

The Dilemma of India: tracing civilisational roots in modern times

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India has had a great tradition of debate. This tradition dates back to the Vedic-Upanishadic times. It did not break with the arrival of people from outside, most of which were absorbed within the large fold of this great civilisation. If there were those who did not adopt the religion of this land they could not be left untouched by its culture. Even the British colonial masters found it very difficult to be not influenced by India. Yet these frequent interventions in its history particularly with the change of ruling class, did not break the ongoing process of dialogue. It is probably due to this rich tradition of engagement even with the most opposed adversary that Indian civilisation could absorb and assimilate those trends within it which otherwise had a very violent impact on societies elsewhere. The richness of dialogue continued all through the freedom movement (in fact the century preceding independence was perhaps the most rich period as far as interaction among thinkers representing differing views on essentials of Indian civilisation was concerned) but once the freedom was attained this process of engagement stopped as the government, state and leaders wholeheartedly participated in the nation making process. Perhaps one final time when a serious discussion took place was in the Constituent Assembly (1946-1949).

Independence and the partition of India posed serious challenges for the country. Preserving its unity and integrity and expressing its views at world stage along with progressing domestically were very serious challenges. Due to these imperatives the leaders of the independent nation chose to address the immediate problems. But because the policy framework could not include the vast mass of people the country progressed in a certain way which failed to address fundamental issues that been debated all throughout the national movement. This inadequacy on the part of newly independent nation to tackle these questions and, in its place, try to come up with temporary solutions was to have consequences in the decades to follow. Even though the

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