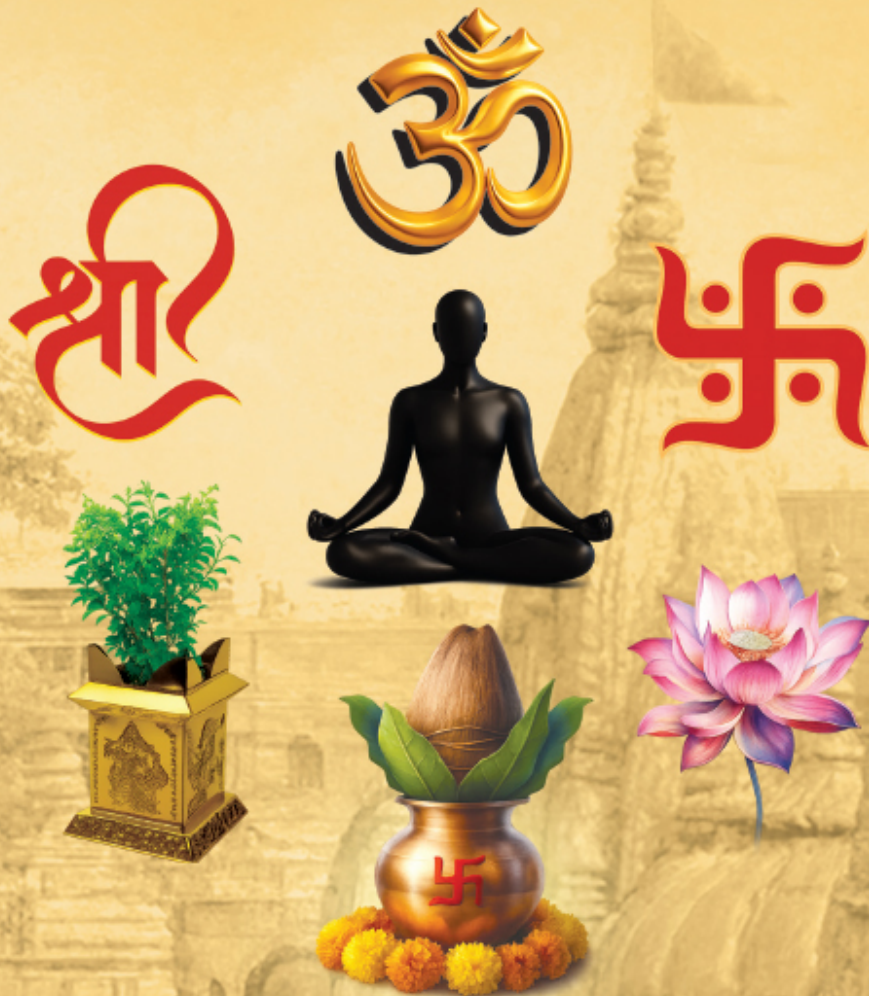


# BHARAT

A RESURGENCE OF  
THE HINDU SPIRIT

VOLUME I



DR K.V. SANGAMESWARAN

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# Table of Contents

*Acknowledgements*

*About the Author*

*Prologue*

## **PRE-WORLD WAR I**

**Chapter 1** Introduction

**Chapter 2** On Civilization: Dharmic Thought

**Chapter 3** India's Polity, Its Characterization and Current Problems

**Chapter 4** Functional Society In India

**Chapter 5** The Self Awakening Of India

**Chapter 6** The Indian State

## **INTERWAR PERIOD**

**Chapter 7** Tamil Nationalism

**Chapter 8** Indian Nationalism

**Chapter 9** Indian Nationalism and Hindu Consciousness

**Chapter 10** Colonial Evangelical Christian Missions

*Bibliography*

# About The Author

Dr K.V. Sangameswaran is a Radiologist by training. A graduate of the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, India, he has served as a clinical Radiologist for over three decades in various service hospitals around the country. Post retirement from the Armed Forces Medical Services, he entered the hallowed portals of Academia as a teacher of Radiology when his career finally ended as an Emeritus Professor in a leading medical school in Pune. All along in his professional life, he also developed a keen interest in the changing paradigm of human thought and strategies adopted by nations around the world. Of particular interest to him was the continued attention paid by the Christian Western powers to dismember India to make it that much simpler for them to continue their domination. Among the very many methodologies adopted for this sinister purpose during recent times, highlighted by the author, the most important was the constant deployment against India the weapons of Human Rights abuse and caste. In addition, the constant harping in every international forum on the need for India to safeguard minority rights to the total and deliberate disregard of majority rights uniformly around the world has assumed epidemic and intolerant proportions. The author attempts to bring to the notice of readers the new age techniques in proselytization, which involves vigorous efforts to enhance the existing encroachments into the Hindu sacred space, this time by actually utilizing Sankara's Advaita philosophy and to appropriate it so as to present Christianity as no different from Sanatana Dharma a product of the composite Indian culture, a clever ploy. Western cultural imperialism has strangled Indian thought and its cultural mores, and the only way to wriggle out of this stranglehold seems to lie in the inculcation of Indian and Hindu Consciousness among the young. Even this benign approach is being constantly attacked as revelatory of an exclusivist majoritarian mentality. The title of the book has been chosen with a deliberate intent to recognize as well as to commend the achievements of the members of the majority community in every field of human endeavour and beseech them to

continue in their path of rediscovering their ancient civilisational heritage. The author has another publication to his credit, entitled “INDIA, SECULARISM IN DECLINE, A NARRATIVE”. (Publishers, PROWESS PUBLISHING, ALANDUR, CHENNAI, 2019).

# **PRE-WORLD WAR I**

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

**T**his volume is a follow-up to my previous work, entitled, “India, SECULARISM IN DECLINE, A NARRATIVE.” This work is an example of a disjointed style in writing where thoughts are recurring and scattered under different headings, notably the subject of Caste. As a result, a topic becomes contextual which is the aim. It is an audacious attempt by itself but certainly not at imitating William Faulkner’s work, “Sound and Fury!” The reader of this work will need to bring together these scattered pieces under a canopy to complete the mosaic. I have attempted to deploy an array of thoughts that I felt would be more striking than restricting myself to a few specific topics and highlighting them. I have not cited primary sources but have heavily drawn from the works of eminent philosophers, intellectuals, and writers reassured by the confidence that they have done all the hard work poring through primary sources. I was convinced that no work would be complete without reference to Ananda Coomaraswamy’s pre-eminent essays. I have drawn heavily from these with the smug confidence that I have his golden seal of approval in the pursuit of knowledge dissemination. Ananda Coomaraswamy had offered to the world his work without restrictions by stating that his writings belonged to the world which meant that it could be used by anyone in the pursuit of dissemination of knowledge. I have been very careful to maintain the sanctity of his work. In addition, I have also been liberal while citing the eminent traditional historian and jurist C.V. Vaidya’s<sup>22</sup> book, “The Downfall of Hindu India”, which has many lessons to offer to contemporary scholars in the formulation of defence strategy and maintenance of internal security. Coomaraswamy is categorical while admitting that he has neither

postulated any new doctrines nor added to the great storehouse of philosophy that is contained in this world of ours, to be specific, belonging to the great Indian civilization. He humbly submits that his works are efforts at knowledge dissemination as it exists and nothing new. His opinions are neither religious nor political. His expressions are still relevant particularly his warning to India not to fall completely into the technology trap at the cost of spiritual enhancement. It has always been my desire to familiarise the younger generation with the principles that formed governance in Hindu India before 1300 CE which has been described by Coomaraswamy and recaptured by Dharampal in his essays. Shivaji could not complete the task of uprooting the Mohammedan form of government though their criminal jurisprudence had much to recommend. It was left to the British rulers to establish their form of judicial system and education which are in place in contemporary India and which is expected to last. The government instrument thus remains Christian in principle. I have divided the construct of this work into different periods which allows for spreading out of contextual topics of interest. I have referred to the adverse effects of colonization which was carried out in the garb of civilizing the barbarians. I have also described the Rwandan massacres as a pointer to system failure of a self-acclaimed righteous faith. King Leopold II's unmentionable crimes in Congo cannot be ignored. He went to the Congo to Christianise but ended up exploiting the poor natives. The crimes he perpetrated on the innocents would be difficult to describe. He was seized with an insatiable lust for brutal colonial exploitation and did not want to be left behind by the other European colonisers. Why am I bringing into focus the world wars one might ask? It is to highlight the greed for the wealth of the colonised territories and the resultant internecine feuds among European nations which left the world in disarray. In the event, if these horrific atrocities were not enough, the colonised were also dragged into wars (WWI and II) of no concern to them. Talleyrand's famous observational statement that the "Bourbons have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing" is equally applicable to the Hindus.

## **Evolution of the Hindu Religion**

The ancient Indians worshipped many Gods and performed myriads of rituals which included animal sacrifices. These sacrifices were elaborate in their conduct and were accompanied by the propitiation of the Fire God, Agni by means of Yagnas. Early Hindus if they could be addressed as such from point of convenience believed in the conception of Trilokya which is constituted by three-tier cosmos, (1) upper heavenly, (2) middle atmospheric region and (3) the Earth. In Sanskrit these three worlds are known as (1) kamaloka, (2) rupaloka, and (3) arupaloka. There is no concept of heaven and hell in the Hindu religion. Religious ideas moved through conquests, traders, merchants, and immigrants. Vedic Indians interacted with pre-Vedic traditions dating back to the days of the Indus period and all popular deities of the old tradition including Indra whose authority was deregulated and the privilege to receive sacrifices was blocked. A new pantheon was set in the place of the old, which had included Mitra and Yama. Indra was further degraded during the Puranic period and connection to svarga whose intermediate control was exercised by Indra, gave way to direct worship of the Great Lord manifested in Maha Vishnu and Lord Siva an approach which was stressed. Vedic dharma is another name for Sanatana Dharma which has transformed into modern Hinduism, an appellation it least deserves. Vedic Dharma extended throughout the world but lately, there have been serious attempts to modify the religion by a process known as rationalisation and an imposition of a moral creed which it is feared will essentially divert the stress away from spirituality leading to the imposition of an alien thought called secularism. The character of modern Hinduism has been explained in detail in other sections of this book.

The Hindu equivalent of the Christian credo of Love your enemy is Love all even your enemy. Hinduism does not need the imagery of a cross to draw compassion for the individual nailed on it. One could argue, that did not Buddha die for humanity every time he reincarnated. Hinduism does not draw the emotion of compassion from a violent act to project something that does not necessarily be violent based. Love is the emotion of creation, encapsulated in the verse from the Gita Chapter 12, verse 13–14 “Advasta serva Bhutanam”. Agitational approach by employing children like Greta Thunborn in climate change campaign in the adult world is a reminder of the tactics employed in the middle ages when women were in the forefront

of civilian agitations and violent expeditions exemplified by the Crusades and the Muslim onslaught (Ref. not known). This attitude is suggestive of an absence of personal convictions pertaining to the cause they espoused. This should never be the way for the Hindus to adopt and children should never be in the forefront of agitations. But then, there is no place for virtue both as a term and sentiment in the modern world. No country in the world has been able to counter the virtual assault by massive regressive propaganda, poisoning the minds of the young around the world. The young need counselling at the age of 16–18 years when they possess an idealistic bent of mind and have not developed the quality of cynicism. This assault may be regarded as the second wave by the dominating West against the pagan world. The ingredients of this deadly assault include the destruction of native cultures by universalism, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, and secularism. The dominant culture of the world has Christian overtones and as a consequence, the conversion of minds is complete among second-generation Hindus especially those born and bred in the West. The Hindus in the West possess no defence mechanism and categorise themselves as spiritualists with no religion as a means of deflecting attacks against their religion of birth. They are made aware that their survival depends on their acquiring the trait of pusillanimity and the resultant genuflection to a well-projected self-acclaimed superior culture.

## **The Philosophical History of Bharat**

Expounding on the essentials of Dharma, Sister Nivedita<sup>75</sup> precludes it as representative of religion. Rather, it is an essential quality, “the unfluctuating, permanent core of substance – the manness of man, the lifeness of life.” It could be translated to the English language as national righteousness. She continues with her description of Dharma as a whole system of complex action, and interaction which extends to encompass moral, intellectual, industrial, economic, political and domestic realms which is generally regarded as the national habit of and an entity known as Bharat. It is these very values that the dying Bhishma lays down for those future sovereigns of India to follow implicitly. Dharma is not a concept with elements that are implanted core beliefs/thoughts at the center with nebulous precepts at the periphery which qualify for the definition of a

religion. Dharma is not sectarian in that sense as religion is and from the point of brevity, we shall skip the accusation of Nivedita as falsely interpreting history that pitted Hinduism against Islam from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Until then, she provides several examples of camaraderie and toleration among the communities. (Why she chose to ignore the Muslim atrocities on the Hindus over many centuries, is a question that remains unanswered) She goes on to explain that the differences between these two essentially concern, purificatory rites, and modes of domestic worship rather than religious or doctrinal. There has been a renewed interest in knowing and chronicling India's history originating from a philosophical idea. This has also been highlighted by Sister Nivedita. She writes that the basis of Indian thought is deeply grounded in the foundation of human evolution which helped her to add to the superstructure, newer points in India's historic development. She refers to the constitutional ceremonies in the kingdom of Travancore, which she regards as clear indications of a transition from the Dravidian matriarchal pattern to the patriarchal system. She provides many other interesting examples which would be valuable in recording here. She recaptures for our benefit the annual village worship of the heroic figures from the great epic the Mahabharata. In these rituals, common to all of South India, great efforts are taken to re-establish and reinforce the people's connection to the heroes of the national Epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata such as Bhishma and Yudhishtira. The firing of gunpowder in the temples in the South after the completion of the ritual is proof of its origins based on aggressive orthodoxy. But this practice continues despite new additions without fear of being replaced. A popular superstition of the East which stands unchanged is the belief among the children that the stars are motionless. Nivedita continues that every saint, sage, and poet continues to add some new belief and thought to the massive pre-existent pile. There is no rigid doctrine that comes in the way of such incorporations. Thoughts that convey so much meaning due to the inherent wisdom contained in them are as much expressed in the native regional languages and dialects as they are in that majestic classic Sanskrit. Sanskrit contains Hindu India's dominating culture though it does not in anyway compete with the additions to this culture from the expressions of Chaitanya of Bengal, the Ten Sikh Gurus, Ram Das, Tukaram in Maharashtra and Saint Ramanuja from the South. Each one of these great poet philosophers during their time represented the embodiment of national philosophy which

had its basis in common life. Each one of these saints is held in veneration as an incarnation by the masses who see in each one of them, their own revelation and their powers. Each one of these saints founded a church which became a nation. Thus arose the Mahratta confederacy and the kingdom of Lahore. A similar example is the origin of Islam in faraway Arabia. The origins of these nations are based on a Law which is common to Asiatic life as a whole. The Hindu world in its entirety is inseparable from the highest philosophy, inscribed in Hinduism on which it is grounded. If one considers Vedantic philosophy, it could be said that it is the rhetorical aspect of the synthesis of all the elements of common life. This remains an exquisite description of the origins of Vedantic philosophy which has advanced in such simple terms by Sister Nivedita. Even the most unlettered idolatrous seeming peasant will talk if questioned about the immanence of God. He is aware of the meanings of words such as Prarabdh (destiny), and Prapancham (the World). A Hindu peasant as a result does not find it inconvenient or embarrassed to accept the missionary's belief that there is but one Supreme. Nivedita fears the consequences that would follow if one generation is divorced from the knowledge of Sanskrit which has great import to the Hindus. It has become prophetic in that this great language has almost been banished from most Hindu homes and there are concerted moves afoot to ban it as a medium of worship in Tamil Nadu temples and replace it with Tamil incantations and hymns in an effort to project Tamil supremacy. She asks other questions like what is the actual dynamic force existing at a given moment in the Hindu people. Lastly, she asks what are the characteristic ideas that are now an inbred habit that extends past the reach of authority to provide evidence of earth-shaking events. These questions can only be answered by the genius of minds. She provides the example of Buddhism which might provide what the answers might be. Buddhism was the name given to Hinduism during the first few centuries of the Christian era (this cannot be validated easily) as a result of the trigger by certain foreign consciousness. What authority did it claim or the explanations of the physical universe it offered or of the soul or evil? Finally, what did it offer to humanity as the goal of the ethical struggle? Since there was no Buddhism that preceded Hinduism, the answers to the above questions would necessarily have to be sought from the latter. The answers, it would stand to reason be variants of ideas from the stock of Hinduism. Though the formulations arrived at may be regarded as heresy, the

testimonies can certainly not be dismissed as disputable. There was at no time in India a religion called Buddhism with its own temples and priests of its own order.

There was a tendency to propagate and popularise truths that were thought fit to be imbibed only for the learned. In addition, there was admiration and veneration for a towering personality which was unofficial and popularising thoughts attributed to him. One such individual was Chaitanya in Bengal. There was a vast kingdom with centralised organisation that was coherent with grand architectural marvels which were temples primarily used for worship. This imperial dispensation was aware of the geographical contours of West and East India, and these huge temples were built in a bid to unify and elevate the status of people and adorn the land. The Indian Empire had established relations with Egypt, Syria, China, and Japan, to which it sent ambassadors, missionaries, and merchants. It provided for high-quality civic amenities within its territories and passed legislation calling for the cessation of violence towards dumb creatures. The Protestant Reformation was a movement that resulted in the release of the mental energy of the masses from the thralldom of the church. As a result of which, there was an efflorescence of culture and the propounding of authoritative commentaries on which modern Europe was built. The Asokan Empire had been founded, albeit almost 1700 years ago prior to the Reformation, where similar assertions had been made but not of the right of private judgment (self-defence). In India, this never required vindication. What was guaranteed was the equal right of every section of society to enter the super-social monastic life. These monks were free to go out into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. It was not only the faith and ardour of common people but also the enthusiasm of traders, merchants, and caravan servants who carried the Gospel to faraway shores, including the Empire of China, to make a permanent contribution. It was a great age, the fragments of which are available, which reflect its wealth and vigour. Nivedita has no hesitation, however unpleasant it might seem, to declare that Asoka's conversion had not been to a new Faith but only into piety of his time. Piyadasi or Asoka declared, "I, King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, obtained true intelligence ten years after my anointing". Buddhism is on a low ebb in India, and its sweep is gradually diminishing. She points to the huge monolithic temple at Ellora to reinforce her argument. She states that

on entering the Ellora caves, one is soon greeted by a huge Buddha-like figure that represents Siva, and to his right, the image portrays the triumph of Durga. Nivedita also draws our attention to the possible gap of a couple of centuries that separate the cathedral-like caves of Thin Thal, a Buddhist excavation, and of Kailash (both located in Ellora). What amazes a visitor is the solitary figure of the teaching or meditating Buddha which surrenders place to a pantheon of devas and guardian kings. Buddha still is keeping company, albeit symbolically speaking, in a later Hindu environment. She draws the conclusion from these images of a period which exhibited, through the work of art and sculpture, an expression of hope and delight. The images also portray affirmation of the demise of cosmopolitan intercourse of the Buddhist period which at a later period is noted to merge imperceptibly into the rich imagery of the Puranic age. It will be relevant to recall the social and political problems confronting Shankaracharya in the age of chivalry. The Brahmins among the Hindus and the yogis in their endeavour to hold out emancipation of the whole nature did it through self-discipline. But the Buddhists, on the other hand, were less inclined to reach the same goal by the gradual ripening of the self but chose a different path that was by withdrawing from the illusion of egoism. Nirvana became the bye-word and not Mukti though each represented one side of the same coin. Western observers saw Nirvana and Mukti as diametrically opposite values. Many theological differences were advanced to reinforce this conception but ultimately, it was the doctrine enshrined in the Gita that all religions express a single truth that held the ground. During the Upanishadic period, the conception of the Brahman had reached its finality. Brahman implied the one appearing as many, or put differently offered to the world as the concept of Maya or the illusion of things which was popularised by Buddhism. By the application of this doctrine, the Buddhists put aside the origin of evil. Both Evil and good are alike shadows on the wall which are cast by our sense of personal convenience in a magnified and distorted form. The saints swallowed in the joy of God experience neither pain, insult nor self-interest.

Another idea that the Buddhist teachers propounded and propagated was the cyclic manifestation of Cosmos. Cosmos was never created but was eternally self-existent, self-destroying, and self-repeating. This theory illustrates the immense scientific energy that has always been an inherent

component of Hindu wisdom resulting from speculation. The spirit of scientific research was inherent in the spirit of devotion. This was in stark contrast to the rigidity of doctrine and resistance of the Christian West to scientific enquiry. Indian priesthood never stood in the way of Knowledge, as it was primarily defending what may be regarded as social aberrations. Priesthood restricted itself to guarding the social system. It may be said with conviction that the much-touted Moorish science was, in fact, the result of extraction from the great Indian culture. The essential difference between Hinduism and the Buddhist religion lies in the latter's belief that the word of the blessed one himself is enough authority whereas in the former, the only proof depends on direct perception. The Vedas were written by virtue of direct perception by seers and sages which authenticate their authority (Vedas). The scriptural texts were written following the realisation that was experienced by the seers and sages. The Jains, for their part, do not either validate or accept the Vedas as embodying the sense of eternal truth. But there is not much divergence between Jainism and all other Hindu sects as would appear on the surface. These great worthies using a common language and the historic acceptance of the Race pronounce, "By the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different people in different times".

The Vedas, which are regarded by Indians as holding profoundly true wisdom in addition to being eternal, are but one part of two classes of Scripture, the other one is called Puranas. The Puranas include stories of creation and destruction of the world, tales of life and death, of holy persons and avatars (incarnations), testimonies of miracles and so on. They represent historicity or timelines and not scriptural instructions.

Thus, when the Christian Gospel says, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God, it speaks Veda. But when the same Gospel, contains a historic event, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king," it is a statement that allows itself for interrogation as it might contain elements of error. That the Vedas, therefore, are the sanction of all faiths, it must be reiterated on behalf of India that this fact has been ill-understood by the West. Nivedita writes that some of the greatest French and English thinkers hold the viewpoint that the history of the West is made by integrating the evolution of science and its progressive application to life's needs from the

6<sup>th</sup> century BC till the present times. These thinkers maintain that the European mind is the result of three integrative formative influences constituted by the Greek, Imperial Rome and the Catholic Church. It can be said with pride that Oriental history unlike that of the West, is that of a single living organism, of which “India may be taken as the heart and focus”. As an extension of this argument, the evolution of Indian thought is clear, continuous and as consistent as the scientific idea of the West. Indian idea should never be taken as an appendage of the West, for it would be totally demeaning to our seers and sages. Indian or Hindu thought, rightly belongs to India and contains the essential factor of human advance for the present as in the past and for all time in the future.

It cannot be denied that India is the heart of Asia and Hinduism is the end product or the finality of Indian thought. For this finality to arrive at and which is personified as a “single rhythm of its great pulsation it has taken anywhere between 1500–2000 years”. During this period, in this great civilisation great souls have lived and walked, to name the most illustrious among the many thousands, Buddha, Shankaracharya and Ramakrishna. The wisdom and the pile of knowledge that is available to mankind is made up of the contribution of these greats and its crowning glory has been the attainment of self-consciousness. Nothing can be said of the prehistoric period preceding the great Mahabharata war which happened in Great India as only shreds of testimony and evidence are available to us. All that is left as Nivedita<sup>75</sup> writes is the legend of Rama and Sita. The heroic age as it can be called must surely have been long, and one of the fragments of this age that remains with us is the greatest hymns written ever, the Rig Veda. Nivedita bases her premises on the nature and content of available scholarship of salaried European chroniclers and Indologists primarily Max Mueller. The premise is that the composers of the hymns had inhabited the vast prairies of Central Asia for several millennia. It was a period when a great world civilisation arose, erected by the Aryan man from which the well spring of human wisdom flowed to be absorbed universally. It was a period of man’s first engagement (Nivedita calls it combat; that was perhaps how harsh nature was) with nature when he domesticated animals, made farming tools, grew corn, made fire, planted fruit trees and most importantly divided the week. The struggle to survive and sustain life was not tad but herculean and the Rig Veda gave a poetic form to his sublime

dreams of which only fragments remain with us. The first Veda must surely have been the source of inspiration for the great poet Kalidasa whose poetry reveals the wide outlook he and the early bards had in the perception of nature. They made the distinction for the first time between morning and evening on the first day and it remains unknown as to how long the duration of a single day lasted. Ten thousand years or another five thousand years before the Great War (Mahabharata) asks Nivedita. Nivedita appears fascinated by B.G. Tilak's book, "The Arctic Home in the Vedas", even while acknowledging the revolutionary ideas expressed in this book that the Vedas were not written in Central Asia nor the Vedic culture acquired here but in the Arctics. But she didn't seem sanguine in accepting Tilak's theory as beyond question. In other words, it may have been a wrong postulation based on wrong assumptions. (The theory pertaining to the Central Asian origins of the Vedic man and his migration to the sub-continent or the categorisation of what connotes an Aryan have since been contradicted by modern scholarship. So also, the Arctic theory which stands discredited.)

There can be no doubt that the major works, namely, the Sutras and the Upanishads which are the products of the great civilisation, emanated from the Gurukulas or forest universities. These constitute the corpus made from what in modern parlance may be called tutorials and didactics, of the later Hindu philosophical thought which was transmitted through both the oral and written traditions. The Vedas were scrutinised by society and the result of the accumulated wisdom led to its reverential and sympathetic interpretations which are now known as the Laws of Manu. The Hindu was not rest content, short of reaching the stage of infinite thought. A proof of this attitude can be offered by citing the early Rig Vedic hymn, "When darkness was hidden, undistinguished like one mass of water". These are the opening lines of the Anthem of Creation. The sweep of the Upanishads which points to the infinity of thought is even larger and is exemplified in the following verse, "They that see the Real in the midst, they know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs eternal peace-unto none else, unto none else". Even if the modern Hindu is unwilling to accept the occupation of India by the early Aryan, it would not be wrong to state that the Vedas were the asset and capital of the early inhabitant of the subcontinent which he gave himself, "an Aryan culture" (Aryan in this context represents virility and is not racial as is

misinterpreted). Nivedita's interpretation of the evolution of Vedic wisdom is immaculate and lucid. She states that in the various periods of rejuvenation that have happened to Indian culture, be it due to the infusion by Shankaracharya's ideals or those contributions from smaller movements brought about by Guru Nanak or Ramanuja, a need was always felt to go back to the basics, the forest sutras enunciated in the ancient Gurukulas so as to maintain structural continuity. She suspects that the initial vigour provided by Vedic inspiration (first period) would have ebbed by the time of the Mahabharata War. A renewed impetus, a restoration of pristine vigour was injected by the force representing Sri Krishna's personality (second period). Nivedita captures very eloquently the imagery of the twilight period during the last days of the Vedic period which merges with the pre-Buddhistic age. The twilight resonated with the sounds of the Vedic chants and prayers. But the succeeding epochs saw the destruction of the civilisation leading to migration to pastures anew. The ballads and songs of the people from towns and villages had different contents, which crystallised finally into the great Epics. The Indian environment was peculiar, in that it reflected religious activity "stirred by the sublime spectacle of life" that represents the Upanishadic culture. A national dream evolved based on the innate religious ideas of the masses. Nivedita continues with her masterly analysis of the evolution of the Hindu religion with a sudden emphasis on pilgrimages and relic worship. Meanwhile, the Brahmins directed their intelligence and accumulated wisdom to activities other than Vedic chanting and seeking knowledge. They became increasingly preoccupied with the interpretation of images, symbols, and rituals which had earlier formed the basis of the first realisation of the race (atma jnana, of the true self). This period has been assigned the term Buddhist period which to a great extent was indicative of achievements in the political, economic, and commercial fields and in creative activities such as letters, arts, and sciences. (Synthesis of Indian Thought). It is speculated that there may have been some evil notions that would have penetrated undiscovered into the train of national thought (consciousness/genius) and became embedded in the fabric of Hinduism. Meanwhile, monastic notions took hold as a reaction to these changes which in turn drew national energy out from safe paths of domestic virtue. Depletion of morality led to its disintegration which adversely affected the values ingrained in family life. It was to counter these vicarious and

perverse tendencies that the song of the ideal made its first appearance in a poem, "Birth of The War God" penned by Kalidasa. He followed this venture by immortalizing the love of Sita for Sri Rama in the final revised recension of the Ramayana. His poem glorified wifehood before which the power of calling to renunciation and faith grew weak. During the closing centuries of the Buddhist age, looking at purely from the point of view of the purity of doctrine, it will be seen that there were no restrictions to the ingress of all kinds of religious ideas. In fact, these were welcomed and this led to the addition of multiplicity of religious symbols adding to those already in existence. Additionally, there was a tendency to lay emphasis on popular notions. But virulent agitation against such abuses was never a feature of Hinduism. It always offered a counter to these penetrations in moments of crisis by lifting the banner of the highest ideal. Even when organic law is established in a nation, the law of avatars still holds ground. The Bhagavad Gita says, "Whenever dharma decays, and when that which is not dharma prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the establishment of national righteousness, I am born again and again". Never has a prophecy been more conclusively validated than by the birth of Adi Sankara. This wonderful young man was born at around the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE (this is open to questioning). He completed his mission on earth at the age of 32 years when most men are still dreaming of a bright future. The product of oriental culture is always a commentary, a form of literature whereby the future is linked to the past. This link is the dynamic power that is not appreciated and remains obscure to the Westerner but is well understood in all its details by the Eastern mind. European Protestantism may be described as a commentary on Christian sacred literature. The Sanskrit sutras lend themselves to critical writing a demand which is addressed; the word sutra means literally a thread. The characteristics of a sutra are unique in that, it is applied to works that are only the main crux of a given argument and require expansion at the end of each sentence. This manner of writing has to conform to literary convention as is the case in the Orient and was probably employed at a time when the main function of writing was to assist in memorizing. The main purpose of writing a commentary was to reconcile by re-adjustment a given question and the whole of the current opinion. It should not come as a surprise that the high point of Sankara's life was a commentary on the "Vedanta Sutra." There were problems that the Indian

mind faced during his time which have a curious resemblance to contemporary times and his perception acquired national dimensions. The only exception, was that India at this time was rich and prosperous. But Sankara found that religious practices had lost their primitive simplicity and also their compelling power. Ideas as to what was orthodox and unorthodox had become indistinct. The Hindu faith had been divided by sectarianism and there was clear evidence to prove that it had lost sight of that austere imperative which had been one of its characteristics. There was dilution in the approach to the highest realization, to the antiquity of the faith and its seamless continuity with it. Sankara decried crass idolatry and was disappointed at the ritualistic worship of Goddess Lakshmi the goddess of wealth among other deities. Kingdoms and Sects were pitted against each other and there was an erosion of mutual solidarity. Never before has an Asiatic traditional society precipitated itself towards a secular development as it happened during Sankara's lifetime.

Amid all the brilliance and opulence of the period, the national genius found in Adi Sankara a redeemer whose soul was captivated by the charm and dynamism of the Vedic chants, its ancient rhythm assisting the soul to super consciousness. His intense love for the Vedas fired his fervour, leading to composing hymns exuding shades of classic beauty and vigour. His books equally may be described as "chains of quotations from the most piercing and comprehensive sentences of the Upanishads, to which he has contributed links and rivets". During his short life, he wandered as a minstrel from the deep South up as far as the Himalayas. Despite his aversion to many different types of worship, he accepted the same with grace. This was the result of his acknowledging the doctrine of One without Second which to him was not only the Vedic but also the Puranic goal. This doctrine is the central theme of his twelve epoch masking commentaries with the crowning glory, the commentary on the Vedantic Sutra. This central idea is what is known as the Advaita philosophy and represents the basis for the rest of the period of Hinduism, the actual unity of India. (How can it be anything else?) Nivedita provides a pen picture of Adi Sankara and in doing so wonders if Western people can imagine a personality such as Shankaracharya. In a matter of a few years, to establish ten great religious orders out of which four survive is indeed truly an extraordinary achievement rarely possible in the annals of the history of mankind. He

acquired such immense and deep knowledge of Sanskrit that he created a distinct philosophy that caught not only the scholarly imagination but also the serious attention of the people of India. Such has been the impact of this unique philosophy that even 1200 years after it was expounded, it has retained its pre-eminence and has withstood the vicissitudes inflicted by alien thoughts, the most recent of which is westernised secularism. Sankara wrote some of the most eclectic poems suffused with grandeur which did not fail to move even the foreign and the unlearned. He was a simple monk who lived an austere life with his disciples radiating joy around him. He exuded the simple pathos of saints, a greatness that one might easily appreciate but not comprehend. Nivedita is all adulation for this great saint who in one frame embodied, Francis of Assisi's devotion, possessed of Abelard's intellect, the force and freedom of Martin Luther and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola. All these attributes were united in this great saint, Adi Shankaracharya.

Critics who followed him have been vocal in their condemnation of Sankara as a persecutor of the Buddhists. It is far from the truth given that he only asserted a coordination of mythologies and doctrines instead of preaching a single exclusive method of salvation as Buddhism does. His goal was an affirmation of the positive and not the negative. He was ever insistent on highlighting the worthlessness of rituals shorn of their inherent philosophy of worship without illumination. If this may indeed be true he may at once place himself in opposition to one school of thought or another. This contrived enmity had all the hallmarks of a political conspiracy whereas he was just another monk in the mould of their own (Buddhist) Nagarjuna. He was not a persecutor but a great, inspired religious teacher in the long line that Bharat has given to mankind. If Buddhist philosophy is the creation of the lay mind of the people by contrast, the work of Sankara was the realigning and linking of the popular practice to the theory of the Brahman. It merged the mythological fancies with Upanishadic doctrine. He put afresh, definitions of commonly used terms in Hinduism like maya, karma, reincarnation and added a new meaning to these which remain with us to the present times. He was recognized as a great personality due to his own power, character and attributes which was in perfect unison with the aspirations and thoughts of those inhabiting the holy land of Bharat.

The events that followed two or three centuries after his departure are worth recapturing for the benefit of the succeeding generations. This period is pronounced as the dark ages of Indian history. The expression is used deliberately as it is not known as in what sense this period was named, the origins being obscure. The annals of the contemporary bards of the Rajput lineage bear testimony to a highly chivalrous age. It is highly recommended that these events which happened during these three centuries during Rajput reign are read and contemplated upon by younger generation of Indian historians. Wars which were fought between the kingdoms were never destructive and it has been the case that these battles were highly chivalrous in character and oriental military history tells us that the life and limb of the non-combatants were always secured. This reinforces the values ingrained in the art and doctrine of war based on the doctrine of Dharma. Nivedita refers to the lives of the water carriers and commissariat servants which were scrupulously respected in Asiatic warfare. She presents the typical example of a European gypsy whose Asian origins are not contested. These once-happy beings were camp followers of Asiatic armies who set a bazaar in half an hour wherever an army camp was pitched. They carried on their business activities and trade without any let or hindrance. They traded their wares independently of the warring protagonists and their caste honour meant abstaining from sharing with neither side the secrets of the other. When Genghis Khan invaded Hungary, he carried them there and left them behind, never to return, a tragedy which needs highlighting.

Preceding the formulation of the Geneva Convention which ensured the rights of the prisoners of war, similar guarantees were extended by law to the Red Cross sisterhood of Europe. A similar consideration prevailed with regard to the peasant working in the fields and a craftsman working on his anvil. A war fought under such considerations could be compared to a deadly form of tournament that involves only those fighting and nobody else. As an extension of this logic, it can be said that if wars are not destructive, equally they cannot instill in the minds of the citizenry the spirit of the common duty of military defence. Nivedita is unequivocal and unambiguous in her emphasis on a common war cry to rally a nation, the right of struggle irrespective of caste. The result could only be achieved if the war cry is based on a religious idea. Tragically for the Hindus their aspiration for a nationality remains unaccomplished and has been diluted by

the consequences of the Mohammedan invasions which insinuated itself to become a component of a nationality and thus arrived in modern India.

The powerful Advaitic philosophy enunciated by Adi Sankara swept around the country in a whirlwind fashion. It produced great philosopher saints, namely, Madhavacharya, Ramanuja, Ram Das and Tuakaram, the Sikh Gurus and Gauranga (Chaitanya). Wherever this spirit met with Muslim consciousness chiefly by means of a contest, it resulted in the creation of a well-centred nation. Where such an engagement did not occur as in Bengal of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the nascent sense of national existence remained, to retain its potential. As regards the deep South which did not come in contact with Mohammedanism, the spiritual energy let loose by Shankaracharya did not succeed in evoking a sense of nationality. Nivedita's reading of the Indian circumstances cannot be left uncontested given that, she believes, the advent of Islam in the post-Shankaracharya period cannot be regarded only as a revolutionary invasion since there was no replacement of the Asiatic modes by an alien culture. She does attest to the long-held European belief that since the Asokan period, if there was a centralized government it had only been during the Muslim rule. She adds that nothing in India changed and the new forces did not show any tendencies to reduce its children to the position of agricultural serfs or tenants. Such a position assumed by her becomes untenable given the accounts of many court chroniclers of the Mughal era. She goes on to almost trivialize frequent Muslim assaults on Hindus as athletic contests among brothers rather than as conquests. She buttresses her arguments by advancing the theory that the victor in this case never attempted to exclude due to creedal distinctions, individuals from office nor were attempts made to create invidious distinctions.

Inclusiveness which is at the core of Hindu doctrine has not been impaired by clearness and the attribute of self-consciousness that have been added to it, extracted from the Muslim dogmas. India had the fortune of throwing another great personality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Ramakrishna Paramahansa which can be regarded as a feature new in its renewing national development. The sanyasis of the order created in his name, believed that he stood for synthesis of all possible ideals and all possible shades of thought. Nivedita is clear in her elucidation of the ideals of this order. She writes that

the Hindu flesh is clothed by the philosophy enunciated by Shankaracharya which makes everyone aware of the sufficiency of one creed or conception to lead the soul to God as its true goal. But Ramakrishna's doctrine which is a reformed formulation does not believe as true, that each form of life or worship is tolerated by the Hindu mind; the modified thought lays emphasis on the justification of each form, welcomed, set up for its passionate loving, forevermore. Henceforth in a manner of admonishing the Hindus, she issues forth a warning that a follower of any sect, whether orthodox or modern, philosophic or popular who indulges in criticism of any other as if it were without the bounds of the "Eternal Faith" will be regarded as a supreme crime.

(Point to Ponder: A great achievement on the part of the drafters of the Constitution of India is to have incorporated this profound Vedantic thought into it. It has become a one-way traffic that applies only to the Hindus.) "Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to error", becomes in the future the formula that constitutes belief.

As if in a manner of the fulfillment of a prophecy, a great disciple of the Master (God) would declare on behalf of the nation that the final differentia/distinguishing mark of Hinduism lay in the acceptance of the doctrine of Ishta Devata, i.e., the right of every man to choose his, and none to force the same choice on any other, from own creed. This disciple was Adi Sankara. Sister Nivedita does not expect that all Hindus would endorse her views based on the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, her gurus and accept their formulations just described as constituting Hinduism. What is it that constitutes Indian thought as per Nivedita's understanding? It is revealed in its entirety she claims, that it recognizes no sect, but is a synthesis, no church but a universality of spiritual culture as an idea of individual freedom. Certain conceptions such as the theory of maya, karma and mukthi, or the beatific vision which have been popularised by Buddhism also find resonance in the teachings of Adi Sankara and the great Sufis. Nowhere is there a mention that these form the essentials of Indian thought nor does it expect conforming to. Such a freedom allows for a Sufi to call himself a Hindu in equal measure as a temple priest or the most learned Sanskrit pundit is permitted to. It would be wrong she adds to read the history of Hindu Muslim engagement purely from the point of view of a

struggle as a result of the influence of faith on politics which is a European conception. It was a painful episode in the annals of our Dharmic civilization between Sankara's time and the nineteenth century when the Mohammedan element was included to derive a completed Nationality. [Points to Ponder: Few if none would be instances in other civilizations where a ruler has given up his throne to acquire the knowledge related to reality and be blessed as a result by mukthi. There are several examples where in Hindu India leading government functionaries overseeing the administration of their respective kingdoms decided to abandon their positions to pursue the highest goal of life, moksha. Of those who come readily to mind are Manikkavasagar, a cavalry commander and a minister to the Pandyan King Varagunavarman II. The Maharaja himself readily gave up his kingdom and the throne and became enlightened after Lord SIVA made him realize his small worldly mistakes. According to Ramana Maharshi, when Manikkavasagar attained mukthi, his body dissolved in a blinding light without leaving behind a corpse. The other personage who gave up worldly activities to devote himself to the service of Lord Siva was the Brahmin prime minister in Kulothunga Chola II's kingdom, Sekkilan Ramadeva who penned the last canonical Tamil Text which is called the Periyapuram or the grand narrative on the lives of 63 Saivaite saints. Manikkavasagar's contribution to Saivaite scriptural texts is formed by the eight volumes of Tirumurai. Both Manikkavasagar and Sekkilan were canonised and are venerated as Saivite saints.] (Reference; Sister Nivedita; THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE, [www.ForgottenBooks.com](http://www.ForgottenBooks.com))

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