

India : The Fountain Source of a Perennial Culture

by the Indian Students Association
for *The Brunswickan*

The development of Indian culture can be compared to the progress of a river from its Himalayan home, through forests and wastelands, orchards and farms, villages and cities. Just as the river remains unchanged along the course of its path even after assimilating the waters of many tributaries, Indian culture shows a similar combination of unity and diversity, continuity and change. In the sequel of her long and ancient history, India has witnessed many changes, made various adjustments, and assimilated elements from innumerable sources, without breaking the continuity.

In the land of India, or Bharat or Hindusthan, as is traditionally called, about 15 major languages, with hundreds of associated dialects, are spoken within a geographical area of about 3.3 square million kms. The subcontinent is adorned with varied landscapes and climates, ranging from the spectacular jagged peaks of the Himalayan mountains, the vast pasture lands, the dense forests of Assam and the oceanic scenes surrounding the land on three sides. The climatic variations of particular regions has led to the development of different cuisine, clothing styles and even artistic forms; all unique, exclusive and splendid! Despite this apparent diversity, with people of many dispositions and tastes, it is remarkable that Indians have lived together in harmony and peace with each other, for ages, as one unique nation.

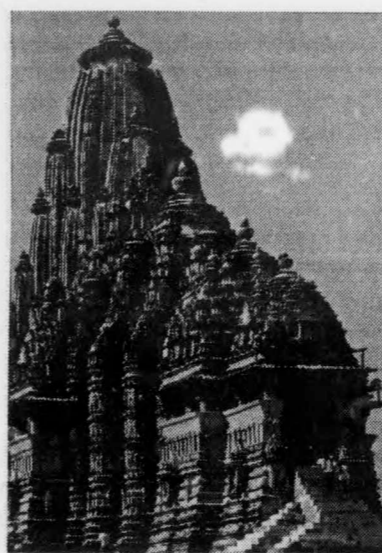
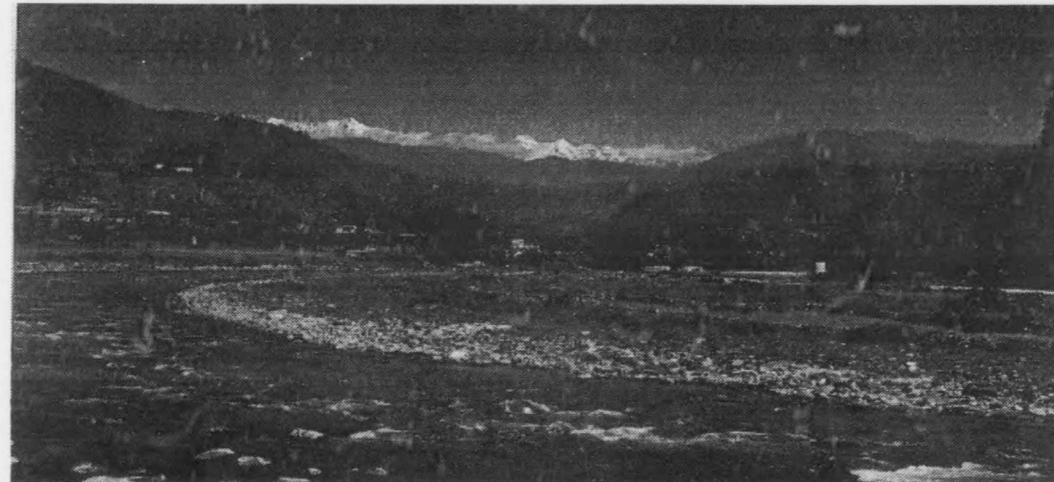
The contributions of Indians towards human development are too numerous to mention here, as singling out particular events, without any doubt, will do injustice to innumerable others. India provides the world with one of the most fascinating and brilliant languages, Sanskrit, which is also the mode and means of expression of the oldest books extant: the Vedas (25,000 BC). The

principles of non-violence, universal brotherhood and unconditional love embedded in the Vedic tenet and thought, but forgotten or misinterpreted over time, were revitalized by The Buddha (1800 BC) and Mahatma Gandhi (1950 AD) of our time. In mathematics, the concept of "zero" and "infinity" is solely attributed to the Indian genius. The noted historian William Durant concludes, "India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all." It is therefore indisputable that the influence of this culture extended to distant regions of northern and western frontiers of India, and perhaps, to many parts of the globe. The origins of Greek mythology and legends is indeed Indian, as recorded by Megasthenes and Herodotus, the Greek historians, themselves.

The Cholas, Pallavas and Rashtrakutas of southern India built the superb temples at Tanjore, Mamallapuram and Ellora. The Sun Temple of Konark in Orissa and the Shiva Temple at Khajuraho in Central India were built in the eleventh century.

In all these temples, sculpture is an integral part of the architecture. The breathtaking grandeur of the Tajmahal is too wonderful to be described with words. In painting, the technique and subtlety of the Persian style with the religious and aesthetic spirit of India, painters of the Rajput School made their own distinctive contribution. This tradition, with further additions, continues and flourishes to this day.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were exceptionally rich in devotional poetry in regional languages. Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh sect



photos courtesy of the Indian Students Association

and Tulsidas, whose Hindi version of the Ramayana epic is recited and read by millions even today. Fabir's poetry transcended all sectarian differences. These and other saint-poets preached a universal religion based on tolerance and love; again, in accordance with the age-old Vedic principles.

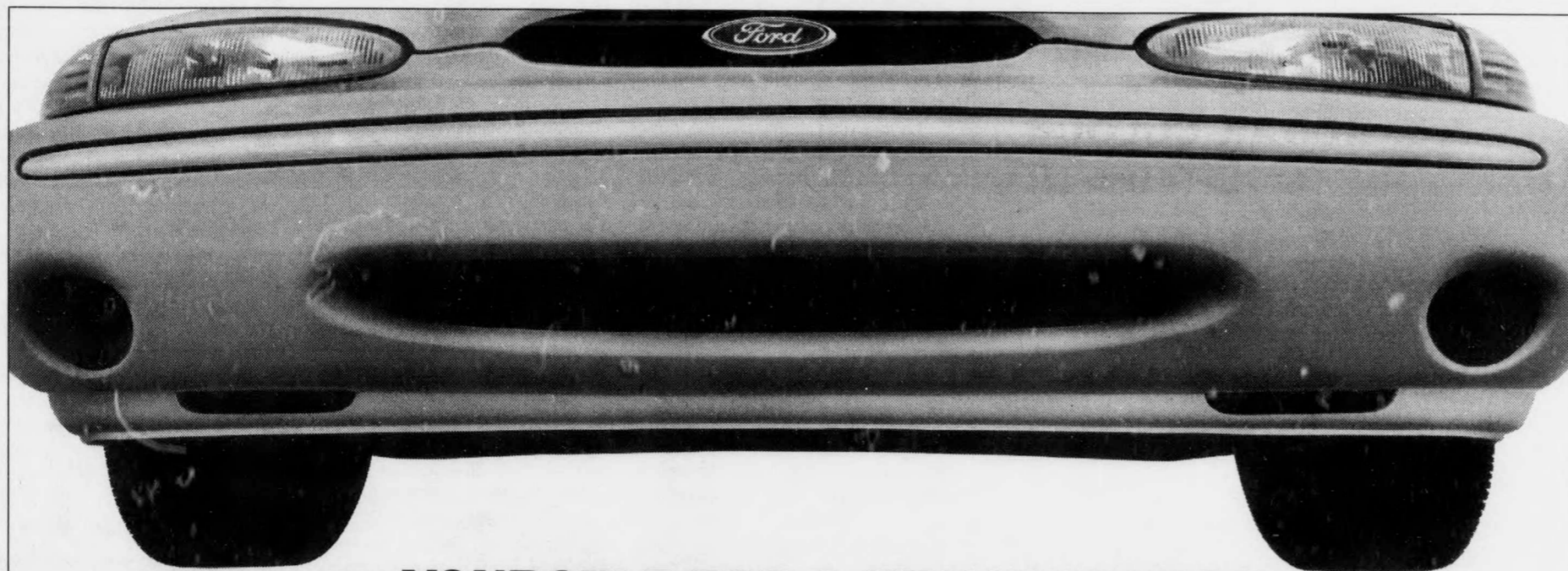
Meanwhile, Europeans were making inroads into India: the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and finally the British who emerged victorious by the end of the eighteenth century. The political trauma was soon overcome, and in 1947, Mother India freed herself from the clutches of

the British colonialists; thanks to the fearless and zealous struggle of the patriots. India soon began building her future as a sovereign country taking her rightful place in the history of nations.

Today, India, apart from being culturally rich, is one of the most industrially advanced nations with products from computers, mechanical machines, construction technology to medical equipment products being developed indigenously. Thanks to mechanized farming, controlled water management and also to the super-fertile soil of the land, Mother India has achieved a self-sufficient

agrarian economy with fresh fruit and vegetables available for the teeming 900 millions. India's peaceful and indigenously developed nuclear program and its tremendous hydroelectric power has brought about a dramatic change in the socio-economic progress. The satellites (INSAT-1B) launched in outer space, provide as accurate a weather-forecast, perhaps, as any other.

India is growing stronger and bigger as time progresses: the rebirth of a positive political and economic force, a giant with an exotic past, an exciting present and an exquisite future.



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