, leaving much of Hindu women's histories to be inferred through texts like Alberuni's *Tahqiq ma li-l-Hind* and regional vernacular sources. While Muslim women's education was often limited to religious instruction, Hindu royal women—especially in Rajput and Maratha courts—were trained in warfare, diplomacy, and governance, although such practices gradually waned under the increasing imposition of *purdah*.

Nevertheless, even in these constrained times, exceptions to the norm persisted. Razia Sultana, the daughter of Iltutmish, ruled as the Sultan of Delhi in the 13th century, defying both gender and political conventions of her time. While her reign was short-lived due to courtly resistance to female authority, her ascension itself was emblematic of a deeper civilizational memory that recognized women as capable rulers. Moreover, various regional dynasties—such as those of the South Indian queens, Rani Durgavati of Gondwana, and later Rani Abbakka of Karnataka—continued to demonstrate the persistent resilience of feminine

This historical examination demonstrates that the decline in women's status in India was not a product of Bhartiyata, but rather a gradual distortion of its core values due to foreign invasions, socio-political instability, and cultural defensiveness. The suppression of women's autonomy was contextual and contingent, not civilizational or theological in origin. Recognizing this distinction is vital in understanding that the path to gender justice in India is not merely about modern legal reform or Western feminist ideals, but also about reviving and reinterpreting the Indic civilizational ethos—which once honored womanhood as sacred, sovereign, and central to the cosmic and social order

leadership within Bhartiyata, even amidst foreign domination.

Furthermore, harmful practices such as slavery, polygamy, and institutionalized prostitution gained prominence during the Sultanate and Mughal periods, often intersecting with both Hindu and Islamic socio-political structures. However, the ideal of womanhood in Bhartiyata, grounded in the principles of Shakti, Dharma, and Grihasthashrama, was never entirely extinguished. It remained embedded in folk traditions, temple rituals, Bhakti movements, and oral histories, providing cultural continuity and laying the groundwork for future reform movements.

This historical examination demonstrates that the decline in women's status in India was not a product of Bhartiyata, but rather a gradual distortion of its core values due to foreign invasions, socio-political instability, and cultural defensiveness. The suppression of women's

autonomy was contextual and contingent, not civilizational or theological in origin. Recognizing this distinction is vital in understanding that the path to gender justice in India is not merely about modern legal reform or Western feminist ideals, but also about reviving and reinterpreting the Indic civilizational ethos—which once honored womanhood as sacred, sovereign, and central to the cosmic and social order.

Colonial Impact on Indian Feminine Identity: Between Resistance and Reinterpretation

"It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing."

— Swami Vivekananda

The colonial era marked a profound transformation in Indian society, not only in its political and economic structures

but also in the construction of feminine identity. British colonialism, while claiming to be a civilizing force, often framed Indian women as victims of a backward, patriarchal tradition, thereby justifying interventionist reforms. However, the actual condition of women in colonial India was deeply shaped by both pre-existing social customs and the evolving colonial legal and educational systems.

During this period, a woman's status remained largely tethered to the men in her life—father, husband, or son.¹⁵ Deeply embedded religious and cultural norms valorized female obedience, chastity, and domesticity, effectively marginalizing women from spheres of education, employment, and public discourse. While upper-caste and elite women had limited access to learning and social influence, the majority of Indian women, especially from rural or economically backward communities, faced systemic deprivation, illiteracy, poverty, and dependence, which made them unaware of even their basic rights.¹⁶

The early Indian feminist awakening during colonial times was deeply intertwined with the social reform movement, which focused on addressing issues such as sati, female infanticide, child marriage, polygamy, widowhood, and the purdah system. Reformers sought to enhance women's access to

education, employment, and legal protection, and gradually paved the way for women's political participation and suffrage.¹⁷

One of the most heinous practices challenged during this time was sati, which was particularly prevalent in Bengal but existed across caste lines, especially among the Brahmins and Rajputs. While it was valorized in some royal families as an act of virtue, it was largely imposed on middle- and lower-middle-class women, driven by social pressure, religious dogma, and the denial of widow's autonomy. The causes of such practices were complex: a woman's low status, the dowry system, the practice of hypergamy, and the burden of upholding family honor contributed to the normalization of such violence.¹⁸

Visionaries like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar led efforts to challenge these oppressive practices. Roy's campaign against sati culminated in its legal abolition in 1829, while Vidyasagar's work resulted in the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Vidyasagar also recognized education as a critical tool for empowerment and founded over 35 girls' schools in Bengal.¹⁹ Additionally, the Charles Wood Dispatch of 1854 emphasized the role of female education in social reform, helping lay the institutional foundation for modern Indian

feminism.²⁰

These reformers did not operate in opposition to Indian tradition; rather, they reinterpreted Hindu scriptures and dharmic ideals to align with women's rights. This strategy reflected a profound aspect of Bhartiyyata—the ability of the Indian civilizational ethos to evolve through introspection and reform without discarding its foundational values.

The relationship between Indian feminism and tradition is neither binary nor antagonistic. Instead, it represents an ongoing dialogue between resistance and reinterpretation. While feminist thought in India has often contested patriarchal customs like dowry, purdah, and early marriage, it has also drawn upon cultural and spiritual legacies to redefine womanhood in empowering ways. Unlike Western feminism, which often emphasizes individualism and secular emancipation, Indian feminism frequently operates within the framework of kutumba (family), dharma (duty), and samudaayik (community-based identity).

This cultural duality allows Indian feminism to resonate deeply in traditional settings by reclaiming roles such as Matra (mother), duhita, (daughter), or Patni (wife) not as symbols of limitation, but as positions of influence, moral authority, and social agency. This integrative approach promotes strī svatantrya (women's autonomy)

without necessarily dismantling existing relational structures.²¹ Rather than rejecting cultural narratives, Indian feminist thought has consistently sought legitimacy in spiritual and textual traditions. The R̥gveda mentions female sages such as Lopāmudrā, Ghoṣā, and Vāk Ambhṛṇī, who engaged in philosophical debates and authored hymns.²² This historical memory of empowered women, rooted in Bhartiya, challenges the colonial portrayal of Indian women as universally oppressed.

Furthermore, the samāj sudhāra (social reformer) tradition, which included thinkers like Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj, also emphasized scriptural reinterpretation as a means to achieve gender justice. Their efforts demonstrate that Indian tradition, far from being inherently patriarchal, contains within it the seeds of equity and liberation, waiting to be reactivated in response to changing times.²³

The colonial encounter undoubtedly reshaped Indian gender discourse. While it introduced new legal frameworks and educational institutions, it also entrenched orientalist stereotypes and a top-down model of reform. However, the Indian feminist movement, both during and after colonial rule, has demonstrated a remarkable ability to navigate between tradition and modernity. By challenging harmful customs while drawing from the dharmic

civilizational ethos, Indian feminism continues to evolve as a unique model—one that seeks not just legal equality, but cultural sovereignty and spiritual inclusion.

Reclaiming Bhartiya Feminine Identity in the 21st Century

Following India's independence in 1947, the Constitution of India laid a progressive legal foundation for women's rights, promising equality, non-discrimination, and access to education and employment. However, the reality for most Indian women in the post-colonial period remained far removed from these ideals. The deeply patriarchal fabric of society, especially in rural and conservative regions, continued to restrict women's autonomy and visibility in public life. While laws such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act and the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 were enacted, entrenched socio-cultural practices ensured that child marriage, dowry-related violence, and gender-based discrimination persisted widely across the country.

In practice, a woman's identity in the decades after independence was still largely defined by her role as a “good wife” and mother. Employment outside the domestic space was often discouraged or stigmatized, particularly for middle- and upper-caste women. Social norms dictated that ambition or assertiveness was unbecoming of

a woman, and basic rights such as equal access to food, healthcare, education, and mobility were often denied. Women frequently ate after the men in the family, and maternal mortality rates remained high due to malnutrition, early pregnancies, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure.²⁴ According to UNICEF estimates, up to 50 million women were “missing” from the Indian population due to practices such as female foeticide and neglect, highlighting the stark devaluation of the feminine identity.²⁵

Despite these challenges, the post-independence period also witnessed the gradual emergence of female empowerment, particularly from the 1960s onwards. Rising literacy, increased state investment in education, and social reform programs such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Saakshar Bharat Mission began to alter the landscape. Female literacy rose from below 10% in the 1950s to over 50% by the early 2000s.²⁶ Access to higher education and professional training allowed women to break into fields such as medicine, law, civil services, academia, and engineering—previously dominated by men.

Women like Kalpana Chawla in space exploration, Kiran Bedi in policing, Indra Nooyi in corporate leadership, and Guneet Monga in global cinema became iconic figures, symbolizing the modern Indian

woman: ambitious, capable, and culturally rooted. Literary and artistic voices such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Konkona Sen Sharma further challenged conventional representations of femininity by offering nuanced, assertive, and critical portrayals of Indian womanhood. The entry of women into public and intellectual spheres significantly diversified the feminist discourse in India.

The 21st-century Indian woman embodies a complex and evolving identity, shaped by both cultural heritage and global modernity. She navigates a dual expectation: to be professionally accomplished and economically independent, while also fulfilling traditional roles of wife, mother, and caregiver. This dual burden—praised as “having it all”—often masks the persistent structural inequalities that restrict women’s full emancipation. Wage disparities, lack of institutional support (such as childcare facilities), and the expectation to prioritize family over career remain prevalent, even among educated urban women.

Furthermore, the benefits of modernization remain unevenly distributed. A significant portion of Indian women—especially those in rural areas, marginalized castes, and tribal communities—continue to face illiteracy, limited access to healthcare, and economic exploitation in informal sectors. According to recent estimates, nearly 245 million Indian women lack

basic literacy skills, and many are employed in vulnerable and underpaid occupations.²⁷

A significant cultural transformation in the 21st century lies in the reclamation and reinterpretation of traditional feminine archetypes. Women are no longer passive recipients of inherited roles but are actively redefining their place in both private and public spheres. Figures such as Sita, traditionally seen as the embodiment of patience and virtue, or Draupadi, often portrayed as a symbol of sacrifice, are now revisited through feminist lenses. Draupadi, for instance, is increasingly viewed as a woman of agency who challenged power and spoke out against injustice.²⁸

This cultural reinterpretation lies at the heart of a uniquely Indian feminist movement, which does not reject tradition wholesale but seeks to reform and reintegrate it. Rituals such as Karva Chauth and Raksha Bandhan, once seen as symbols of patriarchal norms, are now embraced by some women as voluntary expressions of love, faith, and cultural continuity, rather than obligations imposed by male-dominated structures. Practices like wearing sindoor or sarees have become, for many, a matter of choice rather than compulsion—a subtle assertion of autonomy within tradition.

Legal and social activism in contemporary India reflects this dynamic tension between modern rights and traditional

values. Campaigns such as the #MeToo movement, the Sabarimala temple entry case, and widespread protests gender-based violence have created new platforms for women to demand justice and equality.²⁹ These movements signify not only resistance but also the affirmation of feminine dignity within a dharmic worldview, suggesting that Bhartiyyata and feminism need not be contradictory.

Conclusion

The discourse on Strīattva (the essence of womanhood) within the framework of Bhartiyyata (Indianness) reveals a rich, complex, and evolving narrative that transcends simplistic binaries of tradition versus modernity. From the revered position of women in the Rig Vedic period to the constraints imposed during later historical invasions and colonial rule, the feminine identity in India has been shaped by a dynamic interplay of cultural, religious, political, and social forces.

This research has examined how Indian women, historically revered as intellectuals, warriors, and spiritual seekers, were progressively relegated to the margins under patriarchal interpretations of dharma, foreign influence, and rigid social customs. Yet, even in the face of marginalization, Indian women—through reform movements, education, and resistance—have consistently reclaimed their agency and contributed

to societal transformation. In the post-independence era and particularly in the 21st century, the Indian woman stands at a unique confluence: rooted in civilizational values yet forward-looking in aspiration. Feminism in the Indian context does not merely seek to imitate Western paradigms but strives to

reinterpret tradition through an indigenous lens.

Thus, Strītatva in Bhartiyata is not static—it is a living discourse. It encompasses the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and societal roles of women, continuously redefined by each generation. The path forward must focus on inclusive

empowerment, intersectional awareness, and a reassertion of dignity that harmonizes tradition with transformative change. In doing so, the Indian woman does not abandon her roots; she strengthens them, forging a future that honors both heritage and her rightful place as an equal architect of the nation's destiny. ●

References:

1. B.P.Sinha – Evolution of Shakti worship in India, D.C.Sircar Edited, The Sakti cult and Tara, University of Calcutta, 1960, pp: 47,48,49
2. Ibid, p. 50
3. Shiv Stotra,1
4. Narendra Nath Bhattacharya – Op.Cit, p. 31
5. R.C.Hazra – Studies in the Upapuranas, vol II, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, 1963, p. 17
6. Murty, S. (2018). The Daughter from a Wishing Tree: Unusual Tales about Women in Mythology
7. Viśiḷaḥ kāmavṛtto vā guṇairvā parivarjitaḥ| Upacaryaḥ striyā sādhyā satataṁ devavat patiḥ|| (Manusmṛti – 5-154)
8. Yatra nāryastu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ| Yatra tastu na pūjyante sarvāstatrāfalāḥ kriyāḥ|| (Manusmṛti – 3-56)
9. Kane P. V., History of Dharmashastra, Vol. I, Third edition, Reprint 1990, BORI, Pune, 2006
10. Kane P. V., History of Dharmashastra, Vol. I, Third edition, 1990, BORI, Pune, 1993, Reprint, 2012
11. Dinkar G B., Sankshipta Yajnavalkya Smṛiti, 1854, Pune
12. Acharya, B.C. (2011). A handbook of Women's; rights , Delhi
13. Basu, A. (2014). Role and Status of Women in Ancient India. Published online in Important India.
14. Banerjee, T. (2016). Here's How The Status Of Women Has Changed In India [Since 1950 Till Date]. Youth Ki Awaaz, 6
15. Medieval India: Women's "Dark Age". (2010). Retrieved from <https://wewomen.wordpress.com/2010/03/04/medieval-india-womens-dark-age/> on 07/12/2017
16. Smṛiti, M. (1886). With six commentaries, Bombay
17. Stanely, S., & Kumari, S. (2010). Position of Women in colonial Era. International Journal of Educational Research and Technology, 1(2), 109- 111.
18. Ibid
19. Jones, K. W. (1989). Socio-religious reform movements in British India (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.
20. Heimsath, C. H. (1964). Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay.
21. Kakar, S. (1991). The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India. Oxford University Press.
22. Narayanan, V. (1998). The Vernacular Veda: Revelation, Recitation, and Ritual. University of South Carolina Press.
23. Forbes, G. (1996). Women in Modern India. Cambridge University Press.
24. Menon, N. (2004). Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond the Law. University of Illinois Press.
25. UNICEF, 2007. The State of the World's Children 2007: Women and Children – The Double Dividend of Gender Equality.
26. Government of India, 2005. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – A Programme for Universal Elementary Education.
27. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends for Women 2022.
28. Chatterjee, P. (1990). The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question.
29. Sen, R. (2016). Gender and Religious Practices in India. Economic and Political Weekly.



Prof. Bhagawati Prakash
Sharma



Dr. Jaya Sharma

The Universality of Indian Measurement of Time and its Astronomical Accuracy

The Indian measurement of time, by recognizing the eternal its nature, presents the calculation of time independent of its beginning and end. The smallest unit of time, viz, the atom, is the subtlest unit of time and the representation of collosally enormous units of time like the kalpa and manvantara is also an integral part of the Indian measurement of time. Above all, the system of universally referenceable dates is also a unique and excellent format of Indian time measurement.

Among the various methods of the calculation of time prevalent in the world, only Indian dates provide a universally referenceable calendar. Since the beginning and end time of these dates is the same at all places on earth, their universal reference can be easily given. On the other hand, English dates change from midnight and the time of midnight is different at different places, which can vary up to 24 hours. For example, despite the difference of 12 and a half hours between midnight in India and America, the change in Hindu dates occurs at the same time. But there is always a difference of 12 hours 30 minutes in the time of changing the date as well as a

difference of one day in the dates east and west of the International Date Line. Since midnight on earth begins first in New Zealand, the celebration of New Year according to English date first starts there. But by going to Cook Island in the opposite direction of the International Date Line, one can celebrate New Year's Eve again after 23 hours. Similarly, Samoa and American Samoa are only 165 km away from each other. However, Samoa is the first country in the world to celebrate New Year's Day, while American Samoa, a mere 165km away, celebrates New Year's Day a day later, on January 1.

From the point of view of Indian dates, if we consider the first day of the Hindu New Year of 2025, i.e., New Year or Nav Samvatsar, it was celebrated on Sunday, March 30, 2025. On the previous day, 29 March, by 4.27 pm, Amavasya end and the Pratipada Tithi made its entry. At this time, whether it is night or day or morning or evening anywhere on the earth, Chaitra Shukla Pratipada began simultaneously at the same time at all places. In this sequence, on March 30, 2025, at 12.49 pm, whether it was day or night or morning or evening anywhere,

The Indian calendar encompasses time units ranging from the smallest to the largest scales and demonstrates a high degree of compatibility with the movements of the solar system. A portrayal

Pratipada ended and Dwitiya Tithi began simultaneously at the same time. Thus, there was Amavasya till 4.27 pm on March 29 and from then till 12:49 pm on the next day, i.e., March 30, it was Pratipada or Ekam, i.e. the first day. Therefore, the New Year began on March 30. The same day, April 2 was considered as the beginning of Varsha Pratipada and Navratri.

'Group Head (Planning & Control) Pacific University Group

'Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, Pacific Academy of Higher Education and Research University

Thereafter, March 31 was the Dwitiya. On that day, Dwitiya

Tithi remained till 9:11 am, after which the date of Tritiya began. Thus, since the above mentioned beginning and ending times of these dates are contemporary on the whole globe, if the reference of time is given as the time period elapsed after the entry of the date, it would be a universal reference, i.e., if the reference is given two hours after the entry of Pratipada Tithi, it will be universal, whether it is day or night, or morning or evening at that time in any country or longitude. On the other hand, if it is written by referring to the English date that it is 7 am on March 31, 2025 as per Indian time, then at that time in America, it would be 6:30 pm on March 30; in England it would

be 1:30 midnight of March 30. On Baker Island, the reference would be 1:30 noon of March 30 and in Thailand, it would be 10:30 am on March 31. This is extremely confusing.

These dates of the Hindu method of time calculation change one by one every 12° increase or decrease in the angular distance between the Sun and the Moon. From anywhere on Earth the angular or arc distance between the Sun and the Moon might be measured, it always appears the same or is measured the same. Therefore, every Hindu date changes simultaneously or at the same time on the entire globe. On the other hand, due to the difference of up to one day in the moonrise depending on the place, there is a difference of up to one day in the dates and festivals of various places in the Arab Hijri dates as well. Under Hindu calculations, the beginning and end of Amavasya is the same time on the entire globe, and there is not even a difference of one minute in it due to the difference of place. In the dates, on Amavasya, the Sun and the Moon are on the same longitude. From there, till the angular difference between them (Sun and Moon) is 12° , Shukla Pratipada lasts; till the difference is from 12° to 24° , Dwitiya lasts; till the angular distance is from 24° to 36° , Tritiya remains and similarly between 168° - 180° , Poornima will be there, and after that, from 180° - 192° , it will be Krishna Pratipada. The distance



of the Sun and Moon from the Earth is so great that the angular distance between the Sun and Moon appears the same from anywhere when measured.

In the Indian method of measurement of time, the creation and naming of the months has been done on the basis of complete scientificity, keeping in view the constellations of the 12 full moons that occur throughout the year. For example, the month with full moon in Chitra constellation is named Chaitra, the month with full moon in Vishaka constellation is named Vaishakh, the month with full moon in Jyeshtha constellation is named Jyeshtha, the month with full moon in Uttarashadha is named Aashadha, the month with full moon in Shravan constellation is named Shravan, the month with full moon in Ashwini is named Ashwin and similarly, the names of the twelve months (from Chaitra) till Phalgun have been determined according to the constellations of the full moon of those months.

If we consider the English

months, till 450 BC, there were only 10 months in the Roman calendar. After this, January and February were added as two months. Emperor Julius Caesar named a month after himself as July, and his nephew Augustus, on becoming emperor, named the eighth month named Sextilis after himself as August. July had 31 days, and Augustus believed he was no less than anyone, and therefore decreed that August would have 31 days instead of 30. For this, February which had 29 days till then, was reduced to 28. Roman emperor Claudius too changed the name of May to Claudius after himself while Nero renamed the month of April as Neronius after himself. However, these names did not last long and these months again began being addressed as April and May.

The sages who coined the names of the Hindu months, named these months Chaitra, Vaishakh, Jyeshtha, Ashadha, Shravan, Bhadrapad, etc., according to the astronomical coincidences, 5,000 years ago, did so when the full moons of

these months started occurring in these constellations. In actuality, one cycle of solstice is completed every 25,765 years. Solstice is actually a small circular deviation in the axis of rotation of the Earth due to the attraction of various planets and for this reason, the falling of spring equinox shifts back by a few days every year. Due to the precession of the solstice, Makar Sankranti has been advanced from 22 December to 14 January in the calculation of the planets that are not in the solstice and after that, it will move forward in the same order on 15, 16 and 17 January. Western astronomers were initially unaware of the precession of the solstice. But they have now accepted that such precession takes place and the values of the precession of the solstice used by the Indians are astronomically correct. Due to this precession, when these full moons started appearing in the months of Chitra, Visakha, Jyeshtha etc., according to this astronomical order, the learned sages named the respective months as Chaitra, Vaishakh, Jyeshtha, etc., in accordance with the astronomical cycle of events. Earlier in the Vedic period, the names of the months of Chaitra, Vaishakh etc. were popular as Madhu, Madhav, Shukra, Nabha, Nabhasya, Isha, Urja, Saha, Sahasya, Tapa, Tapasya, etc. That is why the same names of months like Madhu, Madhav, etc., are found in the ancient Yajurveda *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, *Taittiriya*

The sages who coined the names of the Hindu months, named these months Chaitra, Vaishakh, Jyeshtha, Ashadha, Shravan, Bhadrapad, etc., according to the astronomical coincidences, 5,000 years ago, did so when the full moons of these months started occurring in these constellations. In actuality, one cycle of solstice is completed every 25,765 years. Solstice is actually a small circular deviation in the axis of rotation of the Earth due to the attraction of various planets and for this reason, the falling of spring equinox shifts back by a few days every year

Samhita and other works. This is the reason why in the *Ramacharita Manas*, the name of the month of Lord Rama's birth on the day of Ram Navami in Chaitra month is mentioned as the 'Madhu' month, and written as "*Naumi tithi Madhumas Punita. Shukla Pachch Abhijit Hari Preeta*". (The date of Navami and the pious month of Madhu; the Shukla paksha, i.e., bright half denoting victory, is der to Hari, i.e., the Almighty). In this quatrain, instead of the Chaitra month, the name of the month that was in vogue in the Vedic and Ramayana periods is written as the 'Madhu month'. If we consider the period of the Ramayana, that period was of the Treta Yuga. The time period of yugas covers millions and crores of years. All the four Yugas (Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali) together have a timespan of 43 lakh 20 thousand years for one Chaturyugi (cycle of four yugas). This is also called a Mahayuga. There are 12,000 divine years in a Mahayuga. The relative expansion from the smallest unit of Indian time calculation, the atom, to a Manvantara and Kalpa is being explained in the following table.

In the Indian measurement of time, the smallest unit is the atom. There are 32,400 atoms in a blink of an eye. The age of Brahma can be called the biggest unit. It has 31 zillion, 10 trillion 40 billion years (31,30,40,00,00,00,000). The value of Brahma's age from this micro atomic time can be

understood from the following table.

1 atom = the subtlest state of time
 2 atoms = 1 molecule
 3 molecules = 1 Trasrenu
 3 Trasrenus = 1 Truti
 10 Trutis = 1 Prana
 10 Pranas = 1 Vedha
 3 Vedhas = 1 Lava or 60 Renus
 3 Lavas = 1 Nimesha
 1 Nimesha = the interval of 1 blink
 2 Nimeshas = 1 Vipal (60 Vipals make a Pal)
 3 Nimeshas = 1 Kshana
 5 Nimeshas = 2 Sahis 1 divided by 2 Trutis
 2 Sahis 1 divided by 2 Trutis = 1 Second or less than 1 Leekshak
 20 Nimeshas = 10 Vipals, one Prana or 4 Seconds
 5 Kshanas = 1 Kashtha
 15 Kashthas = 1 Danda, 1 Laghu, 1 Nadi or 24 Minutes
 2 Dandas = 1 Muhurta
 15 Laghus = 1 Ghati = 1 Nadi
 1 Ghati = 24 Minutes, 60 Pals or one Nadi
 3 Muhurta = 1 Prahara
 2 Ghatish = 1 Muhurta = 48 Minutes
 1 Prahara = 1 Yam
 60 Ghatish = 1 Ahoratra (Day and Night)
 15 Days and Nights = 1 Paksha
 2 Pakshas = 1 Masa (One Day and Night of Ancestors)
 Krishna Paksha = One Day of the Ancestors and Shukla Paksha = One Night of the Ancestors
 2 Masa = 1 Ritu
 3 Ritus = 6 Masas
 6 Masas = 1 Ayan (One Day and Night of the gods)
 2 Ayans = 1 Year

Uttarayan = One day of the gods and Dakshinayan = one night of the gods

One year of human beings = one day of the gods, called a divine day

1 Year = 1 Samvatsara = 1 Abda

10 Abdas = 1 Dashabdas

100 Abdas = Shatabda

360 Years = 1 Divine Year, i.e., 1 year of the gods

12,000 Divine Years = One Mahayuga (the four yugas together constitute one Mahayuga)

Satya Yuga: 4,000 years of the gods (seventeen lakh twenty-eight thousand human years)

Treta Yuga: 3,000 years of the gods (twelve lakh ninety-six thousand human years)

Dwapara Yuga: 2,000 years of the gods (eight lakh sixty-four thousand human years)

Kali Yuga: 1,000 years of the gods (four lakh thirty-two thousand human years)

71 Mahayugas = 1 Manvantara (nearly 30,84,48,000 human years, followed by the time of Pralaya or dissolution)

Fourteen Manvantaras = One Kalpa

One Kalpa = One day of Brahma (after one day of Brahma passes, there is Pralaya or a great dissolution after which there is a night of the same timespan). By the calculation of this span of time of a day and night, Brahma's age is 100 years. Half of his age has passed and this is the first Kalpa of the remaining age.

One year of Brahma thus works out to 31 Nila 10 billion 40

crore years. 100 years of Brahma or in other words, the age of the universe would come to 31 Nila 10 trillion 40 billion years (31,10,40,00,00,00,000 years)

If we go into the authenticity of the value of eras, the instance of the Treta Yuga of the period of the Ramayana can be taken.

Coming back to the scientific nature of Hindu time calculation, if we consider the values of months and years, then along with the lunar months, our ancient sages had developed a tradition of marking the solar months in the name of zodiac signs, i.e., from Sankranti to Sankranti, in the zodiac sign, kala and vikala, up to the time of 24-24 minutes under the solar month and the day of the month. This has been a more systematic and precise method of adjusting the solar year with the seasonal cycle than the English date. This marking is done even today in the almanacs and birth charts to indicate the beginning and end of the Mahadasha and Antardasha. Again, along with balancing the lunar months with these solar months, so that even after millions of years, the lunar months do not get misadjusted or separated from the seasonal cycle, the month without Sankranti was termed as 'adhik-maas' and a provision of one extra month was made every three years. Due to this, all our festivals and celebrations and years have been starting in the same season for millions of years and will continue to do so in future as well. Since the Arab

Hijri year is also of 354 days, the Hijri New Year and all festivals move forward by about a month every three years and move from one season to another in 9 years. Thus, 1,442 Hijri years have been included in 1,400 solar years.

The exact speed at which the earth revolves around the sun was also given by Aryabhatta 2,000 years ago in the *Aryabhattachiya* as the daily speed of the earth. That is, since ancient times, Indians knew that the earth revolves around the sun. Regarding the speed of the earth, it is also written in the *Aitereya Brahmana* that the sun neither rises nor sets. When the sun illuminates one part of the earth, it is dark in the other and when it illuminates the other, it is dark in the first. Not only this, in the five major topics described in the Puranas, Sarga (creation), Prati Sarga (dissolution), etc., it is also described in the Sarga or Srishti Khand that the sun too revolves around a great sun at a speed of 49 thousand Yojanas per Ghati. According to modern astronomers, the Sun revolves around a very powerful black hole in our galaxy at a speed of about 7.45 lakh km per hour and it completes one revolution around the hole in 21 crore 60 lakh years. 50 Chaturyugia pass in this period. According to our Puranic calculations of time, one Chaturyuga is completed in 43.20 lakh years, in which the Kali Yuga is of 4.32 lakh years, the Dwapara Yuga of 8.64 lakh years, the Treta Yuga is of 12.96 lakh years and the Satya Yuga

is of 17.28 lakh years. Seventy-one Chaturyugas make one Manvantara and 14 Manvantarsa, i.e., 1,000 Chaturyugas make one day of Brahma. Thus, 360 days constitute one year of Brahma and 100 years is the age of one Brahma. After one Brahma, another Brahma is born and the cycle of creation continues. In this sequence, the 28th Kali Yuga of the Vaivasvata Manvantara of the Shvetavaraha Kalpa of the 50th year of Brahma of this universe is currently on in our galaxy. Accordingly, this 195,58,85,115th year of the present universe of our galaxy has been completed.

According to our Puranas, the galaxy that we can see in this universe, i.e., the constellation, is spread over countless star systems or galaxies in the infinite universe. In the *Devi Bhagwat*, it has been described that the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) were shown by the Adya Shakti, i.e., primal cosmic power and in the *Ramayana*, Lord Rama showed the sage Kalkbhushundi at the speed of the mind, galaxies one after the other. These galaxies have no end. These narrations are now being scientifically confirmed; there are said to be more than 20 trillion galaxies in the universe. The expansion of one galaxy is about 1,00,000 light years or even more. Thus, the expansion of the entire universe has also been accurately described in the Puranas. Accordingly, this universe and time are infinite. ●



Acharya Dr. Chandan Kumar

Indian Consciousness & the World of Performing Arts

When barbarians destroyed the physical storehouses of knowledge of this civilization, the world of art, performing arts and literature took up the task of keeping it intact. The central understanding of India lies in this world of performing arts. Here is an exposition on how it all happened

This article is focused on 'Leela Lok', which can roughly be translated as the 'world of performing arts', in the context of 'Bharatbodh' or 'realisation of India'. As is known from the subject, two ideas are being formed from this terminology -- the first one is 'Bharatbodh' and the second one is 'Leela'. First of all, there is curiosity about Bharatbodh. What is Bharat? What is 'Bharatbhav' or the sense of being an Indian? What is the idea of India? Is India 'Dar-ul-Harb'? Is this Dar-ul-Harb to be converted into 'Dar-ul-Islam'? Do you understand it as Dar-ul-Harb -- the land of infidels and idol worshippers? The land of war -- is this "India that is Bharat"? Is this just a word from our Constitution or is it identified as a socialist secular republic? Is India a nation? Can India be understood in the terminology of nation state? When you try to understand India in the terminology of the nation state, will you be able to ignore the fact that for about two hundred years, the history of the West is a blood soaked period of the nation state?

What is Leela? What is Leela Lok? What is the Leela Lok of Bharatbodh? How have our

society and our people preserved Bharatbodh through art and performing arts? How should the relationship between Sanatan (the eternal religion), art, performing arts and India be viewed? Are the threads of India's continuity interwoven with the lessons of Sanatan's continuity? The question is also that 'how should we view this continuity of Sanatan?' The truth is that this continuity of art, performing arts and dharmic realisation is Bharatbodh. The elements that made this realisation of India possible are saints and poets, mutts (monasteries) and spiritual sessions, temples and Namghars (prayer halls), and of course, Sanskrit. The social legitimacy of Guru (teacher), Vaidya (doctor) and Purohit (priest) makes India possible.

India is basically a cultural concept before being any political, geographical and administrative unit. Our nation is the outcome of our cultural awareness. "Our nation is made not out of political concept but cultural concept. This nation has been engaged in gaining knowledge with qualities like truth, non-violence, charity, forgiveness, hence it is 'Bha-rat' ('Bha' means

light or knowledge and 'rat' means remaining involved)."¹ Bharatbodh or realisation of India should be seen as the successor of this devotion, truth, non-violence, benevolence, forgiveness, art and performing arts. The soul of India is Sanatan. Bharatbodh is a special spiritual quality. This special spiritual quality distinguishes the Indians from the rest of the world. India has been the land of Leelas. Leeladhar (Krishna) preached the Gita here in Kurukshetra. Understanding Bharatbodh in the perspective of this Leela is the actual realisation of Bharatbhav, understanding the people of India and knowing the society of India.

Tourism, pilgrimage, travel and charity ensure the awareness of being India. Overall, India is the Vaishnavite sentiment of life. Indianness gives this special feeling. India is every Indian's motherland and holy land. Every Indian connects himself with

its history, who is happy in its victory and sad in its defeat amidst its joys and sorrows and hopes and despairs. India has got this feeling in the heritage of Vaishnav. This Vaishnavite feeling is continuity. Continuity is Sanatan or eternal. This eternality is Gandhi's 'Vaishnav Jan', this is Shrimant Shankar Dev's "Pratham Praname, Brahmaroopi Sanatan" (My first salutations to the Eternity in the form of the Creator) and this is the journey of the 'Megh' of poet Kalidas. In 'Meghdootam' written by Kalidas, Purva Megh (the eastern clouds) gives the description of the route from Ramgiri to Alakapuri to Yaksha Badal as the journey of the Himalayas -- from the north-east of the high hills to its north-west. The concept of 'Arya Sapt-Sandhav' is the same concept as that of Bharatbhav.

India is the land of spirituality and consciousness. The cultural consciousness of all the ideologies

of the world is materialistic, while the consciousness of India is organic. That is why India is still India, because it is not materialistic and stubborn. Tamil poet Subramaniam Bharati writing a poem on Shivaji, singing of Ram Katha in the form of Chhavin Alun Ramayan by Karbi Anglong community of faraway North-East, Khamti Ramayan of Khamti tribe or Madhavkandali Ramayan of Assamese, the creativity of Shankardev, Madhavdev and Badla Padmata, the language reforms of Brajbuli, the Govind temple of Manipur, wearing of sacred thread and death rituals of the Jamatia community of Tripura are all the signs of this feeling of India. The indication is that despite a long history of Semitic slavery, a cultural consciousness has been there which is -- "Uttaram Yatsamudrasya Himadreshchaiva Dakshinam, Varsham Tad Bharatam Nam Bharati Yatra Santati", i.e. the country that lies on the north of the (Indian) ocean and south of the snowy mountains (the Himalayas) is called Bharat, for there dwelt the descendants of King Bharat.

In this sense, Chinese traveller Huen Tsang addresses this region as 'Aasetu Himalaya' (the land between the Himalayas and the Indian ocean) and its people as 'Hintu'. Guru Govind Singh Ji says, "Jage Dharma Hindu Sakal Bhand Bhaje" (Hinduism will rise again and all its enemies will flee). "Indian philosophy is

India is the land of spirituality and consciousness. The cultural consciousness of all the ideologies of the world is materialistic, while the consciousness of India is organic. That is why India is still India, because it is not materialistic and stubborn. Tamil poet Subramaniam Bharati writing a poem on Shivaji, singing of Ram Katha in the form of Chhavin Alun Ramayan by Karbi Anglong community of faraway North-East, Khamti Ramayan of Khamti tribe or Madhavkandali Ramayan of Assamese, the creativity of Shankardev, Madhavdev and Badla Padmata, the language reforms of Brajbuli, the Govind temple of Manipur, wearing of sacred thread and death rituals of the Jamatia community of Tripura are all the signs of this feeling of India

a philosophy that is concerned about the entire world of living beings. Such eternal thinking of the entire universe is not found in any other land. Here, our main objective is contentment. The productive wealth of the family is the capital. Chanakya himself says, 'Manushyanam Vritti Artha' (the inherent qualities of a person are his real identity). That is why Indian philosophy talks about 'Yog Kshema' -- 'Yoga' means attainment of the unattained and 'Kshema' means protection of what has been attained. That is why Chanakya could say, "Sukhasya Moolam Dharmah, Dharmasya Moolam Arthah, Arthasya Moolam Rajyam", i.e. the root of happiness is Dharma (righteousness or ethics), the root of Dharma is Artha (wealth or resources) and the root of Artha is Rajya (the state or governance).²

What is India? -- One thing is clear that India is not about 'power'. You cannot view Bharatbodh or the understanding of India in the centrality of power. India does not use knowledge in the pursuit of political power. An interdependent lesson of knowledge and renunciation is the central lesson in understanding India. 'Sanyasi', one who has renounced all material things except the bare necessities to exist, is the embodiment of this lesson. Sanyasi is the lesson of the centrality of society in its knowledge apart from the social systems and methods. A Sanyasi does not have any class or caste

of his own nor have any clan or lineage. A Sanyasi is free from any system created by man. Sanyasi is the lesson of India's accomplishments bereft of 'karmaphal' (the results of one's deeds). This detachment from 'karmaphal' and centrality of the society are the basic elements in understanding India.

Due to this detachment from 'karmaphal' and centrality of the society, wherever India went in the world, it went with a sense of participation. It is not the feeling of India being victorious. It is India's feeling of compassion and empathy for the sufferings of others while accepting the impermanence of time. India is goodness, India is to travel from country to country, India is the mortality of the body, India is festival. I am active in Braj Kshetra these days. There was a poet from Mathura known as 'Gwal'. He is considered to be the last Acharya of the Riti period. Gwal's life span is 1802-1867 AD. He was a polyglot who knew 16 languages and had travelled a lot in his life. His line is --

*"Diya Hai Khuda Ne Khub
Khusi Karo Gwal Kavi
Khao Piyo, Deo Leo, Yahin Rah
Jana Hai.
Raja Rao Umrao Kete Badashah
Bhaye
Kahan Te Kahan Ko Gae, Lagyo
Na Thikana Hai.
Aisi Jindagani Ke Bharose Pe
Guman Kaiso
Desh Desh Ghuomi Ghuomi
Man Bahalana Hai.
Aae Parawana Par Chale Na*

Bahana Yahan

*Neki Kar Jana Hai, Pher Ana
Hai Na Jana Hai."*³

(God has given you a lot of happiness, poet Gwal. Eat and drink, give and take. But everything will stay back here. Many kings like Raja Rao Umrao came here. Nobody knows where they went, nobody knows their address now. How can one be proud on the basis of such a life! So, just entertain yourself by roaming around the country. People come on a licence and no excuses work here. You have to do good and go back, later you will have neither to come nor to go.)

What is India? India is the concept of travelling. India means travelling from country to country. In Indian understanding, life is a travel. If you want to understand the nature of devotion or to understand the Leela, then you have to understand this concept of continuous travel. The lesson of Bharat Yatra (travelling across the length and breadth of India) can be marked from Adi Shankara to Gwal. Shankaracharya starts from Kerala, touches Rameshwaram and Shringeri, then goes to Dwarka and further travels to Puri and Guwahati and finally goes to Badrinath and Kedarnath. Ramanujacharya travels to Karnataka, Puri, Delhi and Braj region. After Shankar's conquest of all directions, Ramanuja also took up extensive travelling.

Swami Ramanand Ji travelled all over India visiting

all the pilgrimage places, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Dwarkapuri to Jagannath Puri. About 700 years ago, Sant Shiromani Namdev Maharaj, spreading the message of peace, equality and brotherhood, reached Ghuman in Punjab from Pandharpur in Maharashtra via Merta and stayed there for 20 years. It was a journey of 2,000 km. Nanakdev's sense of travel is even more special. He travelled a total of 70,000 km in four phases. Similarly, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu travelled from Bengal to Vrindavan and then to Jagannath Puri. Meera travelled to 10 provinces. Shankardev travelled from Assam to the South via Braj region.

What does this journey of these saints indicate? Actually, this journey of these saints is the epitome of understanding India. It is the opposite of erasing of memories. Wherever the Semitic powers went in the world, they destroyed the heritage of the defeated countries. There was a gentleman named Vidyadhar Suraj Prasad Dubey Nepal, better known as V.S. Naipaul. His ancestors had gone to Trinidad from Purvanchal (now eastern Uttar Pradesh) as indentured labourers. They used to live on the Nepal Street there. His own name was Vidyadhar and his father's name was Suraj Prasad Dubey. So, his full name was Vidyadhar Suraj Prasad Dubey 'Nepal'. When he went to London, Nepal became Naipal. Thus, the family name became

Vidyadhar Suraj Prasad Dubey Naipaul. In London, Naipaul wrote a book - 'India: A Wounded Civilization'. The book accuses Islam, a powerful Semitic faith of the world, of this crime of erasing of memories.⁴ When the Semitic faiths took over the power in the defeated countries, then art, performing arts and literature became the opposition to this amnesia or erosion of memory.

Let me give an example of the centrality of art and performing arts in India's heritage. I have a friend, Monica Chanda. She lives in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. She is a Bharatanatyam dancer. She publishes 'Bharatbodh' magazine with me. Once, there was a discussion on how to view the cultural continuity of the East Bengal part of undivided India in art form. We got to know that the priest of a temple in Karimganj district of Assam practices a dance form with some of his school children. This dance form was unknown to the Indian art world till now. After coming in contact with this priest, we came to know that the cultural symbols of the present Bangladesh part of undivided India are present in this song-dance. That art form is called as 'Ojhanach', which is based on Padma Puran.

Bishori Puja is performed in the Sanatani homes of East Bengal. Manushmangal is sung and the goddess is worshipped on the occasion. Ojhanach is the text of that memory or heritage.

After some research, we got the script of a film made by Bhupen Hazarika in 1972, in which we even found some references to this Ojhanach. The readers are requested not to confuse Ojhanach with 'Ojhapali', which is another form of art more popular in the lower parts of Assam. The spirit of India is a spirit beyond geography and power. This is not the spirit of Raja Rao Umrao. It has been present in art forms even in the era of rapacious powers. It has been present in the Guru-Purohit or Master-Priest forms. Our dance forms -- whether it is Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi or Kathak -- have developed under the patronage of these Gurus and the priesthood. Hence, India is the knowledge about centrality of the society.

When 'spirit' is explained in the context of India, one sentence comes to my mind -- India is not just a piece of land, it is a living 'Rashtra Purush' or nation. What does this mean? 'Living' means lively, sensitive or aware. How to view this continuity of understanding of India, continuity of wisdom, continuity of understanding in the context of art and performing arts? Which are those symbols of art and performing arts that provide the lesson of this continuity of India? Before this, it will be appropriate to consider this point as well that 'how has India conducted itself?' Girilal Jain was a former Editor of 'Times of India'. He has written a book

- 'The Hindu Phenomenon'. The book is available on Amazon. The first edition of the book came out in 1994. The book is published by UBS Publishers. There are six chapters in the book and if we include the appendix, then it has 165 pages. Its first chapter is - "The Civilizational Prospective". He put forward an argument that "We should understand India as a civilization - a living civilization."⁵

Swami Vivekananda, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Thakur, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Anand Kentish, Muthu Kumaraswamy - all have presented their own arguments while expressing their thoughts on understanding India. I would like to mention one of them here. There was a gentleman called Benedict Anderson, who was a socio-political scholar and historian. He had studied at Cambridge Cornell. He died in 2015. He had written a book

called 'Imagined Community'. The first edition of the book came out in 1983 from Verso London. The book has 11 chapters in which he reflects on topics like cultural roots or cultural values, official nationalism, memory and forgetting etc. Anderson believes that "the nation may or may not be a geo-political unit, but it is definitely an empirical unit. Its form depends a lot on how it is being lived, how it is being treated."⁶ Maharishi Aurobindo also talks about experiencing and living the nation as a culture. Our past is not just past but is the cream of life. This is an eternal feeling. The concept of sin and virtue, the concept of truth and untruth, the concept of violence and non-violence, the concept of purity and good conduct, the concept of ease and discomfort, the concept of the Supreme Element, the concept of your actions being constantly evaluated in the eyes of the Supreme Element, is a

'Vaishnav' system of discipline.

What was our religion? "Hinduism is not the name of a method of worship. Hinduism is not a new religion like any Semitic religion. Hinduism is the name of that 'mahavidhan' or great law that carries all the emotions and feelings together. Till date, there is no example of any sect that has originated in India which claims that only and only the people of that sect will be happy. The identity of being an Indian is that he keeps taking a pledge for the welfare of the whole world."⁷ "If India is a religion, then this religion is beyond sects and ways of worship. This religion is beyond rituals. This is the religion of human values, this is the religion of the vision of human welfare, this is the religion of striving to live a life filled with compassion. This is such a religion which is based on sacrifice. This is a religion that is based on faith, but this religion proposes a faith with discretion, in which there is no place for blind faith. Knowing such an India, and knowing this India in all time periods and understanding it by contextualising it to one's own period, is Bharatbodh (realization of India)."⁸

Swami Vivekananda, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Thakur, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Anand Kentish, Muthu Kumaraswamy - all have presented their own arguments while expressing their thoughts on understanding India. I would like to mention one of them here. There was a gentleman called Benedict Anderson, who was a socio-political scholar and historian. He had studied at Cambridge Cornell. He died in 2015. He had written a book called 'Imagined Community'. The first edition of the book came out in 1983 from Verso London. The book has 11 chapters in which he reflects on topics like cultural roots or cultural values, official nationalism, memory and forgetting etc

Vedic literature, Shrimad Bhagwat Gita and Ram Charit Manas are the symbols of this centrality. The pursuit of truth and beauty through the coordination of karma (deed), knowledge and devotion has been our cultural purpose.

The continuity of this cultural purpose also forms our historical consciousness. The opposite of this historical consciousness has also been seen in India though. "India is not made up of only geographical structure and nor is Indian consciousness formed only by history. In fact, Indian consciousness is an eternal process, which is intertwined with both eternal and continuity. Eternal values come from eternity and continuity leads to their adjustment with time. Indian consciousness is nationalism, culture and also religion. The meaning that is expressed by the word 'Indian consciousness' is the meaning of the life-system of eternal and continuous civilization."⁹ The tradition of saints and sages, the tradition of devotees, the tradition of temples and monasteries, the tradition of Parivrajaks (travellers) and Sanyasis (ascetics), the tradition of spiritual sessions and preachers make this country called India. The thread of Himalayan culture, which spreads from the Himalayas of the Northeast to the Himalayas of the Northwest, expresses the continuity of Indian cultural life. The Himalayas from Arunachal to Himachal and its cultural social life provide the thread to define the understanding of the Indian nation.

This is a cultural nation which you and I are living in today. I am reminded of an incident from 'Bhagavat' written by Maharishi Ved Vyas. Before the

beginning of the first chapter of Bhagavat comes the 'Bhagavat Mahatmya', in which there is a dialogue between Narada and Bhakti. Narada asks Bhakti - "Kashchitvam", meaning "Who are you?" Bhakti's answer is - "Aham Bhaktiritikhyata Imau Me Tanayo Matou. Gyanvairagyanamanau Kalayogena Jarjarau", meaning "I am Bhakti. These two are my sons. Gyan and Vairagya are their names. They have been weakened by the effect of time." This time reference in the 'Narad-Bhakti' dialogue is of Vrindavan, which is Sri Krishna's home. Bhakti is sad in Krishna's house, but seeing Bhakti happy thousands of kilometres away in Pragjyotishpur, one realises that He is golden. "The Indian psyche is full of spirituality and this tradition is very ancient and unique. Its spread is like that of the ocean."¹⁰

After the above explanation of the principles of Bharatbodh, there is a curiosity that "how to ensure incorporation of the lessons of these principles in the Indian art forms?" I am active in the field of art and performing arts among the tribal communities of Ishan Bharat (North-East India). I can say that the cultural signs of Bharatbodh as a civilization can be seen in our art forms, songs, music and literature. The cultural memory of those tribal communities, whose faith has now become Semitic, can also be seen in their dance, art and performing art

forms. The tendency to celebrate festivities is a chapter in the cultural memory. If you listen to the 'Phaag' of Barpeta, see the 'Raas' of Majuli, see the 'Govind Leela' of Manipur, listen to the stories of the 'Ao' or 'Konyak' communities of Nagaland or observe the traditional food and habits of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia tribes, then you will find authentic references against erasing of memories. This reference is the reference of India's social centrality, art centrality and continuity of memory.

There was a period of slavery for a thousand years. The sectarian invaders who came here were uncivilized barbarians. There was no place for logic in their Semitic beliefs. For them, we were idol worshippers. We were infidels. So, we did not have the right to live in this world. In their words, when we did not have the right to live, how could they have allowed our knowledge, our books, our temples, our faith to survive!! In 1193 AD, when the Turkish invader Bakhtiar Khilji destroyed Nalanda University,¹¹ it is said that the library of that university kept burning for many months.¹² As many as 90 lakh manuscripts of Ayurveda, Vedanta and Buddhist philosophy were burnt down. Our centres of knowledge and its carriers kept falling prey to the hatred of the invaders. This hatred was Semitic.

You know that from the attack of Mohammad-bin-Qasim, a member of the Arabian

barbarian tribe called Al-Saqif, on Dahir, the last Hindu king of Sindh, in 712 AD, to the defeat of the Semitic king Siraj-ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 AD, and then the defeat of the combined army of Nawab Mir Qasim of Bengal, Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah of Awadh and Mughal emperor Shah Alam at Chausa near Buxar on 22-23 October 1764 AD by the army of Hector Munro of the East India Company -- that is total period of 1,052 years -- was the period of suppression of knowledge, acting, drama and art in this country.

After the Battle of Plassey in 1757 AD, the Battle of Buxar had made it clear that there were no people left to compete with the British. The British were wise people. The British knew that they had dealt with the fanatic marauding rulers riding horses, but the real danger had not yet gone. They had realised well that the real danger for them was Indian wisdom. That is why, they decided on some symbols of

British hatred. The British knew that to rule India, it is necessary to rule over the Indian mind.

India countered this social and intellectual violence of the Semitic invaders with devotional consciousness. Devotion

confronted the Semitic power through performing arts. In this period, the power lied in the hands of the heretics. Both art and Sanatan were dethroned. In this difficult period, Indian society provides shelter to art and Sanatan while temples, monasteries, sessions and the society become the shelter of Indian art and religion. Performing arts of every region of India -- whether it is Pandavani, Nacha, Bhaona, Ankia, Ojapali, Ajilamo of Monpa community, Abhang of Manipur or Ramlila-Raslila -- all these art forms accepted devotion and Leela as their subject matter. So, devotion and Leela became the main theme of these performing arts. The heroes of these performing arts are Ram and Krishna. This is to create a 'counter heroism'

to the heroism of the Semitic powers. In opposition to the powerful Semitic invaders, there was an alternative 'raga' creation of Sanatan power.

You can understand this by an example. Goswami Tulsidas and the Mughal ruler Jalaluddin Akbar were contemporaries. Goswami Tulsidas started Ramlila in Kashi. Ramlila of Ramnagar in Kashi was started by none other than Goswami Tulsidas. When Ramlila ends, Goswami Tulsidas used to make people raise slogans like "Bolo, Raja Ramchandra Ki Jai (Hail King Ramchandra)." The political king is Akbar but Goswami Tulsidas's king is Ram. There is literary evidence of the fact that Tulsidas refused Akbar's invitation to join the 'Navaratnas', saying:

"Ham Chakar Raghuvir Ke, Patyau Likhyau Darabar; Tulsī Ab Ka Hohinge Nar Ke Manasabadar."

(I have written to his king that when I have become the servant of Lord Ram, why will I become a royal official under the command of a human now?)

This literary evidence is a proof of the fact that an eternal understanding of the Semitic counter was created in art, play and literature. This eternal awareness ensures the Indian will to live and creates the playfulness of the Indian awareness. "The soul of India is eternal, Indianness is not just the imprint of a geographical circle,

India countered this social and intellectual violence of the Semitic invaders with devotional consciousness. Devotion confronted the Semitic power through performing arts. In this period, the power lied in the hands of the heretics. Both art and Sanatan were dethroned. In this difficult period, Indian society provides shelter to art and Sanatan while temples, monasteries, sessions and the society become the shelter of Indian art and religion. Performing arts of every region of India -- whether it is Pandavani, Nacha, Bhaona, Ankia, Ojapali, Ajilamo of Monpa community, Abhang of Manipur or Ramlila-Raslila -- all these art forms accepted devotion and Leela as their subject matter

but a distinct spiritual quality that distinguishes the Indian from the rest of the world."¹³

What is Leela? Leela is a performing art. Leela is to look like God and this looking like God is the opposite of Semitic. The God full of Leela is the real form of Leela. Leela is displayed through his visible actions and qualities. This vast creation or universe is actually the 'Leela Kshetra' (playing ground) of God. The word 'Leela' is so dear to us that as soon as this word is uttered by our mouth, the mind becomes cheerful. The sages have used the word Leela in their own way. There are many synonyms of Leela in the Hindi encyclopaedia such as 'Keli', 'Krida', mysterious affair and actions of God's incarnations for human beings to imitate, Charit Leela etc. Indian sages have considered this world to

be the huge Leela Kshetra of God. In the view of Indian sages, the vibration of the world is the Leela of Brahma. This vast universe is the manifestation of the Leela of the same God. The action-reaction taking place in it is all His Leela.

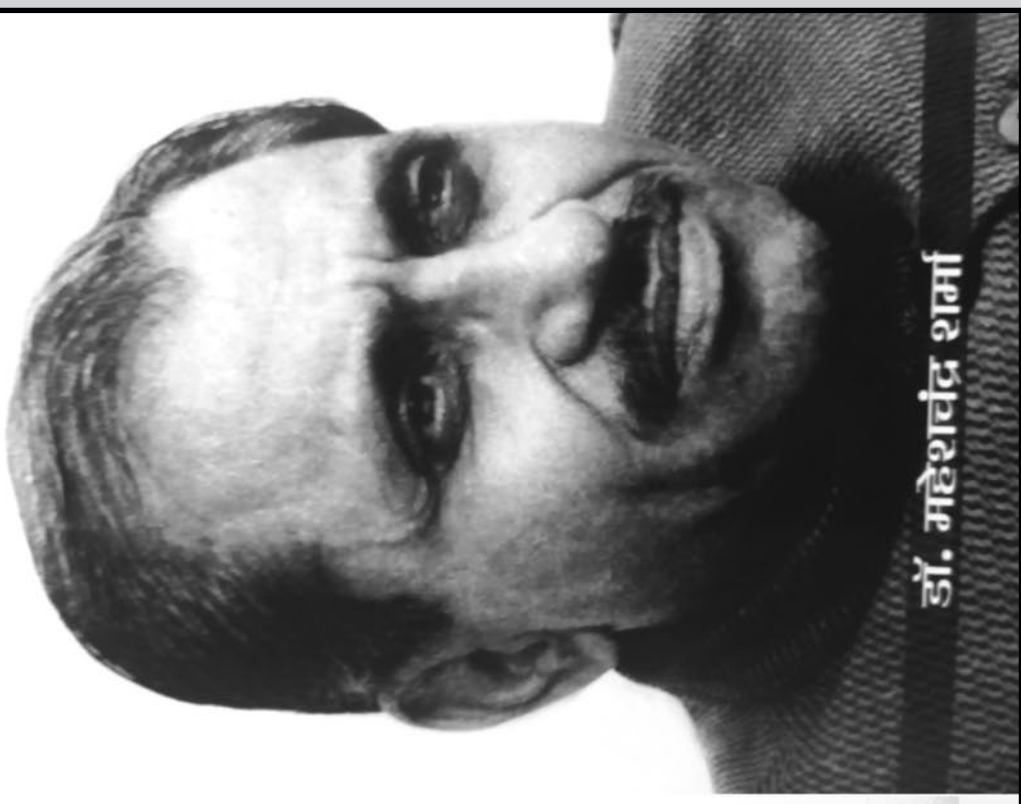
"This is a game, a play, a universal play; it is the amusement of God. The happiness of a child, the joy of a poet, the happiness of an actor, the joy of the great engineer (Creator) of the world, who is the ever-new soul of all things, who is eternal, inexhaustible and who keeps creating Himself again, this is the self-presentation of joy, that Brahma Himself is Leela, He is full of Leela and He Himself is the land of Leela."¹⁴ According to the thought tradition of Bhakti philosophy, Leela is related to God. According to the Sanatan emotive content, this animate

and inanimate world is the result of the Leela of God. Bhakti philosophy believes that the entire Creation is the result of the Leela of Sachchidananda (God). It will not be irrelevant to say that the process of union of the Creator and the Creation is called Leela. "Without Leela, it is not possible to understand God and his Creation. Leela is the centre which is the basic foundation of theistic life philosophy. The Vaishnav sentiment is based on this concept of Leela."¹⁵ "The desire of God to indulge in pleasure is 'Leela'."¹⁶ This Leela is the realization of India. My proposal is that India should not be viewed as a lesson in organization, power or power-centric heroism but as a lesson in Leela, art and society-centric sensibilities. This lesson of India is the actual realization of India. ●

References:

1. *Bharatbodh Ka Naya Samay* (realization of India in current times), Prof. Sanjay Dwivedi, Yash Publications, New Delhi, India, 2022, p. 23
2. Ibid
3. Author - Gwal, editor - Mahalchand Bayed, Oswal Press, Calcutta, 1937, p. 396
4. *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), V.S. Naipaul
5. *The Hindu Phenomenon*, Girilal Jain, UBS Publishers, 1994
6. *Imagined Community*, Benedict Anderson, first edition, Verso London, 1983
7. From the statement of Dr. Krishna Gopal, Saha Sarkaryavah, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/16aMsDhp3W/?mibextid=wwXlfr>
8. *Bharatbodh, Sanatan Aur Samayik*, Rajneesh Kumar Shukla, Prabhat Prakashan, Delhi, p. 11
9. Ibid, p. 10
10. *Bharat Ki Santh Parampara Aur Samajik Samarasata* (India's saint tradition and social harmony), Dr. Krishna Gopal, from his autobiography
11. *The University of Nalanda*, D. Sankalia Hasmukh, B.G. Paul Publisher, Madras (India), p. 209
12. <https://ncert.nic.in/textbook/pdf/ghdv107.pdf>
13. *Bharatiyata* (Indianness) (essay) - Quoted from Agyeya, Hindi Samay
14. *A Glossary of Sanskrit Terms in the Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo, ed. 1652 AD
15. *Rasleela Aur Rasanukaran* Vikas (development of Rasleela and Rasanukaran), Dr. Vasant Yamadagni, Sangeet Natak Academy, Delhi, p. 45
16. *Vallabhacharya*, Subodhni, Srimad Bhagwat, 3.7.2

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय कर्तृत्व एवं विचार



डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय कर्तृत्व एवं विचार

डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा



“पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय के विषय में जानकारीयों बहुत ही सीमित हैं। डॉ. महेशचंद्र शर्मा ने इस विषय पर गवेषणात्मक अध्ययन किया है। इस शोध-ग्रंथ का प्रकाशन न केवल जनसंघ की राजनीति व विचारधारा के प्रति लोगों को लाभदायक जानकारीयों देगा वरन् राजनीति शास्त्र की वैचारिक बहस को भी आगे बढ़ाएगा। दीनदयाल उपाध्याय व भारतीय जनसंघ को समझने के लिए यह शोध-ग्रंथ प्रामाणिक आधारभूमि प्रदान करता है।”

—डॉ. इकबाल नारायण

पूर्व कुलपति-राजस्थान विश्वविद्यालय,
काशी हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय तथा नॉर्थ-ईस्ट हिल्स यूनिवर्सिटी,
पूर्व सदस्य-सचिव, भारतीय सामाजिक विज्ञान अनुसंधान परिषद्

“यदि मुझे दो दीनदयाल मिल जाएँ, तो मैं भारतीय राजनीति का नक्शा बदल दूँ।”

—डॉ. श्यामा प्रसाद मुखर्जी

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय द्वारा लिखित पुस्तकें



प्रभात प्रकाशन

ISO 9001 : 2008 प्रकाशक

www.prabhatbooks.com

Manthan

Journal of Social and Academic Activism

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Please subscribe to *Manthan*, a quarterly research oriented thematic journal, published by Research and Development Foundation for Integral Humanism.

For membership of this journal, individual/institutions may inform to the address given below and payment should be made in the favor of "**Research & Development Foundation for Integral Humanism**". Pay at New Delhi in **State Bank of India, A/c No. 10080533188, IFSC-SBIN0006199**.

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS

Name :

Address :

.....City/District :

.....State : Pincode:

Land Line : Mobile : (1) (2)

Email : Magazine Language : ☐ English / ☐ Hindi

Revised price change from Oct-Dec 2019

Subscription Type	In INDIA	OVERSEAS
Single Issue	₹ 200	US\$ 9
Annual	₹ 800	US\$ 36
Three Year	₹ 2000	US\$ 100
Life Time	₹ 25,000	

Note: The magazine is normally dispatched by ordinary post. If you wish to receive it by Speed Post, kindly pay an additional annual amount of Rs.150/- towards postal and handling charges.

Managing Editor

Manthan Quarterly Magazine

Ekatm Bhawan, 37, Deendayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110002

Phone: 9868550000, 011-23210074

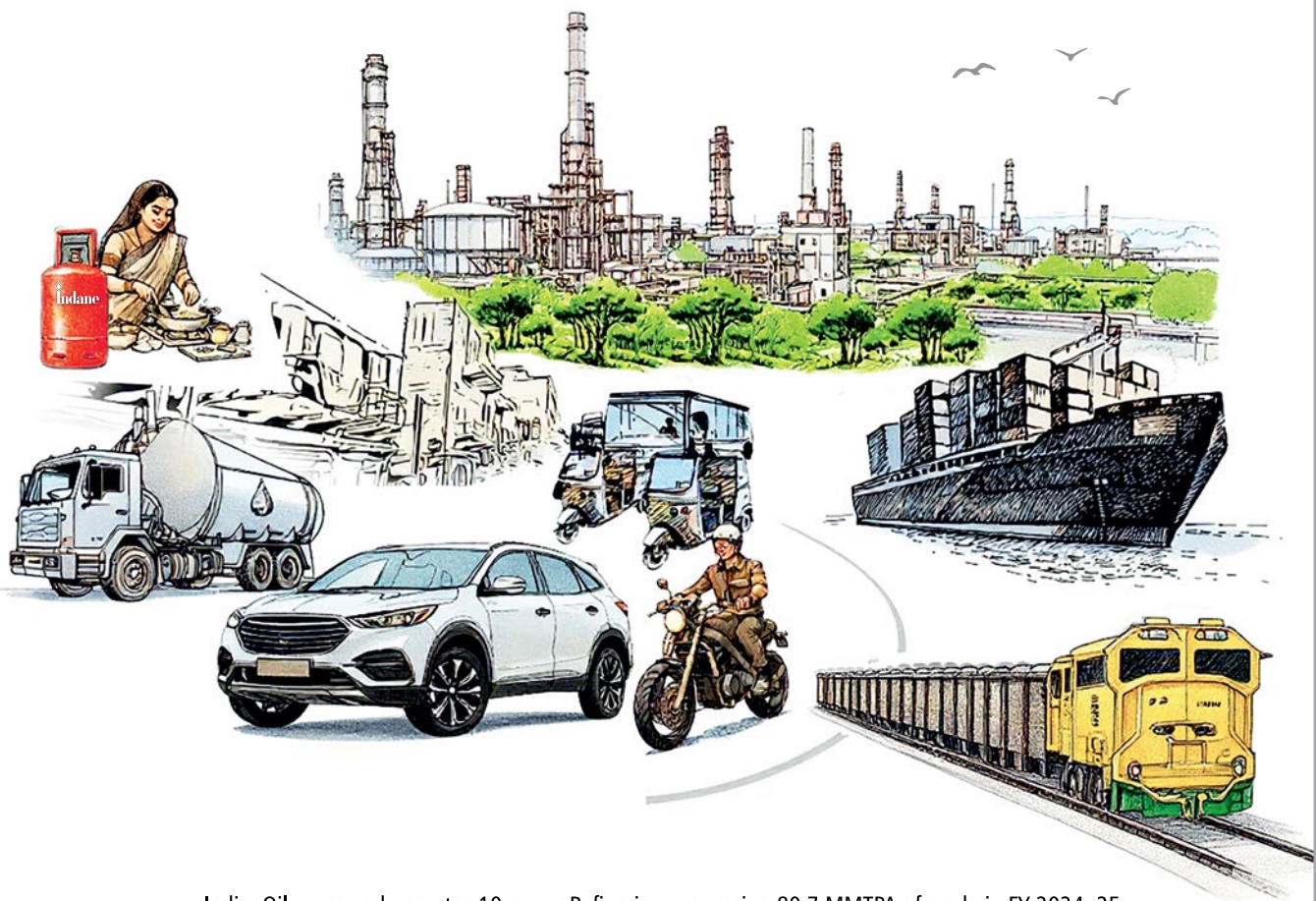
E-mail: info@manthandigital.com



IndianOil



SERVING EVERY MILE, **EVERY DAY** FOR A NATION **ALWAYS ON THE MOVE**



- IndianOil owns and operates 10 group Refineries, processing 80.7 MMTPA of crude in FY 2024–25
- Total pipeline length operated by IndianOil is over 20,000 Km
- Pipelines throughput of over 100 Million Metric Tonnes per annum
- Operates 12,793 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Product sales of over 100 Million Metric Tonnes per annum
- Fuelling journeys across the nation with over 40,000 Retail Outlets
- Over 15 Crore kitchens across India trust Indane LPG

ONGC

ENERGY: Now AND Next



Innovating **Now**
Shaping **Next**

**NET
ZERO**
by 2038

Scope-1 and Scope-2

We are **ENERGY** Now and Next

