



Editorial

Civilisational Continuity, Social Discipline, and the Idea of India: An Editorial Reflection

As an international multidisciplinary journal published since 2012 by the Centre for Environment, Education and Economic Development in collaboration with the Department of Zoology, Cotton University, *The Clarion* has consistently sought to provide a scholarly platform for research across diverse academic disciplines. For over a decade, the journal has addressed the intellectual needs of research scholars and the wider academic fraternity across India, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and encouraging critical engagement with issues that shape societies, cultures, and collective futures. Its sustained commitment to editorial rigor and academic quality has enabled *The Clarion* to establish itself as a reputable multidisciplinary journal, recognised through indexing in several international databases and inclusion within the academic resources of universities in the United States and the United Kingdom.

It is within this intellectual mandate that the present editorial engages with reflections emerging from the centenary celebrations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), held in Guwahati. The occasion, marking one hundred years of an organisation that has played a significant role in India's social landscape, offered an opportunity to examine broader questions of civilisational continuity, social cohesion, and national identity—questions that lie at the intersection of history, sociology, philosophy, political thought, and cultural studies.

Invited as a *Pramukh Nagarik* of Guwahati, the author witnessed a moment that, though seemingly minor, carried symbolic weight. The programme was scheduled to begin at 4:00 p.m., with the address to be delivered by the RSS Sarsanghchalak, Mohan Bhagwat. His arrival on the stage three minutes before the scheduled time stood out in a contemporary public culture where punctuality is often treated as incidental rather than foundational. This quiet adherence to time was not performative but habitual, signalling an ethic of discipline and respect for collective responsibility. Before any formal articulation of ideas, practice itself communicated values—an observation of sociological relevance in understanding how institutions transmit norms through everyday conduct.

The address that followed departed from the conventions of political oratory. Rather than engaging with immediate events or contemporary controversies, it unfolded as a contemplative reflection on India's civilisational journey—its continuity, internal coherence, and capacity to accommodate diversity without losing its core identity. The present was situated within a long historical and philosophical continuum, inviting the audience to view India not merely as a modern nation-state, but as a civilisation shaped by centuries of cultural evolution.

A central theme of the address was India's extraordinary diversity. The multiplicity of deities, philosophies, languages, rituals, customs, and social practices constitutes the defining empirical reality of Indian society. Variation, rather than uniformity, has been the norm. Yet, despite this diversity, India has endured as a single civilisational entity for millennia. This endurance, it was argued, is neither accidental nor imposed; it emerged organically through shared cultural memory, ethical values, and an emotional sense of belonging that transcended

regional and local differences.

The address further challenged the assumption that the idea of India is a modern construction. Long before the emergence of the nation-state or clearly demarcated political boundaries, saints, poets, and thinkers across regions articulated a sense of India as a collective whole. References to figures such as Srimanta Shankardeva in Assam and Guru Nanak Dev in the north-west illustrated how diverse spiritual traditions expressed a shared attachment to *Bharat* as a common homeland. These voices were not isolated; they reflected a widespread civilisational consciousness that persisted even when political authority was fragmented.

This unity was not merely conceptual but was enacted through lived cultural practices. Traditions such as the Char Dham pilgrimage, which emerged nearly a millennium ago, linked distant regions of the subcontinent into a shared sacred geography. People travelled across linguistic and cultural boundaries, often without state patronage or political coordination, yet experienced themselves as moving within the same civilisational sphere. Such practices underscore how India's cohesion historically rested on cultural participation rather than political centralisation.

In addressing nationalism, the lecture distinguished India's experience from contractual or administrative models of nationhood. India's nationhood, it was suggested, is civilisational rather than constructed through modern agreements or institutional convenience. It evolved through the transmission of ideas, values, and social norms carried forward by teachers, monks, scholars, and ordinary people. India's antiquity thus lies not merely in its age, but in its continuity. Despite invasions, colonial exploitation, and internal upheavals, its civilisational core endured even as languages, political systems, and social structures adapted to changing circumstances.

Central to this civilisational understanding is the relationship between land and identity. Invoking the expression "*Mata Bhoomi, Putro Aham Prithivyam*"—the Earth is my mother, and I am her son—the address articulated a conception of rootedness that balances universal human belonging with cultural specificity. While the Earth is shared by all humanity, identity is shaped by the land that sustains one's life, culture, and livelihood. Rivers, soil, landscapes, and ecological contexts play a formative role in shaping social life and emotional attachment. This rootedness, it was clarified, does not imply exclusion or hostility towards others, but affirms a sense of belonging that coexists with an awareness of global interdependence.

The address also examined how India has historically formed collective bonds around shared ethical exemplars. Figures such as Shivaji Maharaj and Rana Pratap are revered across regions not because of sectarian affiliation, but because they embodied values of courage, sacrifice, and self-respect. Similarly, Buddha and Mahavir, though born in specific regions, belong to the ethical and philosophical heritage of all Indians. Such shared reverence illustrates how Indian civilisation has often prioritised values over narrow identity categories.

Within this broader framework, the meaning of the term "Hindu" was addressed as a civilisational rather than purely religious category. Hindu culture was described as an inclusive framework that has historically accommodated a wide range of belief systems without demanding uniformity in ritual or doctrine. From this perspective, individuals belonging to different faiths need not abandon their religious practices to be part of India's cultural fabric. Respect for Indian culture, pride in shared ancestry, and emotional devotion to the homeland were presented as the unifying elements—an inclusiveness rooted in historical practice rather than modern reinterpretation.

Turning to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the address sought to contextualise its work beyond conventional political frameworks. The Sangh was described as a voluntary social organisation, experiential in nature, with no formal membership procedures or compulsion. Participation is driven by choice and a sense of responsibility rather than obligation. Historical references to the life of its founder, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, and to lesser-documented sacrifices by volunteers during the freedom movement, particularly in 1942, were invoked to illustrate an ethic of service devoid of self-promotion or demand for recognition.

Patriotism, in this understanding, was conceptualised as sustained social contribution rather than symbolic assertion. The emphasis was not on claiming credit, but on placing the nation itself at the centre of effort. This approach aligns with a broader civilisational orientation in which service is viewed as duty rather than achievement.

The address also engaged with contemporary global politics, cautioning against simplistic alignments and adversarial nationalism. While acknowledging that international relations are driven by national self-interest, it was argued that being pro-India does not require being anti-any other nation. India's civilisational experience, shaped by coexistence and pluralism, positions it to pursue its interests without framing them in opposition to others. The vision of India as a *Vishwa Guru* was articulated not in terms of dominance, but as an ethical and philosophical contributor to global well-being.

The concluding emphasis rested on society as the foundation of national progress. Institutions, leadership, and policies may facilitate development, but they cannot generate it in the absence of social unity and qualitative human development. Moral strength, intellectual depth, and emotional balance were identified as essential attributes for sustainable national growth. India's civilisational instinct—its capacity to accept difference without denying legitimacy to alternate paths—was presented as its enduring strength.

In the centenary year of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Guwahati address thus offered not a call for immediate mobilisation, but an invitation to reflection. For a multidisciplinary journal such as *The Clarion*, the significance of this reflection lies in its capacity to stimulate critical, contextual, and interdisciplinary engagement with ideas of civilisation, identity, and social cohesion. In an era marked by polarisation and fragmentation, such reflections—whether affirmed, questioned, or critically examined—underscore the continuing relevance of dialogue grounded in historical depth, ethical inquiry, and academic openness.



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