

The History of Bharatvarsha

Bhadra 1309 Bengal Era (August 1903)

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The history of India that we read and memorize for our examinations is really a nightmarish account of India. Some people arrive from somewhere and the pandemonium is let loose. And then it is a free-for-all: assault and counter-assault, blows and bloodletting. Father and son, brother and brother vie with each other for the throne. If one group condescends to leave, another group appears, as if, out of the blue; Pathans and Mughals, Portuguese and French and English together have made this nightmare ever more and more complex.

But if Bharatavarsha is viewed with these passing frames of dreamlike scenes, smeared in red, overlaid on it, the real Bharatavarsha can not be glimpsed. These histories do not answer the question where were the people of India? As if, the people of India did not exist, only those who maimed and killed alone existed.

It is not that these bloodletting and carnage were the most important things in Bharatavarsha even in those miserable days. Despite its roar, the storm can not be regarded as the most important event in a stormy day. In that day too, with sky overcast with dust, it is the flow of life and death and of happiness and sorrow that moves on in the countless village-homes, even though beclouded, which is the most important thing for man. But to an alien passer-by the storm is the most important thing; the cloud of dust devours everything else from his view. For, he is not inside the home, he is outside. This is why in the history narrated by the foreigners we get the accounts of the dust, of the storms, but we do not get even a word about the homes. These histories make you feel that at that time Bharatavarsha did not exist at all; as though, only the howling whirlwind of the Pathans and Mughals holding aloft the banner of dry leaves has been moving round and round across the country from north to south and east to west.

However, while the lands of the aliens existed, there also existed the indigenous country. Otherwise, in the midst of all the turbulence who gave birth to the likes of Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, and Tukaram? It was not that only Delhi and Agra existed then, there were also Kasi and Navadvipa. The current of life that was flowing then in the real Bharatavarsha, the ripples of efforts rising there and the social changes that were taking place, the accounts of these are not found in our history textbooks.

But it is with the Bharatavarsha, which lies outside our textbooks, that we have our real ties. If the history of this tie for a substantially long period gets lost our soul loses its anchorage. After all, we are no weeds or parasitical plants in India. Over many hundreds of years, it is our roots, hundreds and thousands of them, which have occupied the very heart of Bharatavarsha. But, unfortunately, we are obliged to learn a brand of history that makes our children forget this very fact. It appears that in India, as if, we are nobody; as if, those who came from outside alone matter.

From which quarter can we derive our life-sustenance when we learn that our tie with our own country is so insignificant? In such a situation we feel no hitch whatsoever in installing others' countries in place of our own. We become incapable of feeling a mortifying sense of shame at the indignity of Bharatavarsha. We effortlessly keep on saying that we did not have anything worth the name in the past and thus we have to now beg for everything, from food and clothing to conduct and behaviour, from foreigners.

The countries, which are fortunate, find the everlasting image of their land in the history of their country. It is the history that serves as the introduction to one's own country during one's childhood itself. In our case it is just the opposite thing that happens. It is the history of our country that has kept our own land obscured to us. From the invasion of Mahmud to the arrogant imperial declaration of Lord Curzon, that is, all the historical annals till yesterday, are only a mass of strange mist for Bharatavarsha. These accounts do not help clarity of vision about our motherland. In fact, these only serve to cloud it. These accounts throw a beam of artificial light on such a spot that in our own eyes the very profile of our country is made dark. And in that darkness the illumination of the pleasure chamber of the Nawab makes the dancing girl's diamond ornaments gleam and the purple froth of the wineglass of the Badshah appears as the bloodshot sleepless eyes of excess and dissipation. In that darkness our ancient temples cover their heads and the peaks of the tombs of Sultans sweethearts fashioned in white marble and embellished with gorgeous craftsmanship haughtily bids to kiss the world of stars. The sound of galloping horses, the trumpet of elephants, the clanking of weapons, the wavy grey of the vast array of army camps, the velvet covers flashing golden rays, the foamy bubble-shaped domes of masjids, the eerie hush of that abode of mystery – the inner apartments of the royal palaces with eunuch guards keeping vigil over them – the ensemble of all these strange sounds and colours and sentiments produce an enormous magical world in that darkness. What is the point in calling this as the history of Bharatavarsha? All these have kept the Indian ancient text of eternal and beatific value (punyamantra) covered within the jacket of an Arabian-nights romance. Nobody any longer opens that book; and our children commit to memory every line of the Arabian-nights romance. And later, on the eve of its dissolution, as the Mughal Empire lay dying, it signaled the beginning of a spate of deception, treachery and murder among, as though, a group of vultures coming from afar and descending on the crematorium. Is an account of this too the real history of Bharatavarsha? And then began the English rule with its five-yearly divisions like the crisscross houses on the chessboard. Bharatavarsha is even smaller there. In fact, the only difference it has with the chessboard is that here houses are not evenly distributed between black and white; here ninety percent are only white. For the sake of just a morsel of food we are now buying everything, from good governance to good legal system to good education, from a huge 'Whiteway Ledle Store'. All other shops are now closed. May be, that from courts to commerce, everything relating to this concern is 'good', but in it in a corner of its clerical office the space assigned to Bharatavarsha is awfully small.

The superstition that history has to be similar in all countries must be abandoned. The person who has become hardboiled after going through the biography of Rothschild, while dealing with the life of Christ is likely call for his account books and office diary. And if he fails to find them then he will form a very poor opinion of Christ and would say: 'A fellow who was not worth even a nickel, how come, he can have a biography?' Similarly, those who give up all hope of Indian history because they fail to find the royal genealogies and accounts of the conquests and defeats in the 'Indian official record room' and say: 'How can there be any history when there is no politics?' are like people who look for aubergine in paddy fields. And when they do not find it there, in their frustration they refuse to count paddy as a variety of grains of at all. All fields do not yield the same crop. One who knows this and thus looks for the proper crop in the proper field is a truly wise person.

An examination of Christ's account book may lead one to form a poor opinion of him, but when one inquires into other aspects of his life the account books become utterly irrelevant. Similarly, if we view from a special perspective with the full knowledge that in matters of politics Bharatavarsha has been deficient, this deficiency can not be dismissed as of no consequence. By not viewing Bharatavarsha from Bharatavarsha's own perspective, since our very childhood we learn to demean her and in consequence we get demeaned ourselves. An English boy knows that his ancestors had won many wars, had conquered many lands and had done extensive trade and commerce. He too

wants to be an heir to the glory of war, of wealth, of success in commerce. We learn that our ancestors did not conquer other countries and did not extend trade and commerce. To make just this fact known is the very purpose of the history of India. What our ancestors did, this we do not know; therefore we also do not know what we ought to aim for. Therefore we have to imitate others. Whom should we blame for this? The way we get our education since our very childhood, with every passing day, we get increasingly alienated from our own country till a sense of rebellion against the land of our birth overtakes our mind.

Even the educated people in our country are often dismayed and are found asking every now and then, 'What do you mean by our country? What distinctive attitude marks it out? Where is that located now? Where was it located before?' We can not have answer to these merely by raising questions. Because the issue is so subtle and so vast that it can not be comprehended through mere arguments. Neither the English nor the French, or for that matter, the native of no country can answer in one word the question: what is the distinctive attitude of one's own country or where is the real location of its spirit? Like the life inside the body this spirit is a directly perceptible reality. And like the life it is extremely difficult to fathom through logical definitions. Since the very childhood it enters our being through diverse avenues in diverse forms; and it finds passage into our knowledge, our love, our imagination. With its wonderful powers it unobtrusively fashions us; it does not allow the growth of a barrier separating our past from the present. It is by the grace of it that we are not delimited, we are not atomized. How can we give expression in a few words of logical precision to this primordial and hidden spirit endowed with wonderful vigour to satisfy the skeptic inquirer?

What is the chief significance of Bharatavarsha? If a precise answer to this question is sought, the answer is available. And the history of Bharatavarsha upholds that answer. We find that a single objective has always been motivating Bharatavarsha. This objective has been to establish unity among diversity, to make various paths move towards one goal, to experience the One-in-many as the innermost reality, to pursue with total certitude that supreme principle of inner unity that runs through the differences. It has also been her endeavour to achieve these without destroying the distinctions that appear in the external world.

The ability to perceive this oneness in diversity and to strive to extend unity are the native characteristics of Bharatavarsha. It is this quality that has made her indifferent to political glory. For, it is the mode of conflict that forms the basis of political achievements. Those who do not wholeheartedly regard others as truly outsiders can not accept the achievement of political glory as the supreme goal of life. The urge that impels one to establish oneself against others is the foundation of political achievement. And the endeavour to form communion with others, and the effort to harmonize divergences and contradictions within one's own fold are the basis of ethical and social advancement. The kind of unity that the European Civilization has opted for is discord-centered; the kind of unity that Bharatavarshiya Civilization has opted for is concord-centered. Although the noose of discord that the political unity of European kind wears around its neck is able to keep it arrayed in a tight pull against others, it is unable to provide harmony to its own self. And because of this, the antagonism and distance between man and man, between rulers and the ruled, between the rich and the poor are constantly kept alive. It is not that these various sections carry in harmony the whole society together with their distinctive roles in their respective spheres. In fact, they remain mutually antagonistic. The constant and ever alert effort of each section is to try its utmost to prevent the increase of power of other groups. Where everybody is thus engaged in pressing and jostling, equilibrium of power is not possible. There numerical strength acquires ascendancy over excellence and collective accumulation of wealth from commerce overwhelms the householders' savings. Thus the social equilibrium is lost. And in an attempt to keep these mutually antagonistic and repugnant parts somehow cobbled together, the government keeps on enacting law after law. This is inevitable; for, when discord is the seed, the harvest too would only be discord.

The well-nourished and luxuriant thing that is seen in between is only the sprightly and strong tree bearing the fruit of discord.

Bharatavarsha has endeavoured to knit together in ties of relationships diverse elements, even if these elements are disparate. Where there are real differences, it is only by ordering the differences and assigning the differences their proper places and by reining them in can unity be really achieved. By enacting a law to the effect that henceforth everybody is united does not bring about unity. The only way to knit together in ties of relationships those that can not be unified is to distribute them over different areas of special preserves. If the incompatibles are artificially forced into a unity, through force again they split. And the breakup is accompanied by shattering events. Bharatavarsha knew the secrets of integration. The French Revolution had the haughtiness to think that it would wipe off all differences among men with blood. But it has produced the very opposite results. In Europe, the rulers and the ruled, the wealthy and the common people, all the repositories of power, are gradually becoming fiercely antagonistic to each other. The goal of Bharatavarsha too had been to tie everybody in a bond of unity; but the method she adopted was different. Bharatavarsha tried to delimit and demarcate each of the antagonistic and competitive forces of the society and make the body- social fit for both functional unity as well as diversities of occupations. She did not allow conflict and disorder to remain ever active by giving room to constant attempts at overstepping the area of one's own rights. She has not made the duties and works, the home and the hearth and everything else subject to a terrible vortex of sullied directionlessness by driving all the energy of the society to the single path of twenty-four hour fierce competition. To discover the heart of unity and to achieve integration and to secure the space for attaining the ultimate fulfillment and liberation in peace and stability were the quests of Bharatavarsha.

The Providence has pulled in diverse people on to the lap of Bharatavarsha. Since antiquity Bharatavarsha has been provided with the opportunity to put into practice the special talent her people were endowed with. Bharatavarsha has forever been engaged in constructing with varied material the foundation of a unifying civilization. And a unified civilization is the highest goal of all human civilizations. She has not driven away anybody as alien, she has not expelled anybody as inferior, she has not scorned anything as odd. Bharatavarsha has adopted all, accepted everybody. And when so much is accepted, it becomes necessary to establish one's own code and fix regulation over the assorted collections. It is not possible to leave them unrestrained like animals fighting each other. They have to be appropriately distributed into separate autonomous divisions while keeping them bound on a fundamental principle of unity. The component might have come from outside but the arrangement and the fundamental idea behind it were Bharatavarsha's own. Europe wants to make the society safe by driving away the strangers, by decimating them. Specimen of this behaviour can be seen even now in America, in Australia, in New Zealand, in the Cape Colony. The reason for this is that they lack a proper sense of cohesion within their own social fabric. They have not been able to give appropriate places to the various communities of their own and many a limbs of their own societies have become burdensome to them. In such a situation where would they find room for outsiders? Where one's own relatives are ready to create trouble, there the outsiders would never be offered hospitality. A society that has order and has a principle of unity and where everybody has one's own demarcated place and rights, only in such a society it is easy to accommodate others as one's own. There are two ways of dealing with others: either by thrashing and killing and driving them away and thus making one's own society and civilization safe or by providing them proper places in one's own system and by disciplining them with one's own customs. While Europe by adopting the former method has kept alive its antagonism to the whole world and remaining ever ready to strike, Bharatavarsha by adopting the latter method has been trying slowly and gradually to make everybody her own. If righteousness (Dharma) deserves reverence, if righteousness is regarded as the highest ideal of human civilization, then the superiority of the method of Bharatavarsha has to be accepted.

It needs talent to make outsiders one's own. The ability to enter others' beings and the magic power of making the stranger completely one's own, these are the qualities native to genius. That genius we find in Bharatavarsha. Bharatavarsha has unhesitatingly entered other's beings, and has effortlessly accepted things from others. Bharatavarsha was not frightened at the sight of what is termed by foreigners as idolatry and did not sneer at it. Bharatavarsha has adopted even grotesque elements from communities like the Sabara, Pulinda, Vyadha, etc., and has infused her own philosophy into these elements and has given expression to her spirituality through them. Bharatavarsha has not discarded anything and has made everyone her own after accepting him or her.

It is not only in social organization, but also in the area of faith and belief we notice the same trend of the building of unity and harmony. The effort to establish harmony between knowledge, action and devotion that we see in the Gita is a trait that belongs especially to Bharatavarsha. It is impossible to translate in Indian language the expression called 'religion' that exists in Europe, for within the domain of faith Bharatavarsha has resisted the dividing of the mind. Our intellect, our belief, our conduct, all that we hold dear in this world and in the next, all of these together constitute our Dharma. Bharatavarsha has not divided the faith into the pigeonholes of 'everyday use' and 'formal occasions'. For example, the life-force that courses through various limbs of the body like hands, feet, head, stomach, etc., is really the same entity and is not divisible as the life in hand, the life in feet, and so on. Similarly, Bharatavarsha did not slice the Dharma into various pieces like the Dharma of belief, the Dharma of conduct, the Dharma of Sunday, the Dharma of other six days, the Dharma of the Church, the Dharma of the home, etc. The Dharma of Bharatavarsha is the Dharma of the entire society. It has its roots struck into the earth while its head soars into the sky. Bharatavarsha has not looked upon the roots and the top as disjointed parts. Bharatavarsha has looked upon Dharma as one magnificent tree stretching from the earth to the heavens and covering the entire life of man.

Amongst the civilizations of the world Bharatavarsha stands as an ideal of the endeavour to unify the diverse. Her history will bear this out. Amidst many travails and obstacles, fortunes and misfortunes Bharatavarsha has been seeking to experience the One in the universe as well as in one's own soul and to place that One in the variegated, to discover that One through knowledge, to establish that One through action, to internalize that One through love, to exemplify that One through one's own life. When through the study of her history we would be able to realize this everlasting spirit of Bharata, then the rupture of our present with the past will disappear.