

ARYAN-DRAVIDIAN SYNTHESIS: FEAR OR HOPE?

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We are living at a time when momentous changes are taking place in the world. The established order, which had so long provided the threshold of the socio-economic system in some parts of the world, has all but disappeared. The redeeming feature at this juncture is that chances of international cooperation and lasting global peace look brighter than ever before.

Yesterday's icons are becoming memories of distant and evanescent past. We are indeed on the threshold of the architecture of a global village. And to add to this is the breakneck speed of disarmament. India going nuclear and the Indo-US strategic Treaty is a significant development in South Asia. But AQKs of the world will continue to pose threat to world peace and security.

Meanwhile, the global perception of a geo-strategic constant as seen through the eyes of Mahan and Mackinder also has undergone a change. The global as well as regional concern of today is with technology, capital, resources, investment and, above all, communications. The communication super-highway, together with satellite discs spanning remotest parts of the globe, has given to countries rich and poor, developed and developing, the much needed access to the factors of production and growth.

Both Hitler and Napoleon earlier had attempted to unite Europe under German and French hegemony. But their ways were unacceptable — they were devoid of idealism. Only Verdun, Somme and Nettuno convinced the Germans and the French and later the British to take a broader look: The idea of Europe was born and cemented, as suggested by Paul Valery, by the positive-sum game of Greece plus Rome plus Christianity the Greek sense of the importance of individualism, the Roman concept of law and state and Christianity linking the church with state power. And the idea struck firm roots when French Foreign Minister suggested that the prospect for Community was to 'unite in order to live and prosper.

Bahasa Malay, on the other hand, seems to have played an important role in bringing the ASEAN countries together. Added to that was the shadow of external aggression that helped them close ranks.

Both EU and later ASEAN through cooperation in larger freedom succeeded in achieving accelerated economic growth. Today's economic prosperity of both these regions is unmatched in their history. Economic success sent mutatis

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mutandis, the divisive political issues, to the back burner. This is an achievement they don't want to sacrifice to the demons of nationalistic urges. While Franco-German cooperation forms the bedrock of EU, Malaysian-Indonesian understanding has pushed the heady days of CONFRONTASI to near oblivion.

The SAARC geographical region with one-fifth of the global population, shares overwhelmingly a leaven of homogeneity unmatched by many regions of the world. The economies of these countries, if harnessed to full potential, can become a locomotive of growth with unlimited possibility in improving the quality of life of the people of the land whose indigenous civilization predates the arrival of the Aryans.

Viewed in the above context, the proposal mooted by Bangladesh did not come a day sooner. The Dhaka Declaration adopted in 1985 at the first summit set out the future vision in unmistakable terms. Eleven years before that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman envisioned about South Asia Cooperation for mutual benefit. If there is sharp contrast between Helsinki and Palermo, with Catholicism and Protestantism reflecting on manners and styles of attitudes in Europe. South Asian countries also present a variegated mosaic of religions and attitudes. Both Europe and South Asia can trace their roots to a distant past: a culture and civilization, they can pride themselves with. Lionel Trilling admired the intricate plots in European literature because it revealed in the hum and buzz of implication. That's why many Americans including Henry James stayed on in Europe. Both Europe and South Asia have been victims of foreign and alien aggression: Huns in the 5th, Saracens in the 8th, Magyars in the 9th, Mongols in the 13th centuries and Turks in the 14th went to the west to Europe. Following the Aryans came the Huns, the Mongols, the Afghans and finally the Portuguese the French and the British — all attracted to the oriental lure.

The year when Vasco De Gama landed at Calicut on the south-west coast of India in May 1498 is an important landmark in the context of the South Asian contact with Europe and the subsequent western domination.

The French Revolution provided another significant influence in the interaction of intellectual relationship of Europe and Asia. As Panikkar said, "Negros in Haiti, Tipu in Mysore, Dutch radicals in Indonesia, all felt the ripples of this movement. Lord Wellesley's aggressive policy leading to the conquest of large areas in India was one consequence, for it was the fear of the revolutionary French that provided the main motive of his policy of conquest."

Both the Brahmin and Chinese official philosophies tended to be materialistic. We should not underestimate the mystical and metaphysical strain impacting on the people of the areas. India as the crucible of history has absorbed various influences over the centuries. The Greeks and the Kushans, instead of

influencing India became indianized. “Heliodors erected the famous pillar to Vasudeva and Menander became a devotee of the Buddha.”

South Asian history is therefore, closely linked with the history of the West. The influence of *Bhagawat Geeta*, the *Upanishads* and *Sanskrit* on the Western ethos with Islam and the Crusades playing the role of grand communicator in facilitating the efflorescence of European Renaissance is borne out by facts. In addition, the influence of the legal system (Roman Law) and the interface between literary giants like Tolstoy, Roman Rolland, Maxim Gorkey, W B Yeats on the one hand and Rabindranth Tagore, Madhusadan Dutt on the other, have been complimentary.

If we take a closer look into the history of India, our ability to understand the prevailing doubts permeating the body politic of the SAARC countries and their statecraft, secular or non-secular, will become far more easy.

Along with the existence of the civilizations of *Mohenjo Daro* and *Harappa*, we know of similar civilizations in the Sultej Valley in Rajasthan, Ahmedabad and also in the area, which now constitutes North Bengal. In the scale of civilizations, the Aryans were perhaps inferior to the people of *Mohenjo Daro*, but their more aggressive character, and their superiority in the art of warfare assured them victory over the local population.

Chandra Gupta Maurya, whose empire stretched from Afghanistan, to the borders of Bengal, received envoys from foreign kings and potentates as reported by Megasthenes. As legend has it, Alexander took away with him numerous Indian scholars, some of Bengali origin, at the behest of Aristotle, who wanted to learn more about the Indian solution to the problems of metaphysics. It is interesting to note that around 78 AD, Kanishka, a Buddhist with capital in Purushapura or modern Peshawar used a particular dress, which corresponds to the modern version of *achkan* and *pajama*, which is widely used till today in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

In India, the civilization that we inherited can be termed as an Aryan-Dravidian synthesis. It can be said that in India, and the present SAARC countries, the ancient culture is almost as extensive as civilization itself. “In ancient India the higher civilization of the pre-Aryans suffered military defeat at the hands of the invading Aryans but in time transformed the Aryan mentality itself by enriching the cultural life of the conquerors.” We have learnt from history that the Mycenaean civilization was defeated but the result was a higher Hellenic culture. The same phenomenon can be noticed in the cultural conquest by Greece. Remember the Greco-Roman arch in the European Union?

Back home in India the Muslim victory resulted in the synthesis and reconciliation of the great cultures: The emergence of Ramananda and Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and Mohiuddin Chisty is the outcome. As many historians