A New Indic Consciousness Expected by Troubled World
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Nothing special happens to India, but many distressing events are happening in India. The events that are happening in India are well known: the endemic events in Kashmir, Punjab, the Northeast, plus unrest in most parts of the country; deterioration of the quality of life for the majority of the people: a serious economic crisis undermining the relative self-sufficiency of villages and regions; increasing and disturbing communalism. Part of the Hindu population is losing patience and discovers that the cliche of a boundless-tolerance and all-embracing religion undermines Hindu identity and leads to self-alienation.

Not all is negative, of course. We do not have dictatorship. Most people enjoy personal freedom, the press is relatively independent, a middle class has appeared, a certain democracy exists, groups of thinkers, artists and concerned people are increasing in quality and quantity, and first of all the deep-seated archetypes of the Indic mind are still alive.

Yet, nothing special happens to India. And this is in a double sense. Nothing special is happening because the Indian scenario is a reflection of the situation of the world at large. The world sustains an army of almost 30 million well-fed people. A civilization which feels the need of such a defensive apparatus is obviously not healthy. Over 1,200 people die daily in warfare on our 'civilized' planet. Over half of the economy of the world is linked directly or indirectly to 'defense.'

But the fact that nothing special happens to India is significant in another sense. We were given to understand, and we have reasons to believe it, that there is or was something special in the Indic civilization: the Indian subcontinent has been a land of profound wisdom, the cradle of many a culture, the inspirer of enlightened

views on man, the cosmos and the divine - many of these views have passed the test of forty centuries. And here lies the challenge to the intellectuals and the responsibility of the present-day inheritors of the Indic traditions: to overcome the inertia of the mind, and envision the human predicament under a new light.

India seems only slowly awakening from the slumber that made possible her colonization. Or should we recognize that the Indic past is like the pyramids of Egypt and the tombs of the Pharaohs? The world is unconsciously expecting that something special would happen to India, that modern India would set an example in transforming the old 'order' into a new vision of human life. If philosophy is not an empty word, if the traditions of India are not something for export or for tourists, the so-called Indic intelligentsia should not shun to study, to propose and to implement viable alternatives to the present situation.

I have suggested the word ecosophy to indicate a new awareness of the earth and to discover the revelatory character of the ecological crisis. It reveals to us something about the nature of man and cosmos. Atman still means body in the Vedas. We are earth and not only gravitate on this planet. This may not be all that we are, as atman may not be only the body, but those fundamental meanings should not be ignored.

Advaitic wisdom should provide us a clue to overcome the dilemma of religion and politics. Dualism, the separation of the two, is lethal for both. Monism, the identification of the two, provides an apparent remedy which is worse than the malady. But the advaitic relationship requires a radical questioning of the current premises. The scientific worldview also needs to be questioned about its alleged neutrality and universality. In a word, cosmetics will not do. The special contribution the world expects of India is not a better atomic accelerator or a more effective computer, but a new lifestyle, a new consciousness of the meaning of human existence and of Reality. It is this very existence which is at stake in our times.

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