**CHAPTER--1**

**INTRODUCTION**

The present research project entitled **“*AUROBINDO GHOSE---HIS LIFE* *AND WORK IN THE LIGHT OF INDIA’S FREEDOM MOVEMENT*”** aims at evaluating India’s freedom movement under the leadership of Sri Aurobindo Ghose and thereby assessing his proper role. His new and original ideas regarding India’s freedom movement truely influenced and reinforced different revolutionary and nationalist groups. Since his student life he was in search of the causes for India’s bondage. Ultimately, he took active part in India’s freedom movement as a political thinker and an activist. His direct involvement in India’s freedom struggle was very short (1905-1910). But his role and political ideas, no doubt, paved the way to India’s independence and its overall development as a nation.

Introducing political ideas of Sri Aurobindo Ghose is not only a tribute to this great leader of India’s freedom movement but also bears immense importance in respect of relevance of his political thought in 21st century. In fact, in the history of India’s freedom movement Sri Aurobindo’s contribution is yet to be assessed. His revolutionary as well as nationalist role in the India’s freedom movement needs to be studied with careful attention for proper evaluation of his political thought.

The present research scheme seeks to highlight and evaluate the proper role played by Sri Aurobindo in our national freedom movement. During the early phase of our freedom struggle he came to shape it by introducing new ideas based on revolutionary activities which ultimately injected courage and self-confidence to the minds of Indians, specially the youths. As a result, the India’s freedom movement got momentum. The Indian National Army(INA) under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the ultimate culmination of this revolutionary movement. Sri Aurobindo was fully aware of the fact that without mass-participation and mass-awakening India’s freedom movement could not become successful. That is why he advocated a new nationalist path for achieving ‘purno swaraj’ or total independence for India. His such a nationalist political thought had been expressed through his writings and programmes. Later on India’s freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi took a new turn with the involvement of masses. Gandhi’s technique of freedom movement, no doubt, resembles that of Sri Aurobindo’s nationalist political thought.

In the present study attempts have been made to focus on Sri Aurobindo’s Life and Work highlighting an important aspect of India’s freedom movement. Further, such a study also seeks to establish the importance of the political thought of Sri Aurobindo even today from historical point of view and from political standpoint. Sri Aurobindo arrived in India in 1893 from England after getting higher education with a mission to work for India. He took initiative to accelerate and strengthen the process of India’s freedom struggle. At the initial phase he wanted to awake India’s common people through his writings. Such writings were published in the ***‘InduPrakash’*** during 1893–1894.Through his articles he sought to inspire common people to think for their bondage. In fact, he emphasized on acquiring knowledge by the masses. In a word, he emphasized the importance of self-knowledge which would ultimately lead to the process of ‘man-making’ and also *‘*nation-building’*.* Sri Aurobindo wanted that the process of nation-building might start from within. He was of the opinion that no external agency could help this process. In his first article, published in the *‘InduPrakash’* he mentioned “…*our actual enemy, not as any outside force, but rather as our cowardice, our weakness, selfishness, our hypocracy, our purblind sentimentalism.*”**1**

Any way, Sri Aurobindo’s concept of India’s freedom was something new. It should be noted that he got involved in politics of freedom movement and yoga at almost at the same time. He practiced yoga with a mission to achieve success in the field of politics. From this perspective, freedom for India, according to Sri Aurobindo, ‘was not an end in itself, but only the stepping-stone towards leading the world to a better future.’ So it can be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo came forward with a comprehensive idea for the liberation of entire world as an extreme goal. He wanted to activate the will of the Divine in the world through ‘yoga’ to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. To him its object was not personal mukti (salvation for self), but the liberation and transformation of the human being. From this stand point, it can be said that Sri Aurobindo didn’t accept the mechanical western concept of nationalism. Rather, for him, nationalism was *‘*a holy yogna’; **2** by the term ‘yogna’ he wanted to mean mass involvement in the process of freedom movement, as well as spiritual transformation of divine power all over the world. So his concept of nationalism seeks to integrate entire human world with the blessing of the divine power accrossing religious, linguistic, geographical and political boundaries. Thus we may interpret that Sri Aurobindo came forward with a comprehensive idea of nationalism aiming at complete liberation of the mankind all over the world. Rabindranath Tagore, one of his contemporary humanist, poet and thinker also held the similar view and paid highest regards to Sri Aurobindo. Further, Swami Vivekananda who was nine years senior to him also talked of universal humanism following the teaching of his gurudev Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Aurobindo himself recognized their impact and teaching on his life and work. Thus the present research work seeks to find out Sri Aurobindo’s proper place in the history of India’s freedom movement as well as assess his role as a political thinker and nationalist leader.

**Objectives of the Research: ---**

The present research topic has been selected for two reasons. First, Sri Aurobindo’s new and original ideas truely organized and reinforced different groups towards India’s freedom movement. Actually, India got its independence on 15th August, 1947, through the paths which Sri Aurobindo had shown as a political thinker and an active national leader. Secondly, his thought had focused light on the complete liberation through transformation of the entire mankind. His teachings regarding transformation of human being into Divine life have great significance even present day. However, this research work is mainly confined to the role of Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker and a national leader of India’s freedom movement. The objectives of this research work are as follows: ---

**1.** Assessment of the role of Sri Aurobindo in India’s independence movement as a political thinker and theoretician.

**2.** Assessment of Sri Aurobindo as an activist and an analysis of the alternative route to India’s independence as explored by him.

**3.** A comparative study of Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi in the context of freedom movement of India.

**4.** Sri Aurobindo and other contemporary leaders and revolutionaries ---A comparative study.

**5.** Highlighting the relevance of the political thought of Sri Aurobindo.

**Review of Literature: ---**

Review of literature is an important part of a research work. After thoroughly going through different related literatures concerned with the present research work it appears that there are some major gaps or weaknesses regarding the proper role played by Sri Aurobindo in the freedom movement of India and his actual contribution to it. Some of the major works connected with this research are mentioned below: ---

***‘Sri Aurobindo’***, **K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1945.**

The author in this book has attempted to present a composite portrait of Sri Aurobindo. The book was the first attempt of its kind in English which presented Sri Aurobindo’s life and work. Sri Aurobindo himself checked the first and second draft of this book in1943.This book comprises three parts---Humanist & Poet; Patriot & Prophet; Pilgrim & Eternity. The author has not analyzed Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker and political activist. The book also lacks a discussion between Sri Aurobindo and other revolutionaries and leaders of his time.

***‘Life-Work of*** ***Sri Aurobindo’,* Jyotish Chandra Ghose*,* Samabaya Press, Calcutta, SecondEdition, 1951*.***

Prof. J. C. Ghosh a renowned revolutionary was a close associate, admirer and follower of Sri Aurobindo. The author had the fortune to observe the political outlook, ideals and strategy of Sri Aurobindo. So Prof. J.C.Ghose had drawn a real picture of his life and work in this book. He had presented Sri Aurobindo’s life-facts from birth to yogic stage. But he specially emphasized his life during Bengal-phase, when the author followed Sri Aurobindo. The author paid homage to Sri Aurobindo in his book and depicted him as the fighter, protector, victor, social reformer, state-builder, philanthropist, philosopher, artist, scientist, poet, saint and seer. In spite of that the book does not mention Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker, theoretician and relevance of his thought in present day. It does not focus the comparative study between Sri Aurobindo and other revolutionaries. ***‘Sri Aurobindo, Jibon O Yog’* (in Bengali), Promod Kumar Sen, Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Calcutta, 1952.**

This book is mainly a biography. The author highlights Sri Aurobindo’s different activities during student life, professional life, political life and also yogic life to a small extent. But the author does not attempt to establish him as a political thinker. Further, the relevance of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought has not been mentioned in this book.

***‘Life of*** ***Sri Aurobindo’,* A.B.Purani, Sri Aurobindo Ashram,Pondicherry, 1958.**

AB Purani’s book entitled *‘Life of* *Sri Aurobindo’* is basically a biography. His work highlights on his spiritual attitude and practice. It does not study in detail Sri Aurobindo’s role in India’s freedom movement. So this book does not present a complete analysis his role as a political thinker and a political activist.

***‘Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics’***, **Haridas Mukherjee & Uma Mukherjee, Firma K.L.M.,Calcutta,1964.**

This book is a well-documented, critical and fascinating study of Sri Aurobindo. Prof. H. Mukherjee and his wife Prof. U. Mukherjee have presented a vivid account of the contribution of Sri Aurobindo in Indian freedom movement. However, they do not focus on the observations made by Sri Aurobindo during his stay at Pondicherry. The book has not mentioned the relevance of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought.

***‘Aurobindo Prasanga’* (in Bengali), Dinendra Kumar Roy, Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Calcutta, 1972.**

Dinendra Kumar Roy was a distinguished teacher ofSri Aurobindo. He taught Sri Aurobindo Bengali at Baroda. In this book the author throws light on the various activities and thinking of Sri Aurobindo during his stay at Baroda. However, the author does not pay sufficient attention to different activities of Sri Aurobindo during his stay in Bengal and Pondicherry.

***‘Sri Aurobindo towards Victory of the Light Supreme’,* Sisir Kumar Mitra, New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, 1976.**

This work basically focused on Sri Aurobindo’s life, particularly childhood to Pondicherry phase. It also incorporates Sri Aurobindo’s vision of free India and awakening world. However, it does not mention Sri Aurobindo as political thinker, and activist. In a word, his political role in the freedom movement has not been highlighted in this work.

***‘The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo’*, V.P.Verma, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1976.**

Prof. Verma’s book attempts to reconstruct the political ideas ofSri Aurobindo and presented them systematically in the context of comparative political thought. He has presented a highly erudite study of his metaphysics, social philosophy and philosophy of history, theory of nationalism, and the idea of human unity. However, it does not analyze his political thought, role and activities in detail.

***‘Sri Aurobindo As A Political Thinker—An* *Interdisciplinary Study’*, Som P Ranchan and K.D.Gupta, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1988.**

This book has highlighted Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, psychological postulate, and mystic experience. It also explains some fundamental concepts of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought. In this process though it highlights Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker, yet it does not analyze his active political role. Further, there is no comparison between Sri Aurobindo and other national leaders of his time.

***‘Sri Aurobindo and World Events’*, Sraddhalu Ranade, Sri Aurobindo Society, Madras, 1990.**

In this book Mr. S. Ranade focuses on Sri Aurobindo’s overview on various world events. This book concentrates basically on Sri Aurobindo’s views, remarks and thinking on Pan-Asianism, Bolshevik Revolution, World War-I & II, origin of the League and the UNO, Korean Conflict, future of Commonwealth, etc. But it does not explain or interpret his role as an activist and a political thinker in Indian freedom struggle.

***‘Sri Aurobindo’*, Navajata, National Book Trust, New Delhi, Fourth Edition, 1992.**

The author has highlighted Sri Aurobindo’s life and work. His social, political, economical, cultural ideas have been analyzed in this book. But the author does not mention a comparison between Sri Aurobindo and other thinkers. This book does not contain the relevance of his political thought.

***‘The Bomb in Bengal’*, Peter Heehs, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993.**

The book is a narrative history of the revolutionary movement in Bengal from 1900 to 1910. In this book the political activities of Sri Aurobindo have been mentioned by the author. It provides an accurate account on the various revolutionary events. The author gives special attention to major problems regarding the relationship between revolution and religion; the relative importance of violent and non-violent methods. But Mr. Heehs does not highlight the specific role of Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker. Further, the book does not contain Sri Aurobindo’s role during his Pondicherry stay.

***‘Sri Aurobindo–A Brief Biography’,* Peter Heehs, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.**

This book focuses on the faithful account of socio-political thinking ofSri Aurobindo. It also presents his life-facts as well as political ideas. But in this book the comparison between Sri Aurobindo and other contemporary leaders and the relevance of his political thought have not been discussed.

***‘Sri Aurobindo O Bangler Biplabik Andolan’* (in Bengali), Haridas Mukherjee, published by Hooghly Mohsin College, Chinsurah, July, 1998.**

This book focuses on different events of revolutionary activities in Bengal. But it does not highlight the theoretical aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought.

***‘Glimpses of Vedantism in Sri Aurobindo’s Political Thought’,* Samar Basu, Sri Mitra Trust, Pondicherry, 1998.**

In this work Samar Basu has systematically presented glimpses of an aspect of Sri Aurobindo’s life and work. Sri Basu has tried to trace the subtle thread of vedantism underlying the actions and utterances of Sri Aurobindo. The attention of the world today more for his vision of human destiny than for anything else. But events on the surface of his life, despite his viewing them as insignificant, continue to arouse great interest for scholars and historians. This book is helpful to many because, apart from the facts arrayed by the writer, it is a highly readable narrative. So the book lacks historical and political interpretations of Sri Aurobindo’s thought and activities.

***‘Prophet of Indian Nationalism,-A Study of the Political Thought of Sri* *Aurobindo Ghosh 1893-1910’*, Karan Singh, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2000.**

In his work Dr.Singh had given an account of the British impact on awakening Indian nationalism; the crisis of 1905 and the rise of radicalism; Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nation, nationalism and his political goal; Sri Aurobindo’s adopted techniques in freedom movement, his Doctrine of Passive Resistance; and his withdrawal from active politics in 1910. He also assessed Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker. Thus he sought to present an explanation about why Sri Aurobindo was called the prophet of Indian nationalism. But his work did not put enough emphasis on his leadership quality and role in mobilizing revolutionary as well as nationalist movements against the British colonial power, particularly in comparison to that of other revolutionaries and contemporary nationalist leaders.

***‘Sri Aurobindo’***, **M.P.Pandit, Publication Division--Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. Of India, New Delhi, 2000.**

This book is basically a biography. It highlightsSri Aurobindo’s political role to a small extent which is not enough for establishing him as an original political thinker as well as political activist. His political strategies and techniques have not been discussed.

***‘A Journey from Politics to Yoga’*, compiled by G.P.Gupta, Sri Aurobindo Institute of Research in Social Sciences Publication, Pondicherry, 2003.**

This is a compilation from writings ofSri Aurobindo. His writings may be were regarded as revelations packed with patriotism and inspiration to attain swaraj for the motherland for common Indians. The author is of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts have still relevance and may provide guidelines to present-day politicians and statesmen. But the book lacks objective analysis of Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker and comparative discussions with other revolutionaries and leaders.

***‘Hindu Muslim Unity in Sri Aurobindo’s Light ’*, Mangesh Nadkarni, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, 2003.**

In this book Dr.Nadkarni analyses the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity of Sri Aurobindo’s thought. He has attempted to articulate, explain and examine this problem of Indian politics withSri Aurobindo’s view. However, it does not pay sufficient attention to the other ideas and political thought of Sri Aurobindo.

***‘Sri Aurobindo-In the First Decade of the Twentieth Century’***, **Manoj Das, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry, 2003.**

The author has tried sincerely to give a true picture of Sri Aurobindo’s political activities during the first decade of the 20th century. But it does not analyze Sri Aurobindo’s observations and statements during his stay at Pondicherry. His contributions as a political thinker and comparison with other leaders and revolutionaries have not been focused in this book.

***‘Sri Aurobindo From Militant Nationalism to Political Vedantism’,* Shayamalesh Das, The Printo Books Publication, Kolkata, 2006.**

The author has discussed multi-dimensional aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s political role in very short form. This book concentrates basically on the transition of Sri Aurobindo’s role from a political activist to a yogi. But it does not make any comparison between Sri Aurobindo and other national leaders and revolutionaries. Again, in this book brief account of Sri Aurobindo’s life and activities in the Pondicherry-phase, which is an important part of his life as a political thinker, has not been discussed. So it lacks a complete view of Sri Aurobindo’s political philosophy.

***‘Sri Aurobindo and The Mother On Indian Independence & On War and Peace’*, Amalendu De, Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata, 2007.**

This book highlights the concepts of Sri Aurobindo’s swaraj or complete independence, war and peace. However, it does not throw any light on his leadership role, the techniques and strategies adopted by him. So it does not evaluate him as a political thinker and his entire political career in freedom movement.

***‘Sri Aurobindo And His Contemporary Thinkers’*, edited by Indrani Sanyal and Krishna Roy, D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 2007.**

The present anthology is an inter-disciplinary approach. It has focused light on the position and thoughts of Sri Aurobindo and his contemporaries. This book includes the study of Sri Aurobindo and his contributions as well as those of his contemporaries including Raja Rammohan Roy,Vivekananda, GopalKrishna Gokhale, BalGangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Satish Chandra. It aims at situating Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts in its socio-cultural background and studying the contributions of his contemporaries to focus on the distinctiveness of Sri Aurobindo. The researchers take up interpretations of violence and non-violence by Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, Vivekananda’s outlook about morality and caste system, and response of Sri Aurobindo, Gokhale and Tilak to western imperialism. There is also an effort to compare the thought of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore towards the revolutionary movement. However, the articles mentioned in this book do not throw light on the Pondicherry phase of Sri Aurobindo’s life, though it is very crucial for understanding Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker.

***‘Yugpurush Sri Aurobindo’*** **(in Bengali), Motilal Roy, Prabartak Sangha,** **Chandernagore, May, 2007.**

This book highlightsSri Aurobindo’s involvement in freedom movement of India. But it does not present his theoretical perception regarding the struggle against the colonial power.

***‘Sri Aurobindo:Banga Parba’,* (in Bengali), Trija Roy,** **Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir,Kolkata,February,2007.**

This book concentrates basically on Sri Aurobindo’s activities in Bengal (1906-1910). It does not reflect a total picture of Sri Aurobindo’s thought and activities. Further, the book does not include Sri Aurobindo’s role during his Pondicherry stay.

***‘An Interview with Nirodbaran’***, **compiled and edited by Supriyo Bhattacharya, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Research on Social Sciences, Kolkata, Second Edition, 2008.**

It is a monograph prepared on the basis of interview with Nirodbaran by Prof. S. Bhattacharya. Here Nirodbaran, a well-known sadhak and an associate of Sri Aurobindo has focused on different levels of inspiration which were at work when Savitri was composed by Sri Aurobindo. Nirodbaran has remarked that Sri Aurobindo wrote poetry as a part of his Sadhana. He also remarked that Sri Aurobindo’s yoga would not be fulfilled or realized unless the ‘subconsciant’, which is the deport of all the contains of lower nature like passion, anger, etc, in human beings, was totally transformed. So it can said in this monograph there is no mention of Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker and as an activist.

***‘Sri Aurobindo O Nishkrio Pratirodh Tattwa’* (in Bengali), Asis Kumar Basu, Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir, Kolkata, 2009.**

In this work the theoretical aspect of Sri Aurobindo’s strategy (‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’) regarding freedom movement of India has been discussed. But it does not analyze his active political role. Further, there is no comparison between Sri Aurobindo and other revolutionaries of his time.

***‘Amar Dekha Biplab O Biplabi’* (in Bengali), Motilal Roy, Prabartak Sangha,** **Chandernagore, May, 2011.**

This book is a first-hand document of revolutionary activities of Bengal. It throws light on connections between Sri Aurobindo and other revolutionaries. But it does not mention the relevance of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought.

***‘Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India’*, compiled and edited by Chanda Poddar, Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry, Second Edition,2012.**

The first part of this book ‘A Vision of Free India’ includes passages from Sri Aurobindo’s writings and speeches on the need to liberate India. The editors highlight his intense love for his motherland and his burning aspiration to free India from political subjugation. Further, this book also comprises impressions of Sri Aurobindo given by his contemporaries and a chapter on ‘The Young Revolutionaries of Bengal’. However, it does not focus on Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker which contains an important chapter of India’s freedom movement.

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Besides the above mentioned books the following journals have also been consulted for present research work: ---

* ***‘Bartika’***--- a quarterly Magazine, published by Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir Prakashana, Kolkata.
* ***‘Mother India’***--- a monthly Review of Culture, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust Publication Department, Pondicherry.
* ***‘Sandhitsha’****-*-- a quarterly Magazine, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Research on Social Science, Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata.
* ***‘RBHU’***---a half-yearly Magazine, Centre for Sri Aurobindo Adventure of Consciousness, Kolkata.
* ***‘SARR’***---Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research, a semi-annual journal, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, All India Press, Pondicherry.

On the basis of above discussion it may be said that there are some gaps in the above-mentioned works. So the present research work has been undertaken to meet these gaps. This work has immense significance from historical as well as political standpoints of India’s freedom movement.

**Research Methodology: ----**

Research Methodology is an important part of any research work. However, the methodology of a particular research depends upon the very nature of the study and subject matter. A historically oriented social research may be defined as a scientific undertaking which, by means of a logical and systematized techniques, aims to:---A) Discover new facts or verify and test whole facts; B) Analyze their sequenences, interrelationship and casual explanation which were derived within an appropriate theoretical frame of reference; C) Develop new scientific tools, concept and theories which would facilitate reliable and valid study of human behaviour. **3** The present study is a social as well as historical research work. The topics of social science research are approached from several different methodological traditions. However, the present research work is based on the interpretation and analysis of the texts written by and on Sri Aurobindo Ghose and also related works. Interpretative research seeks to uncover or decode the sense of an action, idea or concept, or practice. It leads the researcher intimately into the research process and thereby enables him or her analyzing statements, facts, and events connected with the research scheme. In this study primary and secondary sources of information and data have been used. Letters, remarks, activities, statements, plans and programmes written and chalked out by Sri Aurobindo and many other distinguished thinkers and archival documents play an important role as primary sources of information. Books, journals, periodicals, newspapers also have been used as secondary sources.

**Research Questions:**

Further, on the basis of collected data and information about Sri Aurobindo and his activities the following research questions arise: ---

**1)** Why did Sri Aurobindo take part in India’s freedom movement?

**2)** Was Sri Aurobindo a political thinker and theoretician?

**3)** What is Sri Aurobindo’s contribution to India’s freedom movement?

**4)** Can Sri Aurobindo be regarded as a complete and pioneer political leader of India’s freedom movement?

**5)** Why Sri Aurobindo is different in his thought and action from his contemporaries?

**6)** Did Sri Aurobindo’s thought influence Gandhiji’s thinking and planning regarding India’s freedom movement?

**7)** Why did Sri Aurobindo withdraw himself from India’s freedom movement?

**8)** Has Sri Aurobindo’s political thought any relevance in present-day world?

**Chapterisation: ---**

This study aims at answering the above research questions to get authentic research findings. On the basis of the research findings an authentic conclusion or final report has been prepared which upholds the relevance of the present study. The following chapters represent the present research scheme:-- **1.** Introduction.

**2.** Brief History of Sri Aurobindo’s Life and Work.

**3**. Sri Aurobindo’s withdrawal from Freedom Movement and Engagement in Spiritual Mission (1910-1950): Pondicherry Phase.

**4.** Sri Aurobindo’s Role in India’s Freedom Movement as a Political Thinker

and as an Activist.

**5.** Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi’s Political Thought---a Comparative Study.

**6.** Sri Aurobindo and Other National Leaders and Revolutionaries.

**7.** Conclusion.

The present research work comprises seven chapters and bibliography and appendixes. The first chapter i.e. the introduction highlights the scope of the study. It also mentions various steps taken for organizing and developing the study. The introductory chapter includes a brief account of the study, objectives of the research work, review of literature, research methodology, research questions and chapterization. A key requirement for any research study is to begin with an explanation about selecting a particular research topic upon which the study or work is to be carried out. So the reasons for selecting the present research topic have been mentioned. Then I put forward the research objectives which indicate what I want the study to accomplish. Review of Literature for a researcher to make an overview of the existing relevant literature and to indicate the research gap. This method helps the researcher to focus the area of the proposed study properly. It also helps to connect different currents of knowledge. The next step is research methodology. As per the method employed in the present research work, the only option open to me was to consult the relevant papers and literature. That is, I have concentrated on desk work at the library. Further, on the basis of collected information and knowledge about Sri Aurobindo and his activities various research questions arised. These have been mentioned here. Accordingly, the study aims at answering the research questions mentioned to get authentic research findings. In this process the following chapters comprise the present research work.

After introduction the research study has been organized on the basis of following chapters. The **second chapter** of present research work tries to explain Sri Aurobindo’s life and work. It includes major events of Sri Aurobindo’s student’s life, professional life at Baroda and political life. This period of his life can again be divided into following manner: a) educational life in India and abroad, b) Baroda phase of his life and c) Bengal Phase of his political life. After completing education life in England he returned India in 1893. In India he associated himself with the Baroda State Service and he remained there from 1893 to 1906. As a profession Sri Aurobindo acted as the member of secretariat, professor of English and Vice-principal of Baroda College. Side by side, he started writing political articles with a desire to inject the spirit of nationalism in the minds of Indians. He also engaged himself in chalking out a plan of revolutionary movement against the colonial British power with a desire to liberate India. In 1906 Sri Aurobindo left Baroda service and joined as the Principal of Bengal National College (presently known as Jadavpur University), Calcutta. He also started to act as assistant editor of the English daily ‘*The BandeMataram’* initiated by BipinChandra Pal. As the principal he encourage to students take part in the freedom movement. His writings in theBandeMataramunder the title ‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’ clearly presented a fundamental, original and significant blueprint of the strategy of freedom movement.

In 1906 Sri Aurobindo participated the session of Indian National Congress (INC) in Calcutta and demanded ‘Purno Swaraj’. From this time he gradually got involved in different phases of freedom movement, particularly revolutionary activities in Bengal. Ultimately he was arrested in connecting with Alipore Bomb Case in 1908 and remained in the jail for about one year. During his stay in Alipore jail he realized the presence of God. This event turned his life towards the realization of spirituality and with this a new phase of his life started. He was acquitted from the jail as the British authority can failed to prove his connection with Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case. After realizing from jail he led his political activities for a short period and gradually concentrated towards a life with a higher spiritual vision leading to integration of different communities.

The **third chapter** deals with Sri Aurobindo’s various activities from 1910 to 1950 at Pondicherry. It was the period where he practiced yogic life and sadhana. But he also issued statements and remarks about the contemporary events and situation of Indian and global politics. His statements came in the form of interviews, messages, letters and telegrams. His views expressed in the form of statements may be interpreted and analyzed in connection with his role as a political thinker.

**Chapter four** is connected with Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker and as an activist. He was a rare Indian who formulated a unique, fundamental political theory i.e. Doctrine of Passive Resistance (DPR). His theory not only touched the heights of idealistic fervour, but also descended into the arena of practical politics and sought to prescribe a concrete scheme of action for attaining ‘purno-swaraj’. In fact, by analyzing his role it may be said that he was able to awake Indians for extreme fight against the colonial power. Thus it may be interpreted that he cultivated the spirit of nationalism and prepared Indian soil for freedom movement with a new light.

The **fifth chapter** of the present research work makes a comparative study between the two significant personalities of Indian politics--Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. The comparison is based on various similarities and differences of their political ideas and actions. Further, there are explanations about how they did respond to the causes of India’s bondage and how did they act to free their motherland from the clutches of the colonial power. However, through their political activities both emphasized mass-awakening of Indian society and independence of motherland.

**Chapter six** mentions a comparative study between Sri Aurobindo and other national leaders and revolutionaries regarding their role in India’s freedom movement. In this chapter an effort has been made to analyze and interpret the roles and activities of Sri Aurobindo and his contemporary political leaders and co-workers. Further, a comparative study between Sri Aurobindo and his followers such as Motilal Roy, Charuchandra Roy, Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, etc, has been made to get a proper assessment regarding Sri Aurobindo’s influence on them as well as on revolutionary movements in general.

In the **concluding chapter** an assessment of the role played by Sri Aurobindo in Indian freedom movement has been mentioned. In the present work an attempt also has been made to highlight the relevance of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought in the context of present day. A bibliography and appendixes are attached to the end of this research work.

**Notes & References: ---**

1. Sri Aurobindo*, 'InduPrakash'*, 21st August, 1893; See also, Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*The Libarator’*, (Kolkata, Jaico Publishing House, 1954) 37.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *‘SABCL’*, Vol.1, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 118-123.

3. David E. McNabb, *‘Research Methods for Political Science’*, (New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2009), 3-11.

**CHAPTER----2**

**BRIEF HISTORY OF SRI AUROBINDO’S LIFE & WORKS**

Sri Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta on 15th August, 1872. His father Dr. KrishnaDhane Ghose (1845-1893) hailed from the well-known Ghose family of Konnagar, a township in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. His grandfather Kaliprasad Ghose was a popular personality in the locality and his grandmother Kailashbasini Devi was a pious lady devoted to religious pursuits. Since the advent of the British East India Company in Calcutta, it gradually developed as a centre of trade and commerce. Side by side Calcutta had become the main centre of various intellectual and social activities of the Indians and missionaries under the influence of the West. Moreover, it also witnessed a series of social reform movements which spread to the neighbouring regions. One such locality was the district Hooghly, West Bengal. This district is notable for its role in the history of Indian renaissance and freedom movement. It gave birth of many luminaries of Indian renaissance such as Haji Muhammad Mohsin, Raja Rammohan Roy, Sri Sri Ramakrishna, BrahmaBandhav Upadhyay, Sri Ashutosh Mukherjee, and Sarat Chandra Chattyopadhyay. Moreover, BankimChandra Chattyopadhyay, DijendraLal Roy, U. N. Brahamachari, Syed Amir Ali, Kanailal Dutta, Harihar Seth, CharuChandra Roy, Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Bhupati Mazumder, Debendranath Mondal, Ullaskar Dutta, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Poet Rangalal, Akshay Chandra Sarkar and many others were connected with Hooghly district either in their student and professional life.

His mother Smt. Swarnalata Devi was the eldest daughter Rajnarayan Bose, a great leader of Indian nationalism. He was a pioneer member of 'Adi Barambah Samaj' and made of an important effort to awaken the national spirit in the psyche of Indians. Mr. Rajnarayan Bose established in 1876 a secret society called ‘Sanjibani Sabha’ (life-giving society) and organized ‘Jatiya Mela’ (national gathering) for bring about in the minds of common people. **1** Sri Aurobindo during his boyhood might have talks with his grandfather about his revolutionary plan and programme of India’s freedom movement. His mother Smt. Swarnalata Devi was an educated lady with full of social values. Sri Aurobindo’s father was fond of the English way of life and culture. He wanted that his sons to be given English name. Accordingly, Sri Aurobindo known as ‘Arabinda Ackroyd Ghose’ during his boyhood. It appears in the records of the school and college where he attended. **2** In his early life Sri Aurobindo did not learn Bengali and could speak broken English and Hindustani only. Like many contemporary Indians, his father believed that English education and way of life was an ideal one. So he sent his three sons --- BenoyBhusan, MonMohan and Aurobindo to Loreto Convent School in Darjeeling, where mainly the children of European officials studied. Sri Aurobindo‘s age then was five. Thus he was kept away from his family and homely life. In 1879 Dr. KrishnaDhane Ghose( Dr. K.D. Ghose ), Sri Aurobindo’s father, with his family members left for England to impart Western education. In January, 1880, Sri Aurobindo‘s youngest brother Barindra was born at Croydon, England. From birth register it appears that Barindra’s name was given Emmanuel Ghose. Anyway, Sri Aurobindo‘s mother Smt. Swarnalata Devi returned to India along with Sarojini and Barin and settled at Rohini near Deoghar. Sri Aurobindo and his two brothers were kept at Manchester for educational purpose under the care of Rev. William H. Drewett. Then Sri Aurobindo was only seven years old. He was not sent to any school. He was taught at home by Mr. & Mrs. Drewett. Mr. Drewett a distinguished Latin scholar grounded Aurobindo in English and Latin. Mrs. Drewett taught him lessons in History, Geography, Arithmetic and French. He used his off-time in reading books according to his taste, which included Shakespeare, Shelly, Keats and others. However, 1885, Mr. & Mrs. Drewett had to leave for Australia and Sri Aurobindo was sent to St. Pauls’ School in London in 1884. The Headmaster of that School, Dr. Walker took personal care and coached him as one of the promising student. Dr. Walker was satisfied with his knowledge in Latin and other subjects, but found him weak in Greek. At St. Paul’s school (1884-1889) Sri Aurobindo was attached with different types of activities. He won the ‘**Butterworth Prize’** in Literature and the ‘**Bedford Prize’** in History. In this day he participates with distinction in various debates on different fields in school. It appears from the record of the school that Sri Aurobindo participated in the debates on 5th November, 1889 on the ‘*The Inconsistency of Swift Political Views’* and on 19th November, 1889 on ‘*Milton*’. In course of time Dr. K.D. Ghose faced financial crisis and he finally could not bear the expenditure for education for his sons studying in England. Naturally, Sri Aurobindo and his brothers were thrown in strained circumstances. This condition prevailed for a long period. Once he himself said “*a slice or two of sandwich, bread and butter and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening, a penny worth of formed the only food.”* **3** From the letters written by three brothers during that period, one can come to understand the miserable condition of them in this period. During this days in London Sri Aurobindo lived at three or four different places. Even there was no overcoat to protect Sri Aurobindo from the heavy winter of London and there was no room-heater in the place where he slept. In such a tremendous condition Sri Aurobindo continued his study on English poetry, literature, fiction, French literature and the history of medieval and modern Europe. He learnt Italian, German, and Spanish. He read Dante, Goethe, etc, in the original. He won many prizes and scholarship. Sri Aurobindo began writing poetry from early life and he continued this through his life. Many of the poems written in England were published at Baroda in 1895, in his book *‘Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems’****.*** Sri Aurobindo’s elder brother MonMohan was also a promising poet. He was a classmate of Lawrence Binyon and a friend of Oscar Wilde, Stephen Phillips. MonMohan`s influence led Sri Aurobindo to read the classical poets. Sri Aurobindo translated in English from the Greek a passage entitled*--‘Hecuba’****.*** Having read it L.Binyon asked Sri Aurobindo to write more poetry. It may not be out of place to mention here that famous Irish poet James H. Cousins was of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo’s poetry was “*a meeting place of Asiatic Universality and European Classicism. It is inspired by the philosophy of the Vedas; it is shaped and atmosphered like Greece, or the Greece that is dimly incarnate in English poetry.”* **4**At St.Pauls’ Sri Aurobindo were admitted as a candidate for ICS and this was his father’s desire. He prepared himself in all the subjects without any tutor. He managed to get open scholarship and bagged £ 80 a year in his final examination .He also passed his test for selection for ICS course securing 11th position with high marks in classics. He also gave a stipend for ICS probitionership. He proved his sound knowledge on English literature and he wrote much better than most young English persons. In 1890, Sri Aurobindo admitted Kings’ College, Cambridge. Dr. K.D. Ghose knew very well that Sri Aurobindo was making excellent progress by his own efforts. In his letter to Jogendra Bose, his brother-in-law, from Khulna, dated 2nd December, 1891, he wrote about his sons as follows: *----*

*‘‘…..the three sons I have produced made giants of them. I may not, but you will live to be proceed of three nephews who will adorn your country shed luster on your name...Ara (the nickname of Sri Aurobindo), I hope, will yet glorify his country by a brilliant administration. I shall not live to see it, but remember this letter if you do...He is at Kings’ College, Cambridge, now borne there by his own ability.’’* **5**

The letter of Dr. K.D.Ghose may be interpreted that he had deep faith in his sons. From Kings’ College, Cambridge Sri Aurobindo passed the classical Tripos Examination in first division at the end of the second year, which entitled him to achieve B. A. degree. But it was awarded only in the third year as students generally were the verge of the competitions of course. Sri Aurobindo might have got the Degree even before the third year, if he had applied for it, but he did not care to do that. Oscar Browning, professor of that college, remarked on his performance, *“…..I have* *examined papers at thirteen examinations and I have never during that time seen such excellent papers as yours and the essay (comparisons between Milton and Shakespeare) was too good……”***6** The comment of Prof. Browning supports Sri Aurobindo’s extra-ordinary talent. In 1891 Sri Aurobindo wrote a poem on the Irish revolutionary leader Parnell (Parnell died in 1891), **7** which shows that he took interest in the contemporary public issues with independent judgment and opinion on them. The Indian students of Cambridge founded an association named ‘Indian Majlis’ in 1891. This association played an important role in the social life of the Indian students in England and very often molded their political outlook and activities. Sri Aurobindo took a leading part in it and was for some time acted as its secretary. Keshab Ganesh Deshpande, Sir Hari Singh Gour and many other fire-brand Youngs were the members of Indian Majlis. During this time Sri Aurobindo delivered several speeches against the British imperialism that could only be described as revolutionary. Finally, he passed the open competition with distinction, but he did not qualify for the service because he consciously did not attend the horse-riding test. Because, he felt no call for ICS and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage and he managed to get himself disqualified for riding without himself rejecting the service. In 1938 Sri Aurobindo said, --

“*I appeared for the ICS because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later I found out what sort of work it was and I had no interest in the administrative life. My interest was in poetry and literature and studying of languages and patriotic action.’’* **8**

The spirit of remark made by Sri Aurobindo may be interpreted that he willingly to get himself disqualified for horse-riding. In his Tripos Sri Aurobindo won a prize for Greek and Latin lambics. He started learning Bengali and Sanskrit at Cambridge. Observing the internal situation in contemporary society of India the enthusiastic young Indians at Cambridge formed a secret society romantically called ‘LotusandDragger’***.*** Each member of that organization vowed to work for the liberation of India and to contribute work serving to that end. Among the members only Sri Aurobindo actively served for freeing India. It is proved that Sri Aurobindo had become involved in deep patriotic activities at Cambridge and he expressed desire to dedicate himself for India’s freedom movement. At that time he was inspired by Mazzini, Irish patriotic movements and others. In Cambridge, he read Max-Muller’s translation of the *‘Sacred Books of the East’*series and came across the idea of the ‘Self’ or *‘*Atman*’*. At a time when he knew about ‘Yoga’, then he concluded in his mind that ‘Vedanta’ was the final truth and to be realized in life. Despite absence from his motherland for 14 years, he was very eager to return India.

The Maharaj of Baroda Sri Sayajirao Gaekwar was on a visit to England. Mr. Gaekwar was one of the most enlightened among Indian Princes. He was looking an administrator for his Baroda State. When he came to learn that a talented and enthusiastic young Indian with excellent educational qualification was looking for a job, he at once got interested. As a result Mr. Gaekwar met Sri Aurobindo and he was selected for the Baroda State Service. Sri Aurobindo left England in February, 1893. He did not at all have any feeling of separation from a land where he spent 14 years of his early life. He did develop in him an attachment to English and European thought and literature, but not to England as a country. Sri Aurobindo said, “*There was an attachment to England thought and literature, but not to England, he had no ties there and did not make England his adopted country…...”* **9** From this remark of Sri Aurobindo it may be interpreted that he had no mental attachment to the British political and governing system though the British literature and liberal thought attracted him. In fact, he had no respect to the British Government for its colonial and exploitative character. But unfortunately a wrong news hurt Dr. K.D.Ghose while Sri Aurobindo returning home. He was misinformed by Grindlay & Company that Sri Aurobindo was probably sunk off the coast of Portugal near Lisbon while returning India. Dr. K.D.Ghose read about this news regarding accident and concluded that Sri Aurobindo was drowned. This news shocked him was so immensely that he had a heart attack and died in despair and grief for his beloved ‘Ara’. But the fact that Sri Aurobindo left by a mail streamer ‘Carthage’ and reached India quite safely in February, 1893. This incident may be treated as a sign of divine blessing for India’s freedom movement in course of time.

The year 1893 is a landmark year in the history of India for starting of noble mission by great Indians such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. **First**, Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, addressed at a gathering of the ‘World Parliament of Religions’ at Chicago on 11th September, 1893. His speeches exposed the humanitarian features of the Indian civilization and culture. In a divided world on the basis of religions, races, cultures and civilizations his speech clearly held a new universal outlook regarding religion. In his own words, *“I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believed not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true.”***10** This tolerant attitude towards all religions he must have learns from his master Sri Ramakrishna who proclaimed the simple doctrine of *‘Yata Mat Tata Path’*which means there are as many paths as there are beliefs. He realized that there is one God; all are coming to him, following different paths. In his own words, different paths lead to the same God as the rivers lead to the sea. Thus it becomes clear that Swami Vivekananda proposed religious tolerance for keeping peace and harmony in international community. His idea of tolerance was based on benign principles of moral judgement. In fact, prior to Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda for the first time held the spirit of India before the West. Rabindranath Tagore had deep respect for Swami Vivekananda for his holistic humanist spiritual outlook based on ‘Sanatana Dharma’. Once Tagore wrote Roma Rolland, a renowned international humanist that if you want to know India, read Vivekananda.Tagore’s such a remark clearly indicates the spirit of Swami Vivekananda’s writings. **Secondly**, in 1893, another great Indian, Mahatma Gandhi left for South Africa. There he gradually get involved in practicing law and become known as an advocate. Side by side he experienced bitter inhumane treatments by the ruling White class. Actually, like many other Blacks, he was a victim of the apartheid policy of the ruling class in South Africa. He raised his voice against this inhumane and undignified policy. He was against all kinds of racial discriminations. He there organized social movements against the apartheid policy of the Government. He demanded equal treatment for all irrespective of racial, linguistic, religious and cultural divisions. He undertook the policy of ‘Satyagraha’ as a method or strategy of his movement. In fact, the policy of Satyagraha represents the spirit of India, the essence of Sanatana Dharma. Later on, after returning India in 1916 Mahatma Gandhi took a leadership role in India’s freedom movement and organized a mass-movement following the guideline of the Doctrine of Passive Resistance as developed by Sri Aurobindo. **Thirdly**, Sri Aurobindo returned India with a very little knowledge about her, but with a great mission when Sri Aurobindo set foot on the soil of India at Apollo Bandar, Bombay ‘a vast calm’ descended upon him. This calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards. He once said,

“…*since I set foot on Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I* *began to have spiritual experiences but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time, I found myself entering supra-physical world planes with influences and an effect from them upon material plane.”***11**

These words of Sri Aurobindo clearly indicate his future spiritual life as well as worldly duties. This worldly duty may be interpreted as his firm dedication to liberate India from the bondage of the British Empire. In later course of freedom movement the entire nation saw Sri Aurobindo’s great dedication and a new vision regarding India’s freedom movement.

Sri Aurobindo stayed in England for over fourteen years and joined Baroda State Service in 1893. His stay in Baroda continued for over thirteen years right up to 1907. Interestingly he did not accept any job under the British Government. That is why he made himself unsuccessful in ICS examination. Returning India though he started his career in the Secretariat of Baroda State which at that time was not under the British control, and finally, at Principal’s request he was appointed as a Professor of English. Afterwards, for his brilliance and wisdom he was promoted to the post of Vice- principal at that College for few days. Further, by the request of the Maharaja of Baroda Sri Aurobindo acted as a tutor of his children. Side by side in August, 1893 to February, 1894 by the request of his Cambridge friend K.G.Despande, Sri Aurobindo wrote a series of political articles in the ***‘InduPrakash’***, a Weekly published from Bombay. The articles entitled ***‘New******Lamps for Old’*** were actually the criticisms of aims and objectives of the then Indian National Congress(INC).The articles had three distinct stands of Sri Aurobindo’s early political thought---Sri Aurobindo as a critic of the INC, as a critic of the British colonial power, and his positive programme of political action for India’s independence. Critising the Congress policy, he said that its aims were mistaken; its spirit was not the spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness; its methods were not right method; and the leaders in whom it trusted were not the right persons to lead the nation. Sri Aurobindo also spoke about Bankimchandra Chattopadhaya and Michel Madhusudan Dutta in his articles in the *‘InduPrakash’*. Sri Aurobindo for the first time raised many political questions before the public by his articles. **12**

He visited the then British India’s capital (Calcutta) for the first time in 1894. He met all his relatives. His sister Sarojini described him as *“a very dedicated face,* *long hair cut in English fashion, Sejda* (Sri Aurobindo) *was a very shy person.*” **13** His mother Swarnalata Devi did not recognize him first, then after seeing a cut-mark in Aurobindo’s finger she could recognize him. In the early life of Baroda, Sri Aurobindo gave attention to the learning of Hindi, Gujrati, Marathi, Bengali and Sanskrit. He was thought Bengali by a distinguished teacher, Dinendra Kumar Roy, who came to Baroda and stayed with him (1898-1900). He described Sri Aurobindo as a God in his book ‘*Aurobindo Prasanga’* (in Bengali), published from Cacutta in 1972.In this book Dinendra Kumar throws light on the various activities and thinking of Sri Aurobindo during his stay at Baroda. In his own words "*It was my great good fortune that I had the opportunity of living with him for over two years*". **14** Sri Aurobindo’s Bengali writings, such as the *‘Karakahini’*, *‘Durga-strato’, Khamar Adarsha’, ’Jaganather Rath’*, etc, are some of his remarkable work. He also wrote editorial column in the magazine*---‘Dharma’* in Bengali.

In April, 1901, Sri Aurobindo married Smt. Mrinalini Devi, daughter of BhupalChandra Bose. The occasion took place at Baithak Khana Road, Calcutta. As Sri Aurobindo had gone to England the question of purification rituals was raised. But he refused to do so like his father. The marriage ceremony was attended among others by Mr. and Mrs. Jagadish Chandra Bose, Barrister Bomkesh Chakroborty, Lord Sinha, and many other distinguished persons.

Sri Aurobindo’s political thought was a critique of both the contemporary policies of the INC, and the British imperialist power. At the same time he proposed an action plan and programme based on secret revolutionary propaganda and a mass-organization to liberate his motherland. He influenced the entire nation with the ideal of ‘total independence’ or ‘Purna Swaraj’. To reach that supreme goal he advocated steps such as--- non-cooperation and passive resistance. In one of his early articles, he illustrated that India’s actual enemy was not external force, but its own weakness.....hypocrisy and purblind sentimentalism. In 1902, Sri Aurobindo visited Bengal to take account of the preparation for revolutionary activities against the British colonial power. This year the nation witnessed the untimely death of Swami Vivekananda, whose writings inspired the young community aspiring India’s emancipation from the colonial power. Sister Nivedita, the Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda, met Sri Aurobindo at Baroda in 1902 after Swamiji’s demise. They had a talk regarding revolutionary activities and organization. Nivedita’s involvement in India’s freedom movement and related matters was certainly lesson for Indians. Sri Aurobindo praised Nivedita as *“a solid* *worker”* **15** of India’s freedom movement. From now till almost the last day of Sri Aurobindo’s stay in Calcutta, Nivedita was his collaborator in India’s freedom struggle.

Again in 1904 Sri Aurobindo came to Calcutta and after considering the situation constituted a high-power Committee of five members including PramathaNath Mitter and Sister Nivedita for supervision over revolutionary activities. Thus through this Committee he wanted to maintain his connection with the revolutionary activities in Bengal. Sri Aurobindo handed over the responsibility of starting a centre for secret revolutionary work in Calcutta on Jatindranath Banerjee, who took military training at the Baroda State Army. In fact, Sri Aurobindo helped him to get admission to the State Army. Later on, Sri Aurobindo sent to Calcutta for initiating revolutionary work. He was also instructed by Sri Aurobindo to continue as before under the new Committee headed by Pramathanath Mitter and Sister Nivedita. But unfortunately this Committee could not function long as differences among its members become more and more acquit. Jatindranath Banerjee ultimately left the revolutionary activities and took sannyas under the name of Niralamba Swami. **16**

However, many young men in Calcutta and adjoining areas did not withdraw themselves from revolutionary activities even after taking Sannyas by Jatindranath. Sri Aurobindo gradually made himself very active for taking part in freedom struggle. He wrote the series of ***‘Bhawani Mandir’*** during 1904-1905, being inspired by BankimChandra’s *‘BandeMataram’* (Ananda Math). In *Bhawani* *Mandir* Sri Aurobindo actually presented his plan of revolutionary movement against the ruling colonial power. On the eve of the partition of Bengal thousands of copies of the *Bhawani Mandir* were printed and circulated. It frightened the British administration as the book inspired many ardent youths. In this booklet Sri Aurobindo built a temple of Mother Bhawani where workers had paid their labour with a desire to liberate the motherland. Thus it may interpret that Sri Aurobindo actually wanted to awaken Indians, particularly the working class, with the spirit of nationalism for fighting against the colonial British ruler. Naturally, this booklet grew the attention of the British authorities. It was evident from the confidential report of Mr. Denham, the superintendent of police, Special Branch, Calcutta. This report explained Sri Aurobindo’s *Bhawani Mandir* with the following words:

*“Bhawani Mandir was nothing but a gigantic scheme for establishing a central religious society, outwardly religious but in spirit, energy and work political. From this centre missionaries well-versed in religious-political argument were to go on their wanderings over India, to from fresh centres and gain fresh recruits. The argument in the pamphlet is ingenious and when examined shows that extraordinary adroitness with which its author has misinterpreted the Vedantist ideas for his own purposes, and to adorn his talk and point his moral.”* **17**

Another important event took place in July 1905.The British Government took measures for the partition of Bengal. Such a step created severe resentment in different parts of Bengal and outside. In fact, the entire nation came forward to launch a vehement protest movement against the decision of the partition of Bengal which was named after **‘Swadeshi Movement’**. Sri Aurobindo also took part in this movement with many other eminent persons such as---Rabindranath Tagore, SurendraNath Banerjee, BipinChandra Pal, Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. The whole nation spontaneously launched protest against the declaration of Partition. From a letter written to Smt. Mrinalini Devi by Sri Aurobindo on 21st October, 1905, it appears that Sri Aurobindo engaged himself in political activities during the initial phase of Swadeshi Movement.

On 14th April, 1906, Sri Aurobindo attended the political conference in Barishal along with Krishna Kumar Mitter, Bipin Chandra Pal and other activists. The conference was declared illegal by the British Government and the police strictly banned to cry ‘*BandeMataram’*. In the middle of 1906 Sri Aurobindo took one year’s leave from the Baroda College without pay for taking active part in freedom struggle. After Barishal conference Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal travelled different districts of East Bengal and addressed public meetings and introduced nationalist ideal. In the meantime early in 1906, a weekly English journal named ***‘Yugantar’*** was published from Calcutta by the initiative of young revolutionaries. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some articles and his writings in the *‘Yugantar’* inflamed the hearts of the people with the spirit of patriotism. Besides, Sri Aurobindo and Barindra, several contributors such as---Bhupendranath Dutta, Debabrata Basu, Abinash Bhattacharya, Upendranath Bandopadhaya, Sekharam Ganesh Deuskar and many others came forward with their writings and efforts. *The* *Yugantar* had a lasting memory in the minds of the younger generation who did plunge into the freedom movement in India, in a wide-scale.

In 1906, Sri Aurobindo took mental preparation to leave the Baroda Service to give a concrete shape to his dreams and vision of free India. He joined as the Principal of the Bengal National College (presently known as Jadavpur University) which was established on 15th August, 1906 with the initiative of the National Council of Education. Many important and influential Bengali personalities like Raja Subodh Mallick came forward to donate generously to the fund of Jatiya Siksha Parisad (National Council of Education). This organization was set up to spread Indian education and culture and to make on its own foot. Actually the organizers of this education council sought to inject the spirit of Indianness in the minds of young generation. After the famous Chicago Speech of Swami Vivekananda in 1893, Indians were made conscious of their own culture and civilization to a great extent. As a result in many parts of the country sporadic efforts by different organizations led to make aware the common people about achieving freedom.

Sri Aurobindo’s stay in Bengal accelerated Swadeshi Movement with a new dimension. His joining as the Principal of Bengal National College encouraged and influenced many people to take active part in some programmes aiming at increasing national strength. Bipin Chandra Pal, a leading freedom fighter and scholar started English daily named the ***‘BandeMataram’*** in August, 1906 to make conscious Indians about the exploitation and torture by the British ruler. Sri Aurobindo was appointed assistant editor of this daily. This new daily was abled to win the minds of common Indians for its pro-active anti-British policy. It supported violence against violence sponsored by the British ruler and sought to awaken manhood in the nation. It placed before the people an alternative programme of self-rule by highlighting boycott, swadeshi, national education, passive resistance and parallel government. This newspaper was a great event in the history of Indian freedom movement. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote a series of articles on passive resistance in the ‘*BandeMataram’* from 12th April to 23rd April, 1907. In fact, his articles named after the *‘****Doctrine of Passive Resistance’*** (DPR) was a fundamental, original, and significant blueprint on the strategy of freedom movement. This doctrine has been discussed in detail in Chapter-4 &5.

Sri Aurobindo gradually took active role in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress. He joined the Congress session of December, 1906, held in Calcutta under the Presidentship of Dadabhai Naoroji. Many eminent Congress leaders such as Bal Ganadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Khapade, Khare joined this session. This session is a land mark in the history of Indian freedom movement as the demand for ‘Purno Swaraj’ (Total Independence) was placed and passed in this session despite the opposition of well-known moderate leaders such as Sir Phiroz Shah Mehta, Ghokle, Surendranath Banerjee. It may be mentioned here that Sri Aurobindo took personal initiative for the passing of the resolution in favour of ‘Purno Swaraj’. Thus Calcutta Session of the INC witnessed a clear division between the moderates and the extremists or nationalists which ultimately took a final shape in the next Surat Session (1907).This Calcutta Session may be interpreted as the emergence of Sri Aurobindo as a national leader.

Sri Aurobindo was always in favour of Purno Swaraj. After getting passed the resolution to that end in the Calcutta Session of the INC, he took a programme of touring different parts of Bengal with a view to accelerate anti-British political activities. He received a royal reception in Khulna, incidentally it may be mentioned here that his father Dr.K.D.Ghose spent a long time here during his service life. Sri Aurobindo was always in favour of unity within the INC despite differences of opinion with the moderates---who opposed to the resolution demanding Purno Swaraj. In fact, his concept of Purno Swaraj and the concept of Doctrine of Passive Resistance are interrelated. The last one is an instrument which leads to the first concept---‘Purno Swaraj’. The concept of Doctrine of Passive Resistance has two edges---Boycott and Swadeshi. These two are inter-dependent to each other. Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that if these two edges operate successfully then the British rule in India would become extremely difficult. He categorized the concept of the DPR under following heads: ---i) Economic Boycott and Swadeshi, ii) Educational Boycott and National Education, iii) Judicial Boycott and National Arbitration Courts, iv) Executive Boycott and National Organization and v) Social Boycott. According to Sri Aurobindo ‘boycott’ means ‘*to combine in refusing to hold relations of any kind* *with(the other party) on account of political or other differences, so as either punish him or coerce him into abanding his position.*’**18** Further, by DPR he meant a general campaign for the revival of the national spirit, of pride in India’s great cultural heritage and of self-confidence and self-consciousness in the vast Indian people; a secret and aggressive movement directed against the foreign rulers. Thus the boycott movement against alien ruler on the economic, educational, judicial, executive and social fronts, and the corresponding development of indigenous institutions actually sought to meet the needs and requirement of the Indian people. The words of *‘BandeMataram’* influenced the revolutionaries interpreting the glorious history of ancient Indian culture and heritage. The different writings of Sri Aurobindo created passion and patriotism in the minds, hearts and souls of the Indian masses and encouraged them towards freedom of India. Thus it can be said that Sri Aurobindo took a leading role in awakening nationalist thought in India. The British Government initially did not take any legal action against him for playing such a role, but they knew well that the brain of Sri Aurobindo was very much active behind it.

Ultimately, the British police searched the office of the BandeMataram on 30th July, 1907 and a case was filed against Sri Aurobindo on a charge of sedition on 16th August of that year. However, Sri Aurobindo was granted bail by the court. This incident made his political role public. At the same time the *‘BandeMataram’* too became famous for playing its nationalist role. In the meantime, Sri Aurobindo resigned from the post Principal of the Bengal National College on 2nd August, 1907 on the ground that he would not be abled to give due attention to the work of the college as he would have to be busy with the activities related to the freedom movement of India. However, he addressed to the students of the Bengal National College with a view to make them inspire for the work of their motherland on 23 rd August at his farewell meeting organized by them. In his own words,

*“......If you will study, study for her sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul of her service. You will earn your living that you may live of her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice.”* **19**

The address to students given by Sri Aurobindo may be analyzed in this fashion. It reflects Sri Aurobindo’s heart-felt love for his beloved students and deep faith in their strength. It may be surprising to the present generation, especially the student community, to note that in the entire text of the address there was not a single word relating to politics, although it was for a political reason that he had resigned. He simply spoke with ardent sincerity about three things: First, the mission which he had taken up from his childhood; second, the respect that was shown to him by the students was actually shown to their motherland; and third, to make India a great nation, to enable her to stand up with head erect among the nations in the world. In a word, his address to students actually was an expression of love and respect for motherland which he wanted to inject in their minds. The lecture has been mentioned in **Appendix No.-- 1** .

Sri Aurobindo was freed from the charge of sedition lodged by the British Police against him on 23rd September, 1907, as Bipin Chandra Pal kept mum before the Presidency Magistrate, Mr. Kingsford, when he was asked, who was the editor of the *‘BandeMataram’*? But Bipin Chandra Pal and Mr. Apurba Basu, the printer of the *‘BandeMataram’* both were given six months imprisonment. After this incident Sri Aurobindo drew attention of many leaders of the nationalist group and intellectuals. Even World Poet Rabindranath Tagore was impressed to a great extent by the courageous role taken by Sri Aurobindo in India’s freedom movement. Since then Sri Aurobindo began to lead Swadeshi Movement with a definite direction and his courage and political sagacity made a positive impact among the Indians. In November, 1907, the Provincial (State-level) Conference of the INC was held at Midnapore. The moderates were determined to prevent the nationalists. Moderate leader Surendranath Banerjee led the Conference with the help of the British administration. As a result the nationalists organized a separate convention with Sri Aurobindo as their leader on 8th November, 1907. Here too Sri Aurobindo took an active role in passing a resolution in favour of ‘Purno Swaraj’. It may be mentioned here that he met here Khudiram Bose and Saytendranath Bose, who sacrificed their lives for their motherland in 1908. Many young like them were present in the Midnapore Conference and they were touched to a great extent by the spirited speeches of Sri Aurobindo. The grand success of the nationalists at Midnapore Conference made Sri Aurobindo a national figure for his dynamic and positive leadership. Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra invited Sri Aurobindo to be present in the Surat Congress which was scheduled be held in December, 1907 with his followers. No doubt, Tilak had in his minded this game-plan that Sri Aurobindo’s presence and leadership might have strengthened the nationalists to win over the moderates. This incident may be interpreted as a clear indication of increasing influence and acceptance of Sri Aurobindo as a national leader.

After Midnapore Conference the nationalists organized a large meeting on 15th December, 1907 at Beadon Square, Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo as their leader was present at this meeting and he delivered his speech in Bengali for the first time. At the meeting the nationalists again took resolution in favour of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. Thus the nationalists took the strategy of exerting pressure upon the moderates for accepting the proposal of ‘Purno Swaraj’ at Surat Congress. Sri Aurobindo had his full consent to this proposal and he approved this strategy of exerting influence over the moderates. After this meeting Sri Aurobindo started for Surat on 23rd December, 1907. In his way to Surat he stayed at Nagpur for two days. There he delivered speeches in favour of ‘Purno Swaraj’ on22nd December, 1907. Thus prior to Surat Congress Sri Aurobindo made a total effort to create an atmosphere in favour of the nationalists.

The 23rd session of Indian National Congress began at Surat on 26th December, 1907 and Sri Aurobindo actively participated in the session. At this session the moderates and the extremists or nationalists again got involved in conflict over the issue of the selection of the President of the session. The nationalists put Lala Lajpat Rai as their candidate and the moderates headed by Surendranath Banerjee placed Rashbihari Ghosh their candidate. As a result both sides got involved in quarrel and vandalism and ultimately the meeting was broken up. However, Sri Aurobindo took initiative to protect the representatives of both sides present there. But the split between Radical and Moderate wings of the INC took a final shape. Sri Aurobindo’s observation may be mentioned for proper understanding of the discourse of the freedom movement of India. In his own words:

“*History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil: it records the shown front of the curtain. Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the newfangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat. Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn or founding the revolutionary movement is very little known.”* **20**

If we analyze Sri Aurobindo’s this statement it may be interpreted as a new direction to which Congress would run. Under the uncompromising personality of Sri Aurobindo the Congress had no option but to declare itself against the foreign rule and the moderates within the Congress gradually led to a waning force. The words of eminent Prof. Manoj Das do support this view in his famous book ‘*Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century’*. In his words, *“And behind this grand new turn glows the personality of Sri Aurobindo, the first leader to declare openly completely and absolute independence as the aim of the Indian political awakening.”***21**

After attending the Surat Conference Sri Aurobindo went through a process of spiritual realization and came in contact with some religious personalities such as Yogi Shakhare Baba and Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. In their contact Sri Aurobindo experienced religious strength and blessings which came to dominate his later course of life and led him to be engaged in his total spiritual life.**22** From Surat Sri Aurobindo came to Baroda and there he delivered three speeches describing the then political situation of India. A large number of people attended the above meetings. From Baroda on his way to Calcutta Sri Aurobindo visited Bombay, Poona, Nasik, Dhulia and Amravati. He visited Bombay and spoke on national education there on 15th January, 1908. In his speech he emphasized the need of national education through the proper teaching of history and geography, history of the lives and works of the mighty makers of India’s past, such as the Rishis, Ashoka, Akbar, Shivaji; and geography showing India as our vast Motherland where those makers of her history lived and worked.

Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele accompanied Sri Aurobindo on his request and guided him towards a spiritual mission. Yogi Lele’s influence brought some changes in his speeches and mind-set. In his Bombay speech on 19th January, 1908 Sri Aurobindo was led by deep inner compulsions. In this speech he made his famous statement about nationalism and termed it *“a religion that had come from* *God”.* **23** He described nationalism as a divine, immortal and invincible religion. He started preaching the cult of an exalted nationalism. His Nasik speech (24th January, 1908) concentrated on ‘Swaraj’. He said *“Swaraj is life*, *Swaraj is amrita, Swaraj is mukti. Swaraj cannot be granted by any outside agency. Man is born free. If he has lost his freedom, he must regain it......”***24** As a revolutionary Sri Aurobindo had passionately declared swaraj not as supervised self-rule under the Empire but unqualified independence from the colonizers.Thus, it appears that He made an attempt to awaken Indians by his spirited speeches based on nationalistic elements. He believed that it was God who is his working in Bengal. He had deep conviction that God has a work for the great and ancient nation. Thus, it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo’s belief and work was gradually taking a shape with religious tone. At last he reached Calcutta in late January, 1908 and stayed at Scott Lane, Calcutta. Here revolutionary Amarendranath Chottapadhaya met Sri Aurobindo and got him blessing. Sri Aurobindo told Amarendranath that now time had come to promise to serve the motherland fearlessly. He was entrusted with the tusk of collecting money for revolutionary work. In April, 1908 Sri Aurobindo again became very active in different works related with freedom movement. He provided over a meeting on 8th April, 1908 at Chitala in Chandernagore. There after a meeting was held at Panti’s Math, Calcutta on 10th April, 1908. Sri Aurobindo was the main speaker. The issue of this meeting was the reunification between the Moderates and Nationalists. Again Sri Aurobindo delivered a speech at Baruipur near Calcutta on 12th April, 1908. His speech was published in the *BandeMataram* on 17th April, 1908. In his speech he emphasized that everything could be conquered by truth, love, and belief. Further, he also expressed hope that sons of the mother (Motherland) might be united by her call. Thus one may observe that in the above mentioned speeches delivered by Sri Aurobindo a thrust was made for the unity between the Moderates and Nationalists. It may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo made an untiring effort for the unity of the two wings of the Congress.

In the meantime, the revolutionary activities reached the peak and spread rapidly in different parts of Bengal. Sri Aurobindo as the leader of the nationalists and strong supporter of ‘Purno Swaraj’ had to be present in different meetings organized by his followers at different parts of Bengal and adjoining regions. He visited Kishoreganj and there addressed a public meeting on 18th April, 1908. There he talked on some important aspects such as---village construction and the unity between the Hindu and Muslim. He was of the opinion that, swaraj was impossible without unity. But according to him, the unity for meaningful swaraj is not a unity of opinion, a unity of speech, a unity of intellectual conviction. This unity, according to Sri Aurobindo, would come from the heart. Thus his attitude towards Hindu and Muslim unity may be interpreted as positive outlook.

April, 1908, was a landmark year in the history of India’s freedom movement, particularly in the revolutionary movement. This year witnessed tremendous revolutionary activities by the youths of Bengal. Three major incidents took place in this year----**I)** attempt to kill Magistrate Kingsford by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki at Muzaffarpur on 30th April, 1908, **II)** arrest of revolutionaries including Sri Aurobindo by the British Police in Calcutta on 2nd May,1908 in connection with the ‘Maniktala Bomb’ Conspiracy Case and **III)** hanging of Khudiram Bose on 11th August,1908 at Muzaffarpur jail in connection with the killing of Magistrate Kingsford, Kanailal Dutta on 10th November,1908 and Saytendranath Bose on 21st November,1908 at Alipore jail in connection with the political murder of Naren Gossin, the approver in the Maniktala Bomb Conspiracy Case on 31st August,1908.

The rise of revolutionary activities, particularly attempts of killing the British administrators and Magistrates who were responsible for acts of savage punishments on the revolutionaries and their sympathizers, accelerated the process of searching and raiding the centres of revolutionaries by the British police. In this connection mention may be made of the ‘Maniktola Bomb’ or the ‘Alipore Conspiracy Case’. A detailed mentioning of this incident will indicate the spread of revolutionary activities in Bengal at that time. The revolutionaries headed by Barindra Kumar Ghose, the younger brother of Sri Aurobindo of the ‘Yugantar Group’ were running a revolutionary centre at ‘Muraripukar Garden’, Maniktola in Calcutta. This garden was an ancestral property of Sri Aurobindo. Barindra told Sri Aurobindo about their preparedness to deal with those who were responsible for repression and onslaught on the revolutionaries. In fact, government repressions compelled the revolutionaries to take drastic measures. Sri Aurobindo also held the same view. In this connection his comment may be mentioned *“If anything is worth doing at all, it must be done well.”* **25**The British Detective Department somehow came to learn about the activities of the revolutionaries of the Maniktola garden. Accordingly the British police ransacked the Maniktola garden and unearthed bombs, explosives and weapons. They arrested Barindra and some other revolutionaries. Barindra was suspected as the chief organizer behind the whole underground revolutionary activities. Perhaps the British police also suspected Sri Aurobindo in connection with the entire affair. He was arrested on 4th May morning, 1908. Along with Sri Aurobindo, Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya and Sailendra Nath Bose were also arrested as they were with him in the same house (48, Gray Street, Calcutta). In this connection total 36(thirty six) revolutionaries were arrested and they were sent to Alipore Jail and charged with many grounds, particularly for ‘waging war against the King’.

Then started one of the most famous and celebrated trials in the history of Indian freedom movement, the **‘Maniktola Bomb Case’** or **‘Alipore Conspiracy** **Case’**. Sri Aurobindo was refused bail as the British Criminal Lawyer Mr. Eardley Norton argued that Sri Aurobindo was behind the new national consciousness spreading rapidly all over the country. In defence of Sri Aurobindo his friend and brilliant young Lawyer Mr. Chittaranjan Das (C.R.Das), later known as ‘Deshnandhu’ came forward. Sri Aurobindo’s sister Sarojini issued an appeal for funds to collect for expenditure for the trial in which she said:

“*My countrymen are aware that my brother Aurobindo stands accused of a grave offence....I know all my countrymen do not hold the same political opinion as he. But I feel some delicacy in saying that probably there are few Indians who do not appreciate his great attainments, his self-sacrifice, his single-minded devotion to the country’s cause, and the high spirituality of his character. These embolden me, a woman, to stand before every son and daughter of India for help to defend a brother---my brother and theirs too.”***26**

In the daily *‘Basumati’* a long editorial on Sarojini’s appeal was published on 27th June, 1908.People from all different sections of society responded to the appeal and they contributed within their capacity. After realizing from the jail Sri Aurobindo expressed his deep sense of gratitude to all who had helped him. This incident indicates his great respect towards common people of India.

The case continued many months before the District and Sessions Judge, Mr.Beachcroft. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that Mr.Beachcroft was the class-mate of Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge. In this case 36 accused, 206 witnesses were examined, 4000 documents were filed and 5000 exhibits consisting of bombs, revolvers, ammunition, detonators, fuses, poisonous acid, and other explosive materials were presented before the Magistrate. C.R. Das admitted in his masterly arguments that freedom was certainly the keynote of Sri Aurobindo’s all teachings, i.e. was his dominant principle by which he wanted his country’s politics and his countrymen’s lives to be governed. If that was a crime Sri Aurobindo would willingly admit his guilt. He (C.R. Das) also stated that Sri Aurobindo was ‘the Prophet of nationalism, Poet of patriotism, Lover of humanity’. In other words, according to C.R. Das, Sri Aurobindo was not an ordinary political prisoner but was a remarkable person with high dignity. Advocate C.R. Das in his final appeal to the Judge and the two Assessors in the case stated,

“*Long after* he *is dead and gone, his words will have echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of High Court of History.”* **27**

The words of Chuttaranjan Das may be interpreted as correct analysis of Sri Aurobindo as a pioneer philosopher and thinker of his time. On 14th April, 1909 the two Assessors unanimously declared that Sri Aurobindo was ‘not guilty’. Accordingly about a month later Justice Mr.Beachcroft accepted the verdict of the Assessors and acquitted Sri Aurobindo. The extracts of Justice Beachcroft’s judgment mentioned in **Appendix No.-2.**

During his stay in Alipore Jail from 5th May, 1908 to 6th May, 1909 Sri Aurobindo realized the presence of the Omnipotent God. He had described his jail experiences in the book ***‘****KaraKahini****’***, written in Bengali, published in 1915. In this book Sri Aurobindo had given an account of his outer and inner experiences. He spoke of his incarceration in Alipore jail having provided him with the opportunity for practicing yoga. So it may be interpreted that his stay in Alipore jail was just like staying in an ashram---a shelter for spiritual development. During his jail life he attained spiritual development which ultimately led him towards a ‘psychological break’ with active politics. The new consciousness and state of mind transformed his approach to the existing political issues and problems. His changed attitude was reflected in his following statement published in the *‘Bharat* *Mitra’*, 21st August, 1908, Calcutta, ---

“Service *of our motherland is our highest duty at this moment. This must be our duty in this iron age. It is now the time for us to conserve our energy. Do not be impatient, do not despair. Do not lose faith. The present fatigue and inactivity are natural; you will find instances of them in the history of every nation. Everyone must store up energy. Be prepared with fresh hope and vigour for the worship of the Mother. Divine power has infused this nation with a new power. This power will exalt the nation one day.”* **28**

This statement may be interpreted that the spiritual development in jail finally culminated in his attaining the mystic experience of all pervading Supreme Reality. However, after releasing from the jail Sri Aurobindo engaged himself in publishing an English Weekly paper---*‘The Karmayogin’*and a Bengali Weekly paper---*‘The* *Dharma’***.** These two papers were first published respectively on 19th June, 1909 and 23rd August, 1909. *The Karmayogin* serialized a number of his thoughtful and constructive writings, such as---‘*A System of National Education’*, *‘The Brain of India’*, *‘The National Value of Art’*, *‘The Ideal of Karmoyogin’*, Kalidasa’s ‘*RituSamhara’*, Bankim’s *‘AnandaMath’*, etc. He also made comment on the various political problems of the day not only India but also international scenario. It also contained his thoughts on national, religious, educational, literary and philosophical subjects.The leading editorial articles of *The Dharma* were*---‘Gitar Bhumika’* (Introduction of Gita), *‘Dharma O Jatiota’* (Religion and Nationalism), etc. Through these papers he basically expressed his realization in the spiritual world. In other words, through the said papers Sri Aurobindo vehemently and eloquently preached the revivalist and messianic gospel of nationalism.

On 30th May, 1909 Sri Aurobindo attended the Annual meeting of the ‘Sanatana Dharma Rakshini Sabha’ at Uttarpara in the district of Hooghly. This meeting was mainly sponsored by Raja PearyMohan Mukherjee, the renowned Zamindar of Uttarpara and it was held in the large compound of Public Library and attended by ten thousand people. It was the first public meeting attended by Sri Aurobindo after releasing from the Alipore jail. The lecture delivered by him here is well-known as **‘Uttarpara Speech’.** In his speech he stressed on his spiritual realization. In the light of his spirituality he said,

*“****.......****it is the Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana* *Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.”* **29**

In this speech Sri Aurobindo had given a vivid description of what had happened to him and what he had realized during the period of seclusion in the Alipore jail. Thus, one may notice a change in the attitude of Sri Aurobindo towards existing political issues. His Uttarpara Speech is mentioned in detail in **Appendix No.-3**.

After his release from the jail Sri Aurobindo found that the entire political environment of the country had changed as most of the nationalist leaders were in jail. So in the changed perspective, both in Sri Aurobindo’s attitude and in political environment, he again engaged himself in limited political activities. He attended various meetings and delivered lectures in Calcutta and its suburbs, such as---Beadon Square, Calcutta (13th June, 1909), Provincial Jhalakati Conference, Barisal(19th June, 1909), Annual meeting of the Howrah Peoples’ Association, Howrah(27th June,1909), College Square, Calcutta(18th July,1909), the Hooghly Conference of INC, Chinsurah(4-6 September,1909),etc. At Beadon Square meeting Sri Aurobindo highly commended the courage and enthusiasm of the people. It observed that in this speech he made some passing comment only on certain aspects of the ‘Morley-Minto Reforms’. In his Jhalakati speech he said,

*“We seek the fulfilment of our life* *as a nation. This is what the word Swaraj, which is a bug-bear and terror to the Europeans, really means. When they hear it, they are full of unreasoning terrors. They think Swaraj is independence, it is freedom and that means that the people* *are going to rise against them in rebellion, that means there are bombs behind every bush, that every volunteer who gives food to his famine-stricken countrymen or nurses the cholera-stricken is a possible rebel and dacoit. Swaraj is not the Colonial form of Government nor any form of Government. It means the fulfilment of our national life. That is what we seek, that is why God has sent us into the world to fulfil Him by fulfilling ourselves in our individual life, in the family, in the community, in the nation, in humanity. That is why He has sent us into the world and it is this fulfilment that we demand; for this fulfilment is life and to depart from it is to perish. Our object, our claim is that we shall not perish as a nation, but live as a nation. Any authority that goes against this object will dash itself against the eternal throne of justice---it will dash itself against the laws of nature which are the laws of God, and be broken to pieces.”***30**

This speech also indicates Sri Aurobindo’s changed attitude towards political issues which started to take a concrete shape during his stay in the Alipore Jail. A week later, on 27th June, 1909, Sri Aurobindo spoke on ‘The Right of Association’ at the annual meeting of the Howrah Peoples’ Association. In his long speech he dwelt at length on the three ‘*mantras’* of French Revolution---Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which tremendously stirred 18th century Europe and thereafter the whole world. After that he delivered his speech in the public meeting held at College Square. Here he explained the teachings of the Gita, Vedanta and Sankhya philosophy, etc. The topic of this speech was related to something quite different from his earlier speeches. It clearly indicates a separation from political issues.

In 4th to 6th September, 1909 Sri Aurobindo attended the Provincial Conference of the INC which was held in Chinsurah, Hooghly. It is commonly known as the ‘**Hooghly Conference’**. It was the largest ever attending a conference which Sri Aurobindo attended in his political life. This conference actually witnessed the farsighted and fearless leadership of Sri Aurobindo. But it is the fact that the moderates whole-heartedly tried to prevent Sri Aurobindo from attending this conference for they wanted to get approved resolutions in favour of them. But he was, however, able to overcome the attempts of the moderates. He was present at the Hooghly Conference with the moderate leader Surendranath Banerjee. But Sri Aurobindo received the warmest welcome. In this conference he asked the students and young generation to participate in the freedom movement. He expressed his anxiety for the unity of the Congress. Under his leadership both the moderates and the nationalists or extremists had to join hands for their greater mission---‘Independence of India’. Further, in this conference he urged the people to continue the boycott of foreign goods as a political weapon and as a measure of economic protection. This ‘Hooghly Conference’ was the largest political gathering where Sri Aurobindo was present and participated before leaving for Pondicherry. This Conference witnessed his politically matured and practically wise leadership. Through these speeches Sri Aurobindo sought to awake manhood in his countrymen and builds a strong nation.

In the meantime in July, 1909, Sri Aurobindo chalked out a ‘**six-point programme’** for the Nationalist Party. This programme was highly significant from the standpoint of his contemporary thought. He thought such a programme would be more relevant in the then existing political situation. He summed up his programmes as follows: ---

**1.** Persistence with a strict regard to law in a peaceful policy of self-help and passive resistance.

**2.** The regulation of our attitude towards the Government by the principle of “No control, no co-operation.”

**3.** A rapprochement with the Moderate party wherever possible and the reconstitution of a united Congress.

**4.** The regulation of the Boycott movement so as to make both the political and the economic boycott effective.

**5.** The organization of the Provinces if not of the whole country according to our original programme.

**6.** A system of co-operation which will not contravene the law and will yet enable workers to proceed with the work of self-help and national efficiency, if not quite so effectively as before, yet with energy and success. **31**

His such a programme in the context of the then political situation of India indicates his political sagacity and farsightedness. In fact, with the spiritual factors becoming increasingly predominant in the psyche of Sri Aurobindo the purely political issues began to diminish in importance. This had been reflected in his statement under the title*---****‘An Open Letter to My Countrymen.’*** It was published on 31st July, 1909 in *‘The Karmoyogin’*. The suggestions based upon his realization in the context of his changed attitude had already been mentioned under ‘six-point programme’. However, one may go through the entire text of his Open Letter to his Countrymen for getting an account of his changed attitude based on spiritual realization. The letter is mentioned in **Appendix No.4**.

However, February, 1910, witnessed some major events which ultimately led Sri Aurobindo to quit politics and retire into seclusion. Two Bengali officers under the British Government earned defame for their cruel and anti-independence role during the Swadeshi movement. Naturally, these two officers---Inspector Ramsaday Mukhopadhayay and Deputy Superintendent of Police Samsul Alam became the target of the then revolutionaries. Inspector Mukhopadhayay could escape from the hand of the revolutionaries, but Mr. Alam was killed by the revolutionary Birendranath Duttagupta on 24th January, 1910 at the premises of the Calcutta High Court. Later on 21st February of that year revolutionary Birendranath was hanged. However, the murder of Mr. Alam again brought Sri Aurobindo under suspect of the British Police. Sister Nivedita, anyway, got this information. She decided that this information be told to Sri Aurobindo so that he could escape arrest. Accordingly, Nivedita met Sri Aurobindo and informed him about the news.In the words ofSri Aurobindo,

*“She informed me that the Government had decided to deport me and she wanted me to go into secrecy or leave British India and act from outside so as to avoid interruption of my work…I told her that I do not think it necessary to accept her suggestion; I would write an open letter in the Karmoyogin which, I thought, would prevent this action by the Government.”* **32**

After some days of this incident Sri Aurobindo was informed by a messenger (Ramchandra Muzumder) that the British government had decided to search the office of *The Karmoyogin* and arrest him. In the meantime, on an imperative call or ‘Adesha’ from God Sri Aurobindo departed active politics and left for Chandernagore in French India and for Pondicherry. Before leaving for Pondicherry he sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take up the editing of *The Karmoyogin* in his absence. In fact, this was end of his active connection with his two journals---*‘The Karmoyogin’* and *‘The Dharma’.* Sri Aurobindo’s stay at Chandernagore was kept completely secret and he was there under the care of revolutionary Motilal Roy. According to Motilal Roy, Sri Aurobindo was all the time in meditation, a completely surrendered individual to God. In fact, there he led a ‘yogic life’ and stayed for probably one and half month. Suddenly, in the end of March, 1910, he was guided by the command from above---‘*Go to* *Pondicherry’*. Accordingly, he left Chandernagore and reached Pondicherry on 4th April, 1910. In his own words,

*“Here are the facts of that departure. I was in the Karmoyogin office when I received the word, on information given by a high-placed police official, that the office would be searched the next day and myself arrest. (The office was in fact searched but no warrant was produced against me; I heard nothing more of it till the case was started against the paper later on, but by then I had already left for Pondicherry.)While I was listening to animated comments from those around on the approaching event, I suddenly received a command from the above, in a Voice well-known to me, in three words, ‘Go to Chandernagore’....Afterwards, under the same ‘sailing orders’ I left Chandernagore and reached Pondicherry on April 4,1910.”* **33**

These words of Sri Aurobindo clearly throw light on the real story of his departure.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo left not only active political role in India’s freedom movement but also Bengal permanently. In Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo led a ‘yogic life’ till his death on 5th December, 1950. During his stay in Bengal from 1906 to 1910, he came forward in giving national freedom movement a shape of mass movement with the goal of attaining ‘Purno-Swaraj’. In fact, he was the first Indian leader who could provide a proper direction to the freedom movement and at the same time could lead it towards a desired goal by awakening the masses. This phase of Sri Aurobindo’s active participation freedom movement is commonly known as **‘Banga-Parba’** of his political life. This period of his life was highly potential and memorable and it laid the foundation his future course of action. However, he was widely misunderstood for having giving up the responsibility of leadership and for his sudden departure from the British India. But Sri Aurobindo explained the cause of his withdrawal from active politics in a letter written to Romain Rolland as follows:

*“India possesses in its past, a little rusty and out of use, the key to the progress of humanity. It is to this side that I am now turning my energies, rather than towards mediocre politics. Hence, the reason for my withdrawal. I believe in the necessity for Tapasya.”* **34**

So with an intention for higher and spiritual exercise Sri Aurobindo left Pondicherry. However, besides his spiritual activities at Pondicherry, he also expressed his opinions on important national and international issues till death in 1950.

**Notes &References: ---**

1. Rajnarayan Bose was the first to conceive and organize a movement for preparing India for her freedom and greatness. His plan included national fairs for the revival of indigenous arts and crafts, and promotions of Swadeshi.The members of Sanjibani Sabha were to consecrate their pledge to the Sabha with their blood.The activities of Jatiya Mela inspired and motivated Ananda Mohan Bose's Student Association, Sisir Kumar Ghose's India League and Surendranath Banerjee's Indian Association.All these are regarded as precursors of the Indian National Congress that had came in 1885.

2**.** Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2006), 19-21.

3. A .B. Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’,* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1978), 56.

4. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo-Towards Victory of the Light Supreme’*, (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1976), 129.

5. A .B. Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’,* 24

6. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo-Towards Victory of the Light Supreme’*, 22. Later, Irish Professor and the then class-mate of Sri Aurobindo, R.S.Lepper said about his scholastic and literary talent: "I knew him in those days quite well, and have happy recollections of him as a brilliant young classical scholar, an open Entrance scholar of the college, of marked literary and poetic taste, and as far as I ever saw, a young man of high character and modest bearing, who was linked by all who knew him." ---- A.B.Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’*, 48.

7*.* Sri Aurobindo wrote a short poem in the memory of Parnell' death entitled—'Charles Steward Parnell—1891' as

'O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,

Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords,

Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,

Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!

Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,

Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth'

---- Karan Singh, *‘Prophet of Indian Nationalism’,* (Mumbai: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 4th Edition, 2000), 36.

8. Nirodbaran, *‘Talks with Sri Aurobindo’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Press, First Edition, 1972), 58-59.

9. A .B. Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’,* 39

10. Swami Purnatmananda, *‘Swami Vivekananda---A Tribute’*, (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2012), 20.

11. Navajata, ‘*Sri Aurobindo’,* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), 11.

12. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Nationalism’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Second Edition, 1996), 9-62.

13. A .B. Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’,* 56.

14.Dinendra Kumar Roy, *‘Aurobindo Prasanga’* (in Bengali), (Calcutta: Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 1972), 7-9.

15. Nirodbaran, *‘Talks with Sri Aurobindo’,* 42.

16. Peter Heehs, *‘The Bomb in Bengal’*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 20-23.

17. Samar Basu, *‘Glimpses of Vadantism in Sri Aurobindo’s Political Thought’*, (Pondicherry:

Sri Mira Trust, 1988), 8.

18. Sri Aurobindo, *‘The Doctrine of Passive Resistance’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram,

1972), 35-36.

19. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Speeches’,* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Seventh Edition, 2005) 5-7.

20. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*On Himself’* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol.-26, 1972), 46.

21. Manoj Das, ‘*Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century’,* (Pondicherry: ‘SriAurobindo Ashram, 2nd Edition, 2003), 27*.*

22*.*Promod Kumar Sen, *‘Sri Aurobindo, Jibon O Yog’* (in Bengali), (Calcutta: Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 1952), 29-30.

23. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Speeches’*, 19-20.

24. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Speeches’*, 34-37.

25. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo-Towards Victory of the Light Supreme’*, 79.

26. *‘The BandeMataram’*, *SABCL* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram , June 13, 1908).

27. Karan Singh, *‘Prophet of Indian Nationalism’,* (Mumbai: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 4th Edition, 2000), 154.

28. ‘*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research’*---a magazine published from Kolkata, Sri Aurobindo Trust, December, 1983, 99.

29. Sri Aurobindo ‘Speeches’, 84-85.

30. Sri Aurobindo ‘Speeches’, 98.

31. Sri Aurobindo *‘Speeches’*, 164-165. Also in Shyamalesh Das, *‘Sri Aurobindo From Militant Nationalism* *to Political Vedantism’*, (Kolkata: The Printobooks, December, 2006), 12.

32. Sri Aurobindo‘*SABCL’*, Vol.26, 70. Also in Samar Basu, *‘Glimpses of Vadantism in Sri Aurobindo’s Political Thought’,* 58*.*

33. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Himself and on the Mother’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 95-96.

34. Shyamalesh Das, *‘Sri Aurobindo From Militant Nationalism* *to Political Vedantism’,* 12*.*

**CHAPTER-3**

**Sri Aurobindo’s withdrawal from Freedom Movement and Engagement in Spiritual Mission (1910-1947): Pondicherry Phase**

Sri Aurobindo concentrated mainly on spiritual aspects during his stay at Pondicherry. But he did not keep himself away from observing, analyzing and commenting on the events and issues relating to the India’s freedom movement and important global issues. During his spiritual life at Pondicherry he wrote several important sociological and political articles. Most of them have been published later in book form. In this connection mention may be made of the following books:- *‘The Life Divine’, ‘The Synthesis of Yoga’, ‘The Secret of the Veda’, ‘The Upanishads’, ‘Essays on the Gita’, ‘The Human Cycle’, ‘The Ideal Of Human Unity’, ‘The Foundations of Indian Culture’,* etc. In February, 1910 Sri Aurobindo withdrew himself from active political activities and engaged himself exclusively for attaining spiritual objective.

After his departure from Chandernagore and settlement at Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo wrote occasionally. However, he took initiative for publishing a journal. On15th August, 1914, a monthly journal, the ***‘Arya’*** written by him came out for the firsttime. It was through this coveted publication that he expressed his views on various issues. These valuable writings of Sri Aurobindo follow the same trend that was evident in the writings published before 1910.This trend actually focused on the revival of India’s great cultural heritage and values, the re-appreciation of her outstanding achievements in almost all spheres of human thought and activity. His writings also throw light on the true values inherent in Indian culture and civilization. Swami Vivekananda had also observed the same view. However, out of ignorance or sheer malice it was misinterpreted by the Western thinkers.

Sri Aurobindo presented his views in support of publishing the ‘*Arya*’. In his own words, *“I wrote the Arya, really speaking, for myself. I wanted to throw out certain things that were moving in my mind. I did not write it for others and so I did not care to write with that purpose.”***1** ThisstatementofSri Aurobindo may be interpreted as his opinion regarding the aims and objectives of emergence of the ‘*Arya’*. According to himthe ‘*Arya’* requires two things. First of all, a thorough knowledge of English language and secondly, a subtle and comprehensive mind. The theme of the ‘*Arya’* demands close, thorough and serious thinking from the readers. Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual observations of the ‘eternal world’ and its relation to the individual, the social group and society, and global human family respectively had been expressed in the first issue of the ‘*Arya*’ ( 15th August, 1914). Here he clearly remarked:

“*Only when man has developed not merely a fellow-felling with all men, but a domination Sense of unity and commonality, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers,---that is a fragile bond,---but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live, not in his separate personal and communal ego-sense, but in a large universal consciousness, can the phenomenon of war, with whatever weapons, pass out of his life without the possibility of return.”* **2**

This statement made by Sri Aurobindo may be interpreted as his pious desire for achieving supreme humanity based on brotherhood, seeking love, tolerance, good wishes and fellow-feeling for others. Actually, he expected individual’s highest expression regarding humane qualities for becoming a noble person or a real human. In the first issues of second year of the ‘*Arya’* he emphasized that the ‘*Arya’* is the mouthpiece of sect, school or already organized way of thinking. Its objective is to focus on thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past. Thus from December 15, 1918 to January15, 1921, he published a series of articles which had been collectively printed under the title *‘Foundations of Indian* *Culture’*. This work is a remarkable analysis of the bases upon which Indian civilization was built and survived for centuries. It also effectively refutes the shallow, ignorant and often deliberately malicious criticisms that were levied against Indian Art and Culture by Western litterateurs. In fact, the essays were undertaken by Sri Aurobindo as a reply to *‘Is* *India Civilized?’* a work by one Mr. William Archer. Mr. Archer criticized and attacked Indian civilization and culture in all its aspects. Sri Aurobindo’s main object was to combat the self-depreciation awakened in the Indian mind by this hostile work. At the same time he also sought to explain the true meaning of India’s civilization and its great achievements. He took up the challenge of Mr. Archer and refuted his charges, point by point with relevant arguments seeking that India’s excellence in every sphere of culture and civilization, spirituality and humanity. However, the journey of the ‘*Arya’* came to cease in January, 1921. It threw bright light on search of new life, faiths, believes, cultures and various concepts Sri Aurobindo presented his reasons for discontinuing the Arya in 1921. In his opinion,

*“I stopped the Arya when I found that I had to put myself out too much—so to say, externalise too much. The second reason was that I required to be drawn within myself in order to develop certain experiences, so that the energy might be used for inward work. In a certain sense, I can say that I never stopped doing work—even political work.”* **3**

Manyfreedom fighters and scholars had been influenced to a large by Sri Aurobindo’s writings published in the ‘*Arya*’. It has been reflected by a letter of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose written to his friend in 1932. He affirmed that he was close student of the ‘*Arya*’. In his own words, “*I was a close student of the Arya, when it used to be published and I was profoundly impressed in those days…..”***4** Subhas Chandra described Sri Aurobindo as his ‘spiritual guru’. He was very much impressed by his deeper philosophy. Subhas Chandra Bose wrote that as a college student it was not the mysticism surrounding Sri Aurobindo’s name which attracted me, but his writings and also his letters. Comparing Swami Vivekananda’s view on the Yoga with that of Sri Aurobindo’s concept of Yoga, Subhas Chandra explained that:

*“Vivekananda no doubt had spoken of the need of Janna (Knowledge), Bhakti (devotion and love) and Karma (selfless action) in developing an all-round character, but there was something original and unique in Arabindo’s conception of a synthesis of yoga. He tried to show how by a proper use of the different yogas one could rise step by step to the highest truth. It was so refreshing, so inspiring, to read Aurobindo’s writings as a contrast to the denunciation of knowledge and action by the later day Bengal Vaishnavas. All that was needed in my eyes to make Aurobindo an ideal guru for mankind’s return to active life”* **5**

This statement of Subhas Chandra Bose clearly exposes that Sri Aurobindo for his contribution to Indian culture and civilization may be regarded as the guiding force (guru) for the whole mankind.

Thus it becomes clear that the ‘*Arya*’ influenced the readers very much. Another eminent neo-Indian philosopher Prof. S. Radhakrishnan had recognized the inspiration of writings of Sri Aurobindo in the *‘Arya’*. Radhakrishnan said in 1934,

*“Among the present-day Indian thinkers, Sri Aurobindo is perhaps the accomplished. His firm grasp of the fundamentals of true philosophy, his earnest attempt at cultivation of the inner life and his abundant love for humanity and its future, give to his writings a depth and a comprehensiveness which are rarely to be met with.”* **6**

The elder brother of Poet Ranbindranath Tagore, Dwijendranath Tagore was also a regular reader of the ‘*Arya’*. According to Dwijendranath, what Sri Aurobindo said in the ‘*Arya’* had never been said anybody else in the world. Thus writings of Sri Aurobindo in the ‘*Arya’* touched the soul of the readers. Eminent biographer of Sri Aurobindo, A.B. Purani mentioned in his book that *“I found on making a serious study of the Arya that it led me to very rational conclusions with regards to the solutions of the deepest problems of life.”* **7** Romain Rolland, the distinguished internally acclaimed humanist, once described the ‘*Arya’* as a review of greatest importance for present and coming generations. One of the close followers of Sri Aurobindo, Prof. Jyotish Chandra Ghosh had stated the impact of the *‘Arya’* on him. In his book *‘Life-Work of Sri Aurobindo’*, he said, “*When it (The Arya*) *came out; it proved to the world that he had not been selfishly following the path of individual self-perfection to attain Mukti(or liberation from bondage), but that the interest of the country was as sacred to his heart as it had been before.”* **8** So these remarks by renowned figures may be interpreted as an inspirer of high thinking by Sri Aurobindo. Prof. Ghosh describes the *‘Arya’* as ‘*the Scripture of Indian Nationalism’*. **9** The writings of the ‘*Arya’* are esteemed with the spirit of Indian nationalism.

Sri Aurobindo also kept contact with some personalities having attachment with India’s freedom movement. He also showed interest in important political issues relating to India’s freedom movement. He even occasionally issued valuable and relevant statements on such significant issues and incidents through interviews, messages and letters. Mention may be made of some of them, which would prove Sri Aurobindo’s earnest patriotism and political sagacity. His such a role may be compared to that of Swami Vivekananda who had terrible passion and love for his motherland. Now the observations and statements of Sri Aurobindo are being placed in sequential manner for understanding his role during Pondicherry phase.

In 1914, when renowned scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose was acknowledged in Europe for his epoch-making and original work on discovery of the similarities of life movements between plants and animals, Sri Aurobindo congratulated him for his success. Praising Prof. J.C.Bose, Sri Aurobindo described him as a descendant of the ancient seers whose wisdom he confirmed by experimental science. It was published in the first issue of the *‘Arya’*. Similarly Sri Aurobindo appreciated Abanindranath Tagore for his proficiency in painting and for restoration of Indian culture and heritage. These two events clearly indicate Sri Aurobindo’s love and respect for India. It also appears that even while he was going through a yogic life at Pondicherry, he did not forget his motherland.

Though Sri Aurobindo detached himself from active politics but his country-men did never forget him as their leader who inspired them for liberty. Many of his co-workers, politicians, thinkers, scholars from different parts of India started coming to him with the request to reconsider his decision. They wanted that Sri Aurobindo should again lead India’s freedom movement. For example, Bal Gangadhar Tilak felt that the Congress must have a fresh and dynamic leadership. In 1917, he sent a messenger to Sri Aurobindo with an earnest request to him to come out his seclusion and lead the country. But Sri Aurobindo did not accept Tilak’s offer. In 1918, Kannada educationist, Benegal Sanjeeva Rao, came to Sri Aurobindo and had an interview with him. In this interaction Sri Aurobindo told him about his observation regarding **First World War**. He supported Indo-British Commonwealth organization as it would provide India a free and equal partnership with Britain. This was justified by the subsequent measures of the British Government culminating in India’s freedom and India’s decision to remain in the Commonwealth. Thus Sri Aurobindo’s support for greater international cooperation becomes clear.

In 1918, the British Government declared the ‘**Montague-Chelmsford Reforms’**. Mrs. Annie Besant, the leader of the Home-Rule League, requested Sri Aurobindo to express his opinion about the reform proposals. In response Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to Annie Besant on 10th August, 1918. In this letter Sri Aurobindo compared the proposals with *‘Chinese Puzzle’* and *‘a great shadow’***10**. However, he did not openly express his opinion in detailed as he alienated himself from direct political activities relating to India’s freedom movement. Thus it may be interpreted that he was committed to his spiritual exercise at Pondicherry though not totally indifferent towards national problems. In 1920, barrister Mr. Joseph Baptista, one of the leaders of Tilak’s Socialist Democratic Party invited Sri Aurobindo to move to Bombay and assume editorship of a new nationalist newspaper to be published from there. This time also, Sri Aurobindo expressed his inability to accept the offer for the reason mentioned earlier. On 5th January, 1920, Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to Mr. J. Baptista explaining his stand. The letter is mentioned in **Appendix No.--5.**

In August, 1920 Dr. Balakrishna Shivram Munje, a nationalist leader of the Indian National Congress, wrote to Sri Aurobindo requesting him to preside over the annual forthcoming session of Congress, to be held at Nagpur that year. In this session it was decided a resolution would have taken regarding the non-violent and non-cooperation means for the attainment of swaraj. However, Sri Aurobindo refused to accept this invitation on the same ground mentioned earlier. It will not be out of place to quote here an extract from Sri Aurobindo’s reply:

*“ The central reason however is this that I am no longer first and foremost a politician, but have definitely commenced another kind of work a spiritual basis, a work of spiritual, social, cultural and economic reconstruction of an almost revolutionary kind and I am making or at least supervising a sort of practical or laboratory experiment in that sense which needs all the attention and energy that I can have to spare. It is impossible for me to combine political work of the current kind and this is at the beginning. I should practically have to leave it aside, and this I cannot do, as I have taken it up as my mission for* *the rest of my life. This is the true reason of my inability to respond to your call*.” **11**

In October, 1920, Dr.B.S. Munje personally met Sri Aurobindo to persuade him to accept the Presidentship of the said session of the INC. But he this time also did not change his stand. So a careful study of his life and work during Pondicherry phase indicates that he was never indifferent to India’s freedom and wanted to see a free, independent and united India.

Following Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo too mentioned the ideas and duties for the youth of India, which was published in *‘The Standard Bearer’* in November; 1920.This magazine was published under the editorship of Motilal Roy of Chandernagore, a follower of Sri Aurobindo. In a letter to Motilal Roy, Sri Aurobindo remarked,

“*Our call is to young India. It is the young who must be the builder of the new world……the young who are free in mind and heart to accept a complete truth and labour for a greater ideal. They must be man who will dedicate themselves not to the pastor the present but to the future…”***12**

Once again it becomes evident that Sri Aurobindo had always keen interest in issues relating to her motherland. The extract of *‘The Standard Bearer’* clearly indicates the line of work for Indian youths for preparing themselves for India’s bright future. At the same time his such outlook expresses his passion for motherland.

Sri Aurobindo’s followers Barindra, Abinash Chandra and Ullaskar Dutta, who were acquiesced in Alipore Bomb Case, came to Pondicherry in 1920 after realizing from Andaman Jail. There they had serious talks with Sri Aurobindo on different issues on Indian politics. In this connection Abinash Chandra wanted to know about the future of Bengal, Sri Aurobindo replies in his fashion, *“Bengal will surpass all and win world-renown. Her genius as a race, Hindus and Muslims combined, will shed lustre on every side. She will be the world’s wonder and admiration……India would soon have her freedom.”* **13** This comment may be interpreted as his farsighted and prudence outlook regarding Hindu-Muslim Unity in India. Thus it can be safely said that Sri Aurobindo was an exceptional political thinker of his time with a secular mind-set. In 1920, the prominent Irish poet and thinker, Mr. James H. Cousins met Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry. He described Sri Aurobindo as the philosopher poet. It indicates that Sri Aurobindo was not only an active political leader and a yogi of India but also a great poet. **14** He had versatile personality who marked impression in different fields of innovation.

In 1921, nationalist worker Sarala Devi Chowdhurani met Sri Aurobindo and discussed about the then current situation of India. In this connection Sri Aurobindo expressed his opinion about non-violent and non-cooperation movement. He was in favour of non-cooperation movement considering the existing political scenario. It indicates his deep and practical attachment to his motherland. In 1922, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (C.R. Das), eminent lawyer and freedom fighter, wrote to Sri Aurobindo requesting him to return Bengal for joining actively in freedom movement again and taking the charge of the Indian National Congress. This time also Sri Aurobindo expressed his inability to accept the request through a latter written to C.R.Das on 18th November, 1922. This letter is in **Appendix No. ---6**. In June, 1923, C.R. Das himself went to Pondicherry to meet Sri Aurobindo. Then he had a talk with him regarding the 'Asian Federation' which was formulated by eminent Japanese thinker Okakura Kakuzo. **15** They also discussed Hindu- Muslim Problem. Sri Aurobindo gave his moral support to C.R. Das’s Swarajya Party and its policies. This newly organized party proposed to accept whatever offer of real power would come from the Government and yet fight for more, both in the legislative assemblies and outside till the goal is reached. Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that C.R.Das was quite able to lead India to her goal. However, in June, 1925, C.R. Das passed away. To mourn his death Sri Aurobindo sent a message which was published in the *Bombay Chronicle* on 22nd July, 1925. In his own words,

“*Chittaranaj’s death is a supreme loss. Consummately endowed with political intelligence, constructive imagination, magnetism, a driving force combining a strong will and uncommon plasticity of mind for vision and tact of the hour, he was the one man after Tilak, who could have led India to Swaraj.”* **16**

So this grief-message of Sri Aurobindo indicates his close association with C.R.Das. At the same time it also shows Sri Aurobindo’s deep respect for C.R.Das. Actually he rightly assessed Chittaranjan’s leadership quality and passion for motherland.

Further, Lala Lajpat Rai, Purushattamdas Tandon, Dr. Nihalchand, Krishnadas met Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry on 5th January, 1925, for an interview. They asked Sri Aurobindo on regarding certain important problems of Indian politics and sought his guidance. They were of the opinion that Sri Aurobindo had clear, proper, knowledge and vision of the situation and problems of Indian politics and he would have been able to guide them in proper direction.

What is more astonishing is that the noble laureate Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore met Sri Aurobindo on 28th May, 1928, at Pondicherry. There he discovered Sri Aurobindo with a supreme spiritual mission. Actually, after achieving his dream of spiritual realization on 24th November, 1926, Sri Aurobindo used to spend his days cultivating for further spiritual attainment. Rabindranath had also experienced such an impression while met Sri Aurobindo. In his words,

*“At the very first sight I could realise that he (Sri Aurobindo) had been seeking for the soul and had gained it, and through his long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light……I felt that the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him, ‘You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice, Hearken unto me.”* **17**

It becomes evident Rabindranath’s statement that Sri Aurobindo after spiritual attainment engaged himself in seeking and explaining the mystery of the spiritual world. In this connection it will be not out of place to mention here his spiritual realization. Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual achievement made a significance mark in the cultural and spiritual history of India after Swami Vivekananda’s famous speech at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.Sri Aurobindo achieved his dream of spiritual realization on 24th November, 1926. He realized a decisive and direct descent of a higher consciousness that could be made an enduring basis for erecting a supermental structure in the earth-nature. He called it’s a victory. Since then it is known and celebrated as a **‘Victory Day’**. Sri Aurobindo had expressed his realization in the following words:

“*November 24, 1926, was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overhead Godhead preparing, through not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna in the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the overmind leading it towards the Ananda*.” **18**

Thus with the descent of the spiritual consciousness, a new process of spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality had been expressed by Sri Aurobindo. This phase may be regarded as the development of the overmind, the cosmic consciousness.

However, after getting spiritual realization Sri Aurobindo could not detach himself from outer world. Besides, Rabindranath many important Indian personalities such as Mahatma Gandhi, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Morarji Desai, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to him mentioning their prayers. Among them Mahatma Gandhi after returning India was very much eager to meet Sri Aurobindo. For this purpose, he asked Govindbhai Patel to arrange a meeting with Sri Aurobindo. Mr. Patel was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. Further, on 2nd January, 1934, Mahatma Gandhi himself wrote to Sri Aurobindo seeking his permission to meet him. We should have to keep it in mind at that time Mahatma Gandhi was the unchallenged and most important figure in Indian freedom movement. From this it can be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo’s opinion and observation was also valuable to Mahatma Gandhi. From this we can easily assess Sri Aurobindo’s role and position in Indian freedom movement. In this connection some major words of Mahatma Gandhi’s letter may be mentioned here for understanding his cordial eagerness to meet to Sri Aurobindo. In his words,

*“……Perhaps you know that ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face. Not being able to do that, I sent my son to you. Now that it is almost certain that I am to be in Pondicherry, will you spare me a few minutes & see me! I know how reluctant you are to see anybody. But if you are under no positive vow of abstinence, I hope you will give me a few minutes of your time……”***19**

In response to this letter Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi on 7th January, 1934.This letter may be placed here for better understanding of Sri Aurobindo’ view:---

*“It is true that I have made no vow, for I never make one, but my retirement is not less binding on me so long as it---and the reason for it---lasts. I think you will understand that it is not a personal or mental choice but something impersonal from a deeper source for the inner necessity of work and sadhana. It prevents me from receiving you but I cannot do otherwise than keep to the rule I have adhered to for some years past.”* **20**

Thus, it becomes clear that Sri Aurobindo at that time fully concentrated on spiritual mission.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the renowned philosopher-academician and also Second President of India, once approached to Sri Aurobindo through his disciple, Dilip Kumar Roy, for an article for publishing it in the *‘Contemporary Indian Philosophy’*--- a proposed book on Indian philosophy. But Sri Aurobindo did not agree to contribute an article for the said purpose. Sri Aurobindo informed Radhakrishnan about his decision through a letter on 2nd October, 1934. His letter to Radhakrishnan is mentioned below for understanding his outlook and sense of priority in matter of his business.

*“I regret that you should have had to wait for the publication of your book on account of the contribution I could not write. I had intimated to Dilip that it would be practically impossible for me and I could not make a promise I would most likely be unable to fulfil. I think he hoped I would still find time somehow to write.*

*I am entirely taken up by my present work which is exceedingly heavy and pressing and from which I cannot take my hands for a moment or spare the necessary energy or time for anything else. I have been obliged to put aside all mental or literary work and even to suspend sine de the revision for publication of the unpublished works in the ‘Arya’ which I had undertaken. There is no chance of any alternation in this state of affairs in any near future. It is not a matter of choice but of necessity for me. I hope therefore you will excuse me for not being able to comply with your request. I regret very much that I have to disappoint you, but it is not possible for me to avoid it.”* **21**

In fact, Sri Aurobindo was eager and very sincere to complete had literary tasks which he had already undertaken.

Morarji Desai, a former Indian Prime Minister, once wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry in 1934. He decided coming to the Pondicherry Ashram with his friend Chandulal Manibhai. Chandulal Manibhai wrote to A. B. Purani, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, asking for permission to met Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo allowed Morarji Desai to meet him; accordingly Morarji Desai came to the Ashram on 17th August, 1935. Morarji Desai asked Sri Aurobindo many questions on spiritual matters and Sri Aurobindo had given reply to his questions. His reply had been published in the Autobiography of Morarji Desai---*‘The Story of My Life’*, Vol.1, Page no.126-157 (Published by S. Chand and Co., New Delhi, 1978). Like Morarji Desai, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the First Prime Minister of India was also very eager to meet Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry. For this purpose he sought the help of Dilip Kumar Roy who was close associate of Sri Aurobindo. On behalf of Pandit Nehru, Dilip Kumar Roy told Sri Aurobindo, Pandit Nehru might be here about the 17th of this month (1936) for an interview with Mother. He also told Sri Aurobindo’s force would do the chief think in this regard. However, Sri Aurobindo in reply told Dilip Kumar Roy that

*“I am afraid what you propose is impossible*. *Jawaharlal is coming on a political mission and as president of the Congress, while we have to steer clear not only of politics but of the shadow of politics. If he put up in a house of the Asram, we would be in for it! A flaming report from the British Consul to Delhi to be forwarded to London and from London to Paris. Just now we have to be specially careful, as the friendly Governor is going away---perhaps to return in March, perhaps not. If the Colonial Minister there questions him about us, he must be able to give a spotless report in our favour. The future also may possibly be turbulent and the wash of the turmoil may reach Pondicherry---we have to be on our guard from now onwards. So don’t make Jawaharlal pray for an interview--- it is not possible. Let us be patient and let things develop. If Jawaharlal is to be at all led forcewards, it is more likely to happen when he is less occupied with outer stress and turmoil.”* **22**

The words of Sri Aurobindo mentioned in this letter clearly indicate that he wanted to avoid all sorts of political connection which might jeopardize his spiritual mission and entity. Sri Aurobindo’s such an outlook had again been cleared by a letter written by him to Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury, a landed aristocracy of East Bengal and also an industrialist-politician, on 21st February, 1937. His letter to Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury may be mention here for understanding the spirit of his spiritual life in Pondicherry.

*“I have made it a rule not to write anything about politics. Also the question of what to do in a body like the Assembly depends on circumstances, on the practical needs of the situation which can change rapidly. In such a body the work is not of a spiritual character. All kinds of work can be done with the spiritual consciousness behind, but unless one has advanced very far, one must in the front be guided by the necessities of the work itself and its characteristic nature. Since you have joined this party, its programme must be yours and what you have to do is to bring to it all the consciousness, ability and selflessness which you can command. You are right in not taking office, as you have made the promise. In any case a sadhak entering politics should work not for himself but for the country. If he takes office, it should be only when he can do something for the country by it and not until he has proved his character and ability and fitness for position. You should walk by a high standard which will bring you the respect even of opponents and justify the choice of the electors.”* **23**

However, this letter clearly reflects Sri Aurobindo’s view regarding a Sadhak’s work for his country. Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that a Sadhak who had entered politics should work not for himself but for his country. This needs no explanation further.

Sri Aurobindo preferred to remain silence after withdrawal from active politics in 1910. For a long time he had not wrote on contemporary political issues. However, he broke his silence first in 1940, when **Second World War** broke out. After opposing imperialism on moral ground for a long time Sri Aurobindo came out in support of the British and their allies after the fall of France in the hands of the Axis power. He regarded the Axis power as ‘anti-divine’, while he was of the opinion that the Allied power with all their inhumane attitude to the colonies were representing the forces of higher evolution for the mankind. In this connection mention may be made message sent by Sri Aurobindo on 4th July, 1940 to one of his disciple. This message reflects his observation and opinion regarding the Second World War. In his words,

“*Some forces are working for the the Divine, some are quite anti divine in their aim and purpose. If the nations or the governments who are blindly the instruments of the divine forces were perfectly pure and divine in their process and forms of action as well as in the inspiration they receive so ignorantly they would be invincible , because the divine forces themselves are invincible. It is the mixture in the outward expression that gives to the Asura the right to defeat them.*

*To be a successful instrument for the Asuric forces is easy, because they take all the movements of your lower nature and make use of them, so that you have no spiritual effort to make. On the contrary, if you are to be a fit instrument of the Divine Force you must make yourself perfectly pure, since it is only in an integrally divinized instrument that the Divine Force will have its full power and effects.*” **24**

So we may interpret from his message that Sri Aurobindo identified the progressive force and wanted its victory for the greater welfare of the mankind.

Further, Sri Aurobindo event responded to an appeal made by the Governor of Madras for a fund for war purposes. He sent a sum of Rs. 500 on behalf of him and the Mother to the said fund. In this connection their feeling may be mentioned for understanding their humanist attitude. In their words,

*“We are herewith at the disposal of H. E. the Governor of Madras a sum of Rs.500 as our joint contribution to the Madras War Fund. This donation, which is in continuation to of previous sums given by us for the cause of the Allies…… is sent as an expression of our entire support for the British people and the Empire in their struggle against the aggressions of the Nazi Reich and our complete sympathy with the cause for which they are fighting. We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world-domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and of the whole future of humanity. To this cause our support and sympathy will be unswerving whatever may happen; we look forward to the victory of Britain and, as the eventual result, an era of peace and union among the nations and a better and more secure world-order.”* **25**

Thus, it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo was very much hopeful of a new world-order of nations seeking peace, security and prosperity. In fact, his aim was to achieve a global unity and harmony. He explained his this vision in terms of spirituality. Similarly, he had keen interest in seeing her motherland free and independent. So we find that Sri Aurobindo came forward in support of the Cripps Mission, Cabinet Mission and Wavell Plan. If we analyze his statement regarding the Cripps Mission, it can be said that though he was fully detached from active role in freedom movement yet his inner mind was always in touch with the political process leading towards achieving our independence. The following statements made by Sri Aurobindo and their analysis would focus on his eagerness for India’s political freedom. On 11th March, 1942 the then British Prime Minister Sir W. Churchill proposed to create a new Indian Union with a Dominion Constitution to be formed by India’s own representatives after the Second World War. In this connection Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the British War Cabinet, arrived in New Delhi on 23rd March, 1942. He brought a draft declaration, popularly known as the **‘Cripps Plan’** for discussion with Indian political leaders. On 31st March, 1942, Sri Aurobindo sent a message to Mr. S. Cripps. The text of the said message is,

“*I have heard your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India’s independence, though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity, and take an effective place among the world’s free nations. I hope that it will be accepted, and the right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that friendly relation between Britain and India replacing the past struggles, will be a step towards a greater world union in which, as a free nation, her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light, I offer my public adhesion, in case it can be of any help in your work*.” **26**

In this connection on 1st April, 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps sent a telegram to Sri Aurobindo. Here Sir S. Cripps replied,

*“I AM MOST TOUCHED AND GRATIFIEDBY YOUR KIND MESSAGE ALLOWING ME TO INFORM INDIA THAT YOU WHO OCCUPY UNIQUE POSITION IN IMAGINATION OF INDIAN YOUTH ARE CONVINCED THAT DECLARATION OF HIS MAJESTY’S GOVERNMENT SUBSTANTIALLY CONFERS THAT FREEDOM FOR WHICH INDIAN NATIONALISM HAS SO LONG STRUGGLED.*”**27**

From the above mentioned events it becomes clear that Sri Aurobindo strongly supported the proposal of Sir S. Cripps, for in his opinion, ‘it would be step towards Indianindependence.’ At that time Sri Aurobindo also conveyed a personal message to the Indian National Congress Working Committee. Sri Aurobindo sent his disciple S. Duraiswami Iyer, a prominent advocate of Madras, to Delhi on 1st April, 1942, to speak to the members of Congress Working Committee: Mahatma Gandhi, Moulana Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and others. He gave Duraiswami a letter authorizing him to speak on his behalf as*---“In view of the urgency of the situation I am sending Mr. Duraiswami Iyer to convey my views on the present negotiations and my reasons for pressing on Indian leaders the need of a settlement. He is accredited to speak for me.”* **28** Sri Aurobindo appealed to the Congress leaders to accept the ‘Cripps Proposal’ and thereby to avoid the partition of the country and save the motherland from dangers of communal problems. But the Congress leaders did not pay any attention to his advice. On 16th August, 1951, K.M. Munshi criticized the Congress leaders for rejecting Sri Aurobindo’s advice. He assertively stated that “*if Sri Aurobindo’s proposal had been accepted there would have been no partition, no refugees, and no Kashmir problem*.”**29** This statement bears tremendous significance even in the present day context of Indian society and politics. As a researcher I would like to mention here that one can agree with the above-mentioned statement made by K.M. Munshi if he or she goes through the observations made by Sri Aurobindo on communalism and partition of India.

On 14th June, 1945, the viceroy, Lord Wavell, offered Indian leaders a new plan with a view to normalize the then present situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government. Sri Aurobindo did not support the Wavell Plan and issued a statement in its support. His message was published in the *Hindu* and other leading Indian newspapers on 19th June, 1945. Sri Aurobindo said,

*“… the proposals are decent enough and seem to be even better than Cripps’ in certain respects. An Indian will be in charge of foreign affairs and India will have her own representative in foreign countries. This and other circumstances are an approach practically towards Dominion Status. Of course, there are a few features which personally I would not advocate, e.g. the apparent foundation of the Ministry on a communal basis instead of a coalition of parties. Still these should not be a reason for the rejection of the proposals. A fair trial should be given and the scheme tested in its actual working out.”* **30**

Sri Aurobindo’s message indicates his vision for betterment of India as a nation. Thus, it can be said that he was never psychologically alienated from the thinking process about India’s freedom.

On 19th February, 1946, Mr. Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, announced that three members of the British Cabinet comprising Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander would visit India to resolve the Indian constitutional problems emerged due to differences of opinion between Muslim League and the Congress. On 23rd March, 1946 that Mission arrived in India in order to find out a solution. At that time the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* requested Sri Aurobindo to express his views on the Cabinet Mission. Responding to it Sri Aurobindo expressed that it would be unnecessary to volunteer a personal pronouncement. His views regarding Cabinet Mission is mentioned in detail in **Appendix No.-7**. However, this statement clearly denotes his opposition to the proposal of the partition of India. He was always in favour of unity as a holistic humanist. In this connection the following prediction made by Sri Aurobindo on January, 1910 may be mentioned here for understanding his observation regarding India’s attainment of freedom. In his words,

*“Since 1907, we are living in a new era which is full of hope for India. Not only India, but the whole world will see sudden upheavals and revolutionary changes. The high will become low and the low high. The oppressed and the depressed shall be elevated. The nation and humanity will be animated by a new consciousness, new thought and new efforts will be made to reach new ends. Amidst these revolutionary changes, India will become free.”* **31**

His such view proved true with the announcement of the Cabinet Mission Plan on 16th May, 1946. Thus it can be interpreted he was a visionary.

India got her independence from the British colonial rule on 15th August, 1947. To mark this event Sri Aurobindo issued a message to his countrymen on the earnest request by the All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli centre, on 14th August, 1947 and it was broadcast that day. The message sent by Sri Aurobindo chalks out a picture of his dreams and visions about India and the world in general. It clearly emphasizes a ‘United India’ and a ‘World Union’. Thus it becomes clear that he was strongly in favour of India’s unity by presenting its cultural diversity. At the same time, he also favoured global unity and peace by creating a World Union. His such outlook vividly indicates his stand against any sort of division and disorder. Besides world unity he also wanted resurgence and liberty of the people of Asia as such. He was of the opinion that people of this region had great role in the progress of human civilization. Further, he expressed hope that India would be able to enlighten the rest of the world by her spirituality. It is this spirituality, he hoped, would transform individual to a higher and deeper level of consciousness and in this process they would be abled to solve their problems.

Thus, it becomes evident that Sri Aurobindo was very much involved not only in thinking India’s future but also in thinking for a higher and developed world. He was of the opinion that in reaching this level of supreme unity India should play a vital role. That is why he wanted that his countrymen also would realize that India had a supreme mission of lifting and enriching the global community towards supreme humanity. He made it clear that his ‘Sadhana’ was not for himself but for the entire mankind. His such an outlook undoubtedly placed him as an internationalist. In fact, he personified himself with the message of India’s culture and civilization. The message has been mentioned in **Appendix No.—8**.

After independence of India the incident which immediately took place and shocked the entire civilized world was Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination on 30th January, 1948. This unfortunate incident also touched the mind of Sri Aurobindo. He issued a massage in this regard. In his own words: -

“*I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples. The power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom , will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending ; as it brought us freedom , it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people*.” **32**

It may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo was very much hopeful for a united India and its peoples might be able to achieve supreme humanity which Mahatma Gandhi dreamt.

Besides the above-mentioned message sent by Sri Aurobindo he also came forward during 1949-1950 to comment on the following issues:-- Pakistan (March, 1949), Commonwealth and Secularism(April,1949), The Unitary Party(April,1949), The Kashmir Problem(September,1949), New Year Thought on pacifism by K.D. Sethna (January,1950), Military Action (May,1950), The Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After ( May.1950), Korean Conflict (June,1950), The Communist Movement (September,1950). In the above mentioned issues he cleared his stand through his comments. For understanding his stand regarding the above issues his following statements are important.

**On Pakistan**: *—* “*I don’t want Pakistan to endure, made perfectly clear. Division must go—does not mean that division must be allowed to last in some form or other. Continued partition of India into two Federations one Hindu and one Muslim even if somehow connected together is no part of my idea of the Union of India*.” **33**

**On the Commonwealth and Secularism**: *—* “*India can’t remain in Dominion. It had decided to be a free republic and that can’t be changed. On that basis it can have relations with Commonwealth if it wants.*

*Spirituality cannot be affirmed in a political constitution. You can add spirituality in a matter of the Spirit and not of constitutional politics.”* **34**

**On the Unitary Party**: *—* “*The Unitary Party…..especially in Bengal, which is working for Indian Unity—apart from the well-known Forward Block which has the same end in view though working on a different line.”* **35**

**On The Kashmir Problem: --**“*….. there are certain things to which I have to take objection. For instance, why suggest a slur on the whole Mohammedan population of Kashmir by speaking of ‘fanatic spell of the name of Allah’? This cannot not apply to the Kashmiris who follow Abdullah and who are in a large majority, they are for his idea of a secular state. The others in Gilgit and elsewhere are not actuated by religious fanaticism but by political motives. The rest of the sentence should be modified accordingly; the people in the districts who have been rescued from the grip of the rebels have shown strong gratitude for their release and it would be quite impolitic to ignore by such doubts the sincerity of this gratitude. I am not enamoured of your idea of an understanding between Pakistan and India, it is not likely that Pakistan Government will consent to any understanding except one which will help to perpetuate the partition and be to their advantage. It would be most dangerous to forget Jinnah’s motive and policy in establishing Pakistan which is still the motive and policy of the Pakistan leaders,—although it would not be politic to say anything about it just now…... If there is a change of heart and if Pakistan becomes willing to effect some kind of junction with India or some overtopping Council of cooperation between the two federations……They would be able to appoint their own men in the administration, use intimidation and trickery in order to press people to vote against their will and generally falsify the plebiscite, and they certainly would not hesitate to do all that they could for that end. It might very well knock all the good cards out of Abdullah’s hands and smash up his present predominant chances of a favourable issue of the plebiscite.*

*……In a plebiscite on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India she was and is quite confident of an overwhelming majority in her favour. Moreover, she does not cling to the plebiscite from motives of ideological purity and will even refuse it if it is to be held on any conditions other than those she has herself clearly and insistently laid down. She is quite prepared to withdraw the case from the cognizance of the UNO and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by fight to the finish, if that is unavoidable. That Patel has made quite clear and uncompromisingly positive and Nehru has not been less positive .Both of them are determined to resist to the bitter end any attempt to force a solution which is not consistent with the democratic will of the Kashmir people and their right of self-determination of their own destiny. At the same time they are trying to avoid a clash if it is at all possible.*

*One thing which Abdullah and the India Government want to avoid and have decided to resist by all possible means is a partition of Kashmir, especially with Gilgit and Northern Kashmir going to Pakistan. This is the greatest danger but the details and the reasons for the possibility of its materialising, though they are plain enough, have to be kept confidential or, at any rate, not to be discussed in public……it will be easier to understand the situation and the whole policy of the India Government. That at least is the stand taken by them and the spirit of the terms they have laid down for the conditions of the plebiscite. These conditions have been just at this moment published in the newspapers and the whole course of negotiations with the UNO. Kashmir Commission has been laid bare in a public statement. Practically, the Commission representative has conceded on its part almost all the essential demands and conditions laid down by Nehru. All, however, remains fluid until and unless the Security Council acquiesces in the arrangements proposed by their own Commission or else take a different decision and until the plebiscite Administrator is appointed and makes the final arrangements……It lies also with the reactions of the Pakistan leaders which are more easily calculable, but may not show themselves until a possibly much later date.*

*In any case, it seems to me that our only course is to support the India Government in the stand they are taking in regard to Kashmir and the terms and conditions they have made, so long as they do not weaken and deviate from their position. Nothing should be said which would discourage the public mind or call away the support which the Government needs in maintaining the right course. What I have written on Kashmir is only my personal view at present based on the information I have and must be kept quite private……..We shall have to wait and see what will be the definite arrangements and how the Commission will get out of this imbroglio……*”**36**

**The Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After:--**“……*I had given of my view that a change has**taken place in the situation owing to the Nehru-Liaquat Pact……After the conclusion of the Pact, after its acceptance by the Congress Party and the Assembly and its initial success of organization and implementation, its acceptance also in both Western and Eastern Pakistan, no outbreak of war can take place at least for some time to come and, unless the Pact fails, it may not take place. That may mean in certain contingencies the indefinite perpetuation of the existence of Pakistan and disappearance of the prospect of any unification of India. I regard the Pact as an exceedingly clever move of Liaquat Ali to fish his ‘nation’ out of the desperate situation into which it had run itself and to secure its safe survival. I will not go elaborately into the reasons for my view and I am quite prepared for events breaking out which will alter the situation once more in an opposite sense. But I had to take things as they are or seem to be, weigh everything and estimate the position and make my decisions…….”***37**

**Korean Conflict:--** *“…….It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to dominate and take possession first of these northern parts and then of South East Asia as a preliminary to their manoeuvres with regard to the rest of the continent—in passing, Tibet as a gate opening to India. If they succeed, there is no reason why domination of the whole world should not follow by steps until they are ready to deal with America. That is provided the war can be staved off with America until Stalin can choose his time. Truman seems to have understood the situation if we can judge from his moves in Korea; but it is be seen whether he is strong enough and determined enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be seen whether he is strong enough and determined enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be incomplete and unsuccessful, since they do not include any actual military intervention except on sea and in the air. That seems to be the situation, we have to see how it develops. One thing is certain that if there is too much shilly-shallying and if America gives up now her defence of Korea, she may be driven to yield position after position until it is too late; at one point or another she will have to stand and face the necessity of drastic action even if it leads to war. Stalin also seems not to be ready to face at once the risk of a world war and, if so, Trumann can turn the tables on him by constantly facing him with the onus of either taking that risk or yielding position to America. I think that is all that I can see at present; for the moment the situation is as grave as it can be.”* **38**

**The Communist Movement:--“***Naturally I am in agreement with the views expressed about Communism in the Manifesto, but……I will have to wait and see how it develops in the field of practical politics……Whatever is done must be something strong and effective, a blow that can tell; otherwise, the Communist movement has become so powerful that it can feed upon the shocks one tries to give it as one can see in the tussle that is going on in the UNO……it seems to me that if any movement of the kind is made it would be worth while to make it as widely representative as possible and in that case the Socialists like JaiPrakash who distrust and are opposed to Communism would have to be included. There is such a thing as social democracy which need not to be confused with Communism as it has its own more manageable standpoints.* **39**

From his above remarks on the above-mentioned issues his political farsightedness and sagacity becomes evident once again. At the same time from his remarks mentioned above he has established himself as a national leader and thinker.

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3. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo–towards* *Victory of the Light of Supreme’*, (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1976), 140.

4. Sisir Kr. Bose (ed.), *‘Netaji--Collected Works’*, Vol.1, (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1980), 111-112.

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7. A. B. Purani, *‘The Life of Sri Aurobindo’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1978), 272.

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9. Trija Roy, ‘*Arya*’, (Kolkata: Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 2014), 59.

10. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Nationalism’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Second Edition, 1996), 531.

11. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Second Edition, 2006), 257-259.[ K.M.Munshi, the renowned scholar-statesman, was the student of Sri Aurobindo at Baroda College. He became a leading member of the INC in Gujrat. In 1946 he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and after independence joined the union cabinet as agriculture minister]

12. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo–towards* *Victory of the Light of Supreme’*, 127.

13. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo–towards* *Victory of the Light of Supreme’,* 128.

14*.*Sri Aurobindo introduced himself as, *"I was poet and a politician, not a philosopher." 'SABCL*', Vol.26, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 374. However, James H. Cousin was an Irish poet, thinker, critic and exponent of Indian art. He belonged to the Irish Literary Dramatic Revival movement through which Ireland sought to recover her nationhood. He came in India in 1921.In his famous book *'New Ways in English Literature'*, published in 1918, recognized Sri Aurobindo as one of those writers who introduced new ways in English literature. He also called Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a meeting place of Asiatic Universality and European Classicism.

15. Okakura Kakuzo one of the outstanding leaders who revived traditional Japanese art in the midst of Japan's westernization. He was the famous Japanese art critic and historician. He was the curator of the Imperial Art Museum and president of the Tokyo School of Art. Later he came in contact with Sister Nivedita in 1901.He came to India in the month of January, 1902. Okakura had plans of an All-Asian uprising against European domination in Asia. Okakura's famous book *'The Ideals of the East'* begins with the words "*Asia is one*". [Peter Heehs, *'The Bomb in Bengal'*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993) 27-29].

16. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 279. Also in Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo–towards* *Victory of the light of Supreme’,* 131.

17. Sisir Kumar Mitra, ‘*Sri Aurobindo–towards* *Victory of the Light of Supreme’,* 133.

18. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Himself and on the Mother’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol.-26, 1972), 136.

19. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 442.

20. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 443.

21. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 444-445. [ The book of Radhakrishnan *'Contemporary Indian Philosophy'*, was published, without a contribution by Sri Aurobindo, by George Allen & Unwin in 1936.]

22. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 447.

23. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 448.

24. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Himself and on the Mother’*, 393.Also in Amalendu De, ‘*Sri Aurobindo And The Mother On Indian Independence & On War and Peace’*, (Kolkata: Sri Aurobindo Bhavan,2nd Edition, 2007), 8-9.

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26. K.R. Srinivas lyengar, *‘Sri Aurobindo a Biography and a* *History’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1985), 680. Also in Amalendu De, ‘*Sri Aurobindo And The Mother On Indian Independence & On War and Peace’*, 15.

27 . Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Nationalism’*, 533. Also in Chanda Poddar,Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker (ed.), *‘Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India’,*( Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2012),269.

28. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 470.

29. K.R. Srinivas lyengar, *‘Sri Aurobindo a Biography and a* *History’*, 681.

30. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’*, 471-472*.*

31. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Himself and on the Mother’*, 390. Also in Amalendu De, ‘*Sri Aurobindo And The Mother On Indian Independence & On War and Peace’*, 55.

32. Sri Aurobindo, *‘On Himself and on the Mother’*, 404-407.

33. Kosha Shah, *‘India and the Future of South Asia’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Trust, Second Edition, 2009), 66-67.

34. Sraddhalu Ranade, ***‘****Sri Aurobindo and World Events’*, (Madras: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1990), 31.

Also in Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 514.

35. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 514-515*.*

36. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 517-520.

37. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest’,* 522-523. [Pakistan PM Liaquat Ali Khan came to India on 2nd April, 1950 to discuss the emerging problem with Indian PM Pandit Nehru. They signed the pact on 8th April, 1950, about the refugee problem and guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities in both countries.

38. *‘Mother India’*---a monthly Review of Culture, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust Publication Department, February, 1955). Also in Sraddhalu Ranade, ***‘****Sri Aurobindo and World Events’*, (Madras: Sri Aurobindo Society, 1990), 19.

39.Sraddhalu Ranade, ***‘****Sri Aurobindo and World Events’*, 27-28.

**Chapter –4**

**Sri Aurobindo’s Role in India's Freedom Movement as a Political Thinker and as an Activist**

The history of political thought is a major arena for understanding the course of human civilization, particularly society and polity. Each and every nation has its own history of political thought. It is well-known that ancient Greece is the breeding down for the emergence of political thought. Prior to the birth of Christ political thought in Greece took a definite shape in the hands of Plato and Aristotle. There contribution as political thinkers today is well recognized. India, which has a long history of ancient civilization, had also witnessed the emergence of a series of political thinkers. In this respect, mention may be made of the names of Manu, Kautilya and many others. In the nineteenth century India witnessed a movement akin to European renaissance blossomed forth here largely under the impact of the modern Western ideas being injected into our body politic through the newly introduced English education and culture.

Political thinkers provide us a lot of knowledge and theoretical basis regarding the issue of political events and problems and how to change or resolve political conflicts and problems during their times. Their views or writings and thoughts throw lights in shaping the course of nation-building and state-formation. Further, their thought and views may have relevance in regard to the all-round development of their respective nations. In fact, their experience and views, sagacity and farsightedness always help the coming generations.

Before going to analyze Sri Aurobindo’s role as a political thinker it would be worth-mentioning to discuss something about the definition of political thinker since ancient time the study of Politics, Political Theory, Political Philosophy dominated the study of the field which as presently known as disciplinary of political science. In fact, these were the part of the study of political thought and all focused on the concept state. All these study put fundamental issues and questions regarding the several states. For example, what is state? What is the need of the state? What is the relation between state and authority or power? What is the role of morality behind the emergence of the state?, etc. In fact, the issues regarding the emergence of the state, transformation of the nature of the state, changing role of the state, etc, are by nature fundamental question of political thought. Since ancient times, the issues such as the individual liberty and state authority, conflict between them, etc, are very debatable issues. The persons who have engaged themselves in thinking over the above mentioned issues they are commonly called **‘Political Thinkers’**. All of them are trying to get answers of the above mention questions. If such answers, given by a political thinker, provide a theoretical frame-work or philosophical basis, then only they are universally accepted as fundamental thinkers. In this context, mention may be made of the names of the following thinkers---Plato (427-347 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), John Locke (1632-1704), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Kautilya (321-296 BC) and Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950).

As we are concerned about Sri Aurobindo’s contributions as a political thinker hence it would be relevant to assess his contributions as a political thinker to Indian political thought. As a pioneer leader of Indian freedom movement he contributed to a large extent to visualize the ideal of complete freedom from the British rule. In this regard, he himself came forward in radicalizing the freedom movement of India. In fact, we were able to inject or infuse a new and radical spirit in to the course of freedom movement and thereby brought a change in the dimension of freedom movement of India. In this respect mention may be made here that in 1893-1894 Sri Aurobindo laid out a dynamic philosophy of politics leading to free India from the control of the British colonial power. Later, during anti-partition movement under his leadership the people of India, more particularly Bengalese became activated against the colonial power. This was possible because Sri Aurobindo laid before the people of the supreme ideal of---‘**Purno Swaraj’** or total independence. He argued that the demand for ‘Purno-Swaraj’ was not a favour from the British ruler, but was the inalienable birth-right of India. He was of the opinion that the divinity of the Motherland would lead directly to the demand for complete emancipation (Purno Swaraj) from the foreign rule. He preached his this opinion with immense patriotic fervour. Besides, constructing a new high ideal of independence he also came down heavily from the moderates for their ‘mendicant policies’. Thus he was able to make Indian people to became receptive to a more radical and aggressive political programme against the British colonial power.

Sri Aurobindo took up the concept of the divinity of the Motherland, the writings of the litterateur BankimChandra Chattopadhaya, who in his **‘*Ananda Math’*** created the famous mantra---**‘*BandeMataram’***. In fact, this mantra imported and glorified sense of the divinity of the motherland. Sri Aurabindo sought to inject this mystic and religious concept in the mind set of the common Indians. In other words, he wanted to adopt it to the freedom movement of India with an innovative shape. Thus Indian freedom movement got a new dimension. In his own words, ---

*“The strength of the new movement in India lies in its supreme idealism. It is not a mere economic movement, though it openly strives for economic resurrection of the country. It is not a political movement, though it has boldly declared itself for absolute political independence. It is an intensely spiritual movement having for its object not simply the development of economic life or the attainment of political freedom, but really the emancipation in every sense of the term of the Indian manhood and womanhood.”* **1**

Being inspired by this new religious-nationalistic fervour thousands of patriots faced repression and even death at the hand of the British ruler. Thus on the base of spiritual-nationalism Sri Aurobindo wished to bring complete freedom from the British colonial power for Indian masses. These two ideals, for Sri Aurobindo, were complementary to each other and may be regarded as the core of his political thought. For these outstanding, innovative thought and for their successful application in determine the course of Indian freedom movement Sri Aurobindo must have been regarded as one of the pioneer political thinker of India.

Besides, Sri Aurobindo’s above mentioned contributions he also chalked out the theory of Boycott and Passive Resistance along with the use of force if necessary to achieve independence of India. But he did not visualize mere political independent of India. He destined a broader role with India to play in international affairs. In this connection he developed a unique ideal of human unity that ultimately would transcend mere rational development all over the world.

Sri Aurobindo’s assessment as a fundamental political thinker depends largely on the evaluation of the theory of Boycott and Passive Resistance as developed by him. In fact, by the application of this theory Sri Aurobindo and his fellow freedom fighters sought to change the very nature of freedom movement of India. During the first two decades of its establishment of the Indian National Congress (INC) was mostly engaged in demanding some minor reforms to get some relief to the Indian. But it did not demand or in a position to demand total independence or Purno Swaraj. This phase of the history of freedom movement was controlled by the moderate groups of INC. Actually, these groups failed to visualize the aspiration of the Indians towards freedom. The attitude of the moderates and their initiatives also failed to attract the attention of Sri Aurobindo and many others for some limitations and impracticability in respect of realizing the dream of independence for Indians. That is why Sri Aurobindo perhaps felt urgency in taking active part in India’s freedom movement. As an observer of the history of India and the history of Europe Sri Aurobindo had his own thought regarding the way of India’s freedom movement. Here one may get the answer of the research question: Why did Sri Aurobindo take part in India’s freedom movement?

It is Sri Aurobindo and his fellow associates, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Brambha Bandhab Upadhayay, who came forward to translate the aspirations of common Indians towards freedom. In 1905 when the declaration of the Partition of Bengal took place and created stir among the political circles and the public, Sri Aurobindo decided to take a full leap into the nation’s freedom movement. In March, 1906, he started a Bengali paper the ***‘Yugantar’***, which was to preach open revolt against the British colonial power and published a series of instructions for revolutionary warfare. Later on, he joined on English daily the ***‘BandeMataram’*** which had circulated all over India. Initially, Bipin Chandra Pal was the person to lead this paper and after he left it, Sri Aurobindo took the steering of this daily. The articles published in the ‘*BandeMataram’* were full of the fire of patriotism. Sri Aurobindo declared and developed in the *‘BandeMataram’*, a new national programme. He wrote a series on the theory of Boycott and Passive Resistance, a new political philosophy of revolutionary warfare as well as nationalistic movement. Many leading articles published in the *‘BandeMataram’* aimed at destroying misconceptions such as the belief in the British justice and the benefits bestowed by the foreign government, faith in its low-courts, in the adequacy of the education provided in its schools and universities. Sri Aurobindo strongly and continuously highlighted the deplorable and ignoble results of the foreign rule such as emasculation, tardy progress, poverty, economic dependence, absence of a rich industrial activity; he insisted especially that even if the alien rule were beneficent and benevolent, it could not be a substitute for a free and healthy national life. During its short and continuous existence the ‘*BandeMataram’* could change the political thinking of India’s freedom movement. The spirit of revolt was visible between the lines of this paper. However, in August, 1907 the government arrested Sri Aurobindo as editor on charge on sedition in the *‘BandeMataram’*. World poet Rabindranath Tagore stood by him and sang ---*“Aurobindo accept salutation from Rabindranath.”* 2

The theory of Passive Resistance and Boycott may be regarded Sri Aurobindo’s unique contribution to his understanding of politics relating to nation’s freedom movement. In fact, he raised some moral questions relating to national development. According to him, the future of India would depend on how and to what extent conditions of a grand national development is laid down. In his opinion, Passive Resistance as a means is directed to that end. In his own words, --

*“There are certain moral qualities necessary to self-government, which have become atrophied by long discuss in our people and can only be restored either by the healthy air of a free national life in which alone they can permanently thrive or by their vigorous exercise in the intensity of a national struggle for freedom…Passive Resistance affords the best possible training for these qualities.”* **3**

As Sri Aurobindo conceived it the process the goals and means overlap each other; they become indistinguishable in some cases. Take the case settlements of disputes through arbitration instead of law-suits. It is a boycott of colonial judiciary as well as achievement of Swaraj in the administration of justice. By depending less and less on a foreign government people become more and more attuned to free and healthy national thought and action, which is impossible in a state servitude. But it is a development which inform the whole population and not a mere part of it. Sri Aurobindo makes this clear when he write,

“*Just as individual liberty is necessary for the richness and variety of national development, so self- government is necessary for its completeness and the full deployment of national strength of the depressed classes is so much valuable force lost to the sum of national strength…The great Weakness of India in the past has been the political depression and nullity of the mass of population. It was not from people of India that India was won by the Mogul or Briton, but from a small privileged class.”* **4**

Besides, the Doctrine of Passive Resistance and Boycott has another feature–it presents a positive view towards state-power. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo no national Self-development is possible without the support of Raj-Sakti and a native cannot move forward in any direction unless there is a central force. Thus, Political freedom, for Sri Aurobindo, is the life-breath of a nation’s social and educational reform, industrial expansion and more improvement can hardly be achieved without political freedom. He indentifies two requisites for national progress. The first is the free habit of free and healthy national thought and action. The second one he finds in organization of the national will in a strong central authority. The father of modern India Raja Rammohan Roy had more or less identical attitude towards state-authority or state-power. In fact, he was the first Indian who emphasized on the need for social change for progress. At the same time he also realized that social change and progress in India would require state-intervention. In other word, Raja Rammohan wanted that the state would play and active role in social reform and change. As such, he sought State-intervention for the introduction of the modern education and action for prohibition of **‘**Sati**’**. Thus, he sought to overcome the reactionary forces and entrenched orthodoxy. To Raja Rammohan the state-power, though it was a foreign power, was a progressive force in the context of traditional and moribund Indian Society. He thought state-power could be an aid to or an instrument of social change. East India Company representing the West was not only a progressive force as Raja Rammohan, but was also a breath of fresh air in the closed environment of traditional Indian society. Hence Raja Rammohan sought to activate the colonial state-power against the reactionary and obscurantist forces in his fight for social reform, change and progress. What is important for researchers is that Sri Aurobindo was also of the same view with this instrumentalist approach of state-power.

In spite of similarities in respect of instrumentalist approach of state-power, Sri Aurobindo had some differences with Raja Rammohan. One should keep it in mind that Raja Rammohan grew up at a time when the concept of native and foreign state-power was neither clearly defined nor demarcated. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, was born a century back from Raja Rammohan’s year of birth. So there was a clear gap of a century between Raja Rammohan (1772) and Sri Aurobindo (1872). A century of the colonial experience which Sri Aurobindo visualized was suffering for him to conclude that a colonial state would never give priority to native interests. Sri Aurobindo witnessed the growing poverty of India under the British colonial power. So Sri Aurobindo and many of his associates could not share the expectation of the earlier generation from, and its enchantment with, the British colonial power. Naturally, where as Raja Rammohan and his followers saw in the British colonial power for instrument for social change, reform and progress, Sri Aurobindo and his fellow friends talked of total independence or ‘Purno Swaraj’. Purno Swaraj was a condition for social change, reform and progress.

Raja Rammohan thought that the decaying and closed (moribund) Indian society could get a fresh air of life by the West wind (English education). So he welcomed the British rule in India at its early phase. During Raja Rammohan’s life time such a stand was to same extend progressive, particularly, from the context of contemporary Indian society which was loaded with superstition, illiteracy, poverty, etc. But, after a century back Sri Aurobindo witnessed the exploitative and inequitable character of the British colonial power. So the British rule was to Sri Aurobindo, and extremely enervating process for the spirit as well as the social environment of India. On the other hand, the British rule for Raja Rammohan was an off suit (a conduit) of the renaissance spirit. He visualized it is a liberating force. Sri Aurobindo and other contemporary leaders was the product of Indian renaissance which process started to take place in the last half of the nineteenth century. But the nineteenth century also witnessed recurrent famines devastating epidemics, intensifying, white-racism and decreasing employment opportunities. Consolidation of the British rule throughout this period was accompanied by anti-colonial uprisings from Western Ghats to the hills and jungles of Chotanagpur. With stagnation in agriculture, speedy decline of traditional industries and with an oppressive land-revenue system staring in the face of a helpless people, it was but natural that a sizable section of young generation---educated, mentally agile and sensitive---would refuse to put any premium on the British sense of justice, or on the benevolence of the Raj. Naturally, the common people of India saw the British rule in India as a demon straddling the body of the motherland (India) and sucking her blood. In other word, there outlook regarding the British rule in India was the pole apart to that Raja Rammohan and his moderates progenies. In this context, they could not support to the programme of collaboration and co-operation with the British rule which Raja Rammohan prescribed. Sri Aurobindo was the real representative of common Indians of such a brand; Sri Aurobindo called rather for confrontation and non-cooperation with the British rule. Against this backdrop Sri Aurobindo constructed the doctrine of Passive Resistance – a theory of non-cooperation in its pragmatic formulation.

Sri Aurobindo is not to be taken as a text book political thinker like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, etc. In fact, these Western political thinkers formulated their concepts and ideas on the basis of existing socio-political realities that they were familiar with and on the basis of certain assumption about human psychology and society which they knew not by their experience and intellect. But Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, constructed his ideas and concepts on the basis of social, cultural and political realities that he experimented and visualized. At the same time, he was also guided by the reaching of historical events having commonalities with the context of contemporary Indian society. In assessing the history of ancient India Sri Aurobindo observed that

“*the political history of India is the story of a succession of empires, indigenous and foreign, each of them destroyed by centrifugal forces but each bringing the centripetal tendency nearer to its triumphant emergence. And it is a significant circumstance that the more the foreign rule, the greater has been its force for the unification of the subject people. This is always a sure sign that the essential nation unit is already there and that there is an indissoluble national vitality necessitating the inevitable emergence of the organized nation.”* **5**

Sri Aurobindo meticulously observed that the contribution of the socio-economically backward classes in the colonial history of India did not get any proper place. Rather, the elite and middle classes had been highlighted for their role. But any reader of Indian history may get an account of protest and struggle of the common people belonging to lower classes currently identified as **‘Sudras’.** Prof. Ranajit Guha in recent past had thrown light in this field named *‘Subaltern Studies’*. But interestingly it may be mentioned here that Sri Aurobindo was attracted to the struggling role of the common masses belonging to the lower classes against the ruling authorities in different parts of India. Taking a lesson from it he rightly understood that the working masses, belonging mainly to the lower classes, would be involved in movement against the British colonial power. In fact, Sri Aurobindo was first amongst the Indians, even before Swami Vivekananda, talked about awakening of the people belonging to lower classes in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Twenty-five years before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 Sri Aurobindo used the term **‘Proletariat’** in his political writings. It was he who first evaluated the political situation of India with reference to its relation with the downtrodden, overlooked and neglected class known as the proletariat. In stern and unwavering language he wrote an article in the ‘*InduPrakash****’*** on 4th December, 1893 where he said:

*“…The proletariate among us is sunk in ignorance and overwhelmed with distress. But with that distressed and ignorant proletariat, resides, whether we like it or not , out sole assurance of hope, our sole chance in the future.....Yet the proletariat is, as I have striven to show, the real key of the situation. Torpid he is and immobile; he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great potential force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength, becomes by the very fact master of the future…Theorists and trifler as I may be called, I again assert as our first and holiest duty the elevation and enlightenment of proletariate.”* **6**

Thus it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo is a genuine political thinker who could realize the importance of the working class in Indian freedom movement. Other than him, no Indian national leader had such a vision. He was really an extraordinary political leader and thinker in this context. His analysis of socialism and capitalism far before of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) is a matter of research. According to him, socialism is an extension of national idea and it is an attempt to complete the growth of the national community by making the individual do what he has never yet done, life for the community more than for himself. Thus, Sri Aurobindo put a spiritual or moralist emphasis on the concept of socialism. In 1920, in his famous essay *‘After the War’*, Sri Aurobindo predicted the collapse of capitalism in the coming days, because it had lost its moral force. As a spiritualist he was attracted by social and economic egalitarianism of socialism. But at the same time, he also opposed to socialist authoritarianism. He was of the opinion that totalitarianism is the natural and inevitable destiny of socialism. But at the same time, he vehemently criticized fascism as an offspring of capitalism. He could visualize a possible war between capitalism and communism. He also predicted the possibility of bi-polarization of the international politics after Second World War. He was highly skeptical about the establishment of a ‘Stateless Communism’ which was expected to be the final phase of socialism. His observations proved true with the collapse of socialist system of the USSR in 1990. In this light he may regard a true political thinker who sought to make a balance between western concepts of socialism as well as its Indian connection.

The credit of Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker lies in the fact that he among the Indians for the first time presented a splendid blue print or draft of ***‘***Self-rule***’*** that could make the British imperial presence in India irrelevant. According to him, ‘Self-development’ and ‘Passive Resistance’ are genuinely presenting the Doctrine of Passive Resistance; Sri Aurobindo actually gave an outline upon alternative system and structure of governance to the British rule. Even Rabindranath Tagore, one of the leading humanists of the contemporary world, thought the Doctrine of Passive Resistance as a positive and constructive step towards achievement of **‘Atmasakti’** (the power of the self). Even Swami Vivekananda stressed on Atmasakti for Indians. He also prescribed some treatments for achieving Atmasakti by Indians. Sri Aurobindo as a political activist as well as political thinker gave highest priority to establish a ‘**Swadeshi State’.** Only then, according to Sri Aurobindo, ‘Purno Swaraj’ could be achieved.

However, for Sri Aurobindo, the word ‘**Swaraj**’ had a far-reaching and higher meaning. According to him, Swaraj is the fulfillment of the ancient life of India under modern condition. In fact the, greatness of ancient India should be revived for the fulfillment of Purno Swaraj for India. Thus, Sri Aurobindo attempted to bind the ideal of swaraj and the ideal of human unity. As a political thinker he pointed out that *“Swaraj is life, it is nectar and salvation. Swaraj in a nation is the breath of life. Without breath of life a men is dead. Swaraj being the life of a nation it is essential for it. History shows the fate of nations without Swaraj”* **7** History shows the fate of nations without Swaraj. He was of the opinion that Swaraj is essentially needed and one has to gain it by own efforts. He was of the opinion that it (political freedom) was necessary to attempt social reform, educational reform and industrial expansion. He was of the opinion that Swaraj is essentially needed and one has to gain it by own efforts. In his opinion,

“…*One way of gaining it is to implore the sovereign, who hold our realm, but he won’t give it. Unfortunately there still exists a party of men who still cling to the idea that we shall obtain Swaraj by asking for it, which is to be regretted. This party thinks that we are not capable of managing our own affairs, that we are being trained in that direction and that our benign English Government will extend swaraj to us by degrees. But they do not understand that it is against human nature--Indians excepted.”* **8**

At the same time, he stressed on moral improvement of the Indians without which no social progress can be attained. In his own words, ---*“The primary requisite for national progress, national reform, is the free habit of free and healthy national thought and action which is impossible in a state servitude.”* **9**

So he emphasized to acquire swaraj by own efforts and the process of acquiring swaraj, is essentially a process of hardship in the struggle for swaraj. He was of the opinion that there was no alternative. Thus viewed, swaraj, for Sri Aurobindo, is a highly pressed goal or objective for which Indians have to struggle. In this perspective Sri Aurobindo came forward to set the path of our freedom movement. In this role he appeared as political thinker in the history of Indian freedom movement. No other leader of his time could visualize such a role. In fact, he was the first among contemporary leaders in India’s freedom movement, who could read the socio-economic context of India under the British colonial power. As such he advocated for a strategy aiming at securing independence. He was the leader who was able to transform the freedom movement and construct a cultural base of Indian nationalism. His writings regarding Indian culture and civilization were based on Indianness. At the same time he sought to refute all ignorant and deliberately malicious criticism raised by Western critiques against Indian art, culture and civilization. It may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo’s effort was to create such a mind-set for Indians which would be able to appreciate its culture and civilization and thereby would be able to revive India’s ancient spirit and glorious heritage. In fact, he was of the opinion that only such an atmosphere would be able to create desirable base for the success in the political struggle against the British imperial power. In other words, he actually wanted to awaken Indian people against foreign rule with a view to liberate India. He emphasized the necessity for self-scarifies by Indians in order to win their freedom. That is why, he wanted that Indian people to shake off their lethargy to gain power and strength for fighting against foreign rule. So, Indian masses had to welcome pain and sufferings for achieving freedom. In this respect he may be treated as the pioneer and theoretician of India’s freedom struggle.

However, Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nation is something unique. According to him individual is an organic part of nation because of his history, language, culture and traditions. In the *‘Savitri’*Sri Aurobindo said individual is a colonist from immortality. According to him, though individual is shaped and moulded by the society, he or she is a decent of the numinous. As a thinker he always emphasized on the quality of individuals. So he conceives of a nation not as a territorial but as a psychological or spiritual being a Devine entity. It is a living group or unit of humanity which nature has been developing throughout the world in various forms. Like the individual and society it has a body and organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul. According to Sri Aurobindo, “.....*the essential elements of nationality are geographical unity, a common past and a common interest”.***10** A ‘common enthusiasm’ is the most powerful fosterer of nationality. He emphasized on the psychological rather than the biological and physical factors as the foundation of nationality. Thus viewed, nationality refers primarily to the nation of psychological unity which, in turn, may be fostered by common historical memories of ancient culture and tradition of past heroes and sufferings, common geographical habitation and common interests and values. Such views regarding individual, nation and nationality, make Sri Aurobindo different from other thinker. Sri Aurobindo’s concepts are based on Indian culture and outlook. He didn’t follow the path of the West in interpreting the above concept.

The term ‘group-soul’ or **‘**nation-soul’ is the central theme of Sri Aurobindo’s political and social thought. In place of ‘national egoism’ as find in the Western political thought, Sri Aurobindo refers to nation-soul which is characterized by love and veneration for the country. This patriotic attitude or love for the country is not considered by the Western concept on ‘self-interest’. But such sentiment or feeling is considered by the term ‘brotherhood’ used by Sri Aurobindo in his ***‘Open Letter to My* *Countrymen’*** in 1909. In this letter Sri Aurobindo said, *“Our ideal patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood ---- it is a unity of brothers, equals and freemen that we seek, not the unity of master and serf, of devourer and devoured”.***11** Further, the realization of God through a nation distinguishes Sri Aurobindo not only from the Western political thinkers, but also from majority Indian political thinkers. Sri Aurobindo gives a spiritual tone to his concept of nation. He looked upon the nation as a divine entity for achieving national liberty. To him, patriotism or nationalism is alienated from spirituality. Noted national leader of Indian freedom struggle Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das once described Sri Aurobindo as--- *“the poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity.”* **12**  During his later life Sri Aurobindo enlarged his spiritual vision and looked upon the nation as a milestone in the journey to a more integral, global consciousness and organization. Thus, his concept of India as a nation is far deeper than mere patriotism that everyone is expected to feel for one’s country. He looked upon India not as a mere geographical entity, a physical and material land mass but as a ‘spiritual entity’, a Goddess incarnate, a mighty Mother. In the words of Sri Aurobindo---

“*For what is a nation? What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the shaktis of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the shaktis of three hundred million people…*’’ **13**

Sri Aurobindo’s such views made him different from other thinkers India’s freedom movement. Sri Aurobindo firmly believed that “…..*a nation which has ones risen, once has been called up by the voice of God to rise cannot be* *checked by physical repression*”.**14**  According to him, it was in destructive unless its perish from within. Thus we find a unique concept of immortality of the nation in the political thought of Sri Aurobindo. Such an explanation certainly makes him different from other political thinkers of his days. One may find some kind of similarity between Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nation and the concept of nationalism developed by famous political philosopher Fichte and Hegel. Both Fichte and Hegel admit the spirit as the dynamic force in the activities of the nation. But while Sri Aurobindo consider the nation as the manifestation of the Devine Mother and wants to realize God through the nation Fichte and Hegel have no such view of nation. Further, while Hegel believes that only the nation can bear of the spiritual mission and, therefore, assigns absolute powers to the nation-state, Sri Aurobindo considers the national-state as a transitional stage in the divine fulfillment of the individual and therefore assigns limited power to the nation-state.

Sri Aurobindo made a distinction between people and nation. According to him, the Asian states during their flourishing stage of their political life were not nation states in the modern sense of the term. They were characterized more by social, cultural and religious ethos than by modern concept of nation-state. They were national in the sense having a common soul-life, a common culture, a common social organization and a common political head. He emphasized the role of the three important factors in the formation of nation-state. These are kingship, social hierarchy and foreign domination. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo referred to two important stages namely the pre-national empire-building cycle of the ancient world and the modern cycle of nation-building in the process of state formation. The ancient world started with the small distinct cultural and geographical units, namely, the tribe, the clan and the city-state. The loose geographical and cultural aggregates of Greece, Italy, Egypt, China, and India illustrate this point. The modern cycle of nation-building began with the growing political consciousness through several successive steps. Such an analysis by Sri Aurobindo certainly points out his quality of thinking. In fact, his immense historical knowledge and comparative study in the fields of Indian and European history puts him in a different place from other national thinkers.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes the modern process of nation-building from the ancient process of nation building on three points **–**

**1)** The ancient world as in the case of Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome) developed from the local and regional units to imperial conglomeration without going through a nation-unit as necessary evolutes. The modern cycle of nation-building does not proceed to the larger aggregate to the neglect of the intermediate aggregate.

**2)** The ancient empire-building cycle imposed political uniformity from the top. The modern cycle of nation-building, however, is the result of a growing political evolution through several successive steps.

**3)** The ancient empire-building rested on the authoritarian principle. The modern European nation-building, however, is marked by a process of revolt, resistance and rebellion against authoritarianism.

Thus viewed attempts may be made to analyze the concept of nationalism chalked out by Sri Aurobindo. No doubt, it is a core concept of his political thought. In the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo nationalism is a religion for the realization of Divinity in the nation and not a mere formula for the realization of the economic and political self-interests of the nation. According to him,“*Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it. Nationalism is immortal, Nationalism cannot die…*’’ **15** To Sri Aurobindo nationalism is the Shakti of all Gods for conserving national vitality and power and a passionate aspiration for the emancipation of the motherland. As a prerequisite for the fulfillment of India’s role in the spiritual regeneration of the world, in his famous Uttarpara speech, Sri Aurobindo said that India was rising for the salvation of humanity. In his words, --

“… *She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world. India has always existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great”.* **16**

His concept of nationalism was different from that of the Western outlook. According to him, nationalism was not a mere political programme; it was a religion that had come from God. Such an outlook about nationalism of Sri Aurobindo may remind us Swami Vivekananda’s concept of nationalism. Vivekananda was fully aware of the fact that Indian society was divided by elements such as race, language, culture, religion, etc. In a word, there was diversity in Indian society. So, Swami Vivekananda was in search of a common factor or bond of unity among Indians which could provide the base of Indian nationalism. It is in his opinion that*,* the one common ground that we have is our sacred tradition, our religion, that is the only common ground and upon that we shall have tobuild.In other words, Swami Vivekananda wanted to build future India on the basis of religion (Sanatana Dharma). Likewise, Sri Aurobindo said on the 30th May, 1909 at Uttarpara that, *“I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism.”* **17** He optimized nationalism in its most pristine form. It was multi-sided in a manner of speaking. Along with pride and determination to maintain the nation’s independence and integrity, it also encompassed compassion, love and respect for all of God’s creations. Today, as we confront narrow and sectarian nationalism, it is important to understand and make note of the lofty idealism enshrined in Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nationalism, so as to be able to rise above petty difference and personal belief and ideologies. A nation does not become strong where myopia reigns and leaders and people conflict themselves to functioning within ‘narrow domestic walls’. Nationalism entails not only a willingness to drive for one’s rights but it also calls for performance of duties to society and above all, ensure a congenial atmosphere, where in people can work and thrive.

Sri Aurobindo believed that nationalism cannot be crushed because it is the power of God. In fact, his concept of nationalism focuses on revivalism of the glorious traditions of ancient India. Likewise, the main focus of nineteenth century renaissance in India was to discover its glorious past and to rebuild itself in that light. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to rebuild India in the light of glorious traditions of the past to make Indian society more effective and dynamic. He not only was confined to the glorious past of India, but also was very much concerned for a developed India. That is why, he emphasizes on modern organizational capability to make society more effective and dynamics. This element of dynamism, in Sri Aurobindo’s thought of nationalism, makes him different from Dayananda Saraswati who focused on accepting the glorious traditions of ancient India intact. But Sri Aurobindo was really a visionary and modern political thinker in respect of his time and contemporaries. According to Sri Aurobindo, geographical unity is the basic foundation of nationalism. The common past plays an important role in bonding common interest. He said that a common enthusiasm coalescing with a common interest is the most powerful fosterer of nationality.

However, Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nationalism was based on the ideal of universal human unity. Here in lies the importance of the role of Sanatana Dharma. According to Sri Aurobindo---Sanatana Dharma makes India separate from other parts of the world. He believed Sanatana Dharma as a world religion and said, *“(It) embraces science, faith, theism, Christianity, Mohamedanism and* *Buddhism and yet is none of these....”***18** Thus to him nationalism was not mere politics but a religion a creed, a faith. From these perspectives it becomes very much clear that Sri Aurobindo’s first dream was a free and united India. In other word, he did not favour partition of the sub-continent, especially along communal lines, as it would make the nation weak in the context of the world. In this process Sri Aurobindo wanted to unite an entire world---the global human community. Both BipinChandra Pal and Chittaranjan Das were influenced to a large extent by Sri Aurobindo’s concept of nationalism. According to Chittaranjan Das

*“ Nationalism is a process through which a nation expresses itself, not in isolation from other nations, but as a part of a great scheme by which in seeking its own expression, and therefore its own identity, it materially assists the self-expression and self-realization of other nations as well. Diversity is as real as unity.”***19**

Following Sri Aurobindo, Deshbandhu chalked out such a broad definition of nationalism as the President of Goya Conference of the INC in 1922. Likewise, Bipin Chandra Pal was of the opinion that all kind of nationalist efforts would lead to promote international humanism. He advocated for federalism for future India because of the existence plural society. Thus, it becomes clear that Bipin Chandra Pal too viewed nationalism on a broad sense.

In this connection mention may be made of Rabindranath Tagore’s concept of nationalism, like Sri Aurobindo, he also believed that nationalism is directed by spirituality. In other words, he believed in spiritual nationalism and democracy. He had firm belief that a spiritual unity exists through all differences. He rejected Western concept of nationalism for it did not represent any high principle of social cooperation and harmony or spiritual idealism. His song ***‘Jana, Gana, Mono’***---the National Anthem of free India emphasizes on sustaining and nourishing the unity of our country. In fact, the thinkers like Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, did not take into account the harmful consequences of parochial nationalism. They all stood against militant and aggressive nationalism. They expressed a cherished dream of creating a world where there would be no barriers of language, religion, caste, creed, nation or state. They looked upon humanity as something of all nations.

Sri Aurobindo opposed to the idea of Hindu Nationalism based on communal line. Lala Lajpat Rai when talked of in favour of Hindu Nationalism as a necessary preliminary of a ‘Great Indian Nationality’, Sri Aurobindo rejected his opinion as it was a communal idea. In this context Sri Aurobindo’s views on Hindu-Muslim relationship in the sub-continent may be mentioned. According to him,*“...Our ideal therefore is an Indian Nationalism, largely Hindu in its spirit and traditions....but wide enough also to include the Moslem and his culture and traditions and absorb them into itself.”* **20** He rather came forward to highlight the unity of Hindu and Muslim communities under modern conditions of India. In his own words,

*“Not that we are blind to facts---not that we (i.e. the Nationalist Party) do not recognize Hindu-Mahomedan rivalry as a legacy of the past enhanced and not diminished by British ascendancy, a thing that has to he faced and worked out either by mutual concession or by a struggle between nationalism and separatism. But we do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions. Hindu nationalism had a meaning in the times of Shivaji and Ramdas... because India was then a world to itself and the existence of two geographical units entirely Hindu, Maharashtra, Rajputana, provided it with a basis... But under modern conditions India can only exists as a whole. ...the country, the Swadeshi which must be the base and fundamental of our nationality, is India, a country where Mahomedan and Hindu live intermingled and side by side.”* **21**

Thus it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo was a true secular and democratic thinker who in his heart and mind was a real anti-communal person. He was in favour of ‘Composite Nationalism’ which would include the essence of all communities. In the *‘BandeMataram’* once he said:

*“Nationalism depends for its success on the awakening and organizing of the whole strength of the nation; it is therefore vitally important for Nationalism that the politically backward classes should be awakened and brought into the current of politically life; the great mass of orthodox Hinduism which was hardly even touched by the old congress movement, the great slumbering mass of Islam which was remained politically inert through the last century, the shopkeepers, the artisan class, the immense body of illiterate and ignorant peasantry, the sumrerged class, even the wild tribes and races still outside the pale of Hindu civilization. Nationalism can afford to neglect and omit none.”***22**

Taking lesson from historySri Aurobindo was of the opinion that people belonging to different religions, cultures, languages might be united towards nationalism. In this context he mentioned the history of France, United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland. So he was confident that in India also a common bond of nationalism might be developed

among different religious, linguistic and cultural communities. In his own words,

“…*We do not deny the difficulty created by the divisions between the Mahomedans and Hindus, but it is idle to say that the dipienlty is insuperable. If the spirit of nationalism conquered the much fiercer intolerance of the religious struggles in Europe after the Reformation, it is not irrational to hope as much for India in the twentieth century.”* **23**

Sri Aurobindo did not believe that the Hindus andMuslims in India have separate nationality. Thus Sri Aurobindo suggested solving any sort of tensions between the Hindu and the Muslim from humanitarian and moral standpoint. In this process he wanted to solve the long-existing communal rift between Hindus and Muslims with a new approach. However, prior to him Swami Vivekananda and his Gurudev Thakur Ramakrishna also talked of unity and harmony among all sections of people acrossing caste, creed, language, and religion. In fact, they upheld the spirit of Sanatana Dharma of ancient India, which was based on total humanitarian approach. But Sri Aurobindo’s credit is that as an Indian political leader of pre-independence era, first time he raised the issue and proposed a humanitarian scheme for solving the century’s old communal problem. Thus the sagacity of Sri Aurobindo becomes proved and it also bears relevance till date as the said issue is yet to be solved from humanitarian outlook.He opinioned that

*“More than 90% of the Indian Musalmans are descendants of converted Hindus and belong as much to the Indian notion as the Hindus themselves. This process of conversion has continued all along; Jinnah is himself a descendant of a Hindu, converted in fairly recent times, named Jinnahbhai...”* **24**

Thus it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo regarded that majority of the Indian Muslims belonged to Indian culture and heritage as basically they were descendants of converted Hindus. Naturally, according to Sri Aurobindo, they inherited the external values and culture of India. This external values and culture as a composite whole forms the basic concept of Indianness. Both Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda held such a view. So Sri Aurobindo vehemently opposed to the concept of ‘Two-Nation Theory’ which ultimately created a sense of separatism in the minds of Hindus and Muslims in India. With such a outlook on Hindu and Muslim question in India Sri Aurobindo in 1909 cautioned the then moderate leaders and remarked that we would not for a moment accept separate electorates or separate representation on the basis of caste, creed or religion. His such an outlook clearly denotes his political sagacity as long before the demand for Pakistan for the Indians Muslims raised by the Muslim League Sri Aurobindo could apprehend such a bad politics of partition. Other than Sri Aurobindo no national leader of that time had such an outlook and wisdom. So he may be regarded as a pioneer and original political thinker in the Indian context.

Sri Aurobindo was the first national leader of Indian freedom movement who identified the causes of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and recognized the issue as national problem. To him it was a social and internal issue of Indian nationality. He did not regard it as a political issue. That is why, he wanted to solve the issue by creating a strategy of national unity on the basis of spirituality. No doubt, the concept of spirituality his very often misunderstood. Sri Aurobindo articulated the concept of spirituality as freedom of the human soul. According to him, this freedom gives the power to expand and grow towards perfection. From this standpoint, spirituality insists on respect for all religions. So Sri Aurobindo emphasized on devotion to one's own ideas and institutions, with tolerance and respect for the ideas and institutions of other section of the community, and an ardent love and affection for the common civic life and ideal of all. He wanted the above qualities to be cultivated by the Indians for building up of the real Indian nation**.25**  Thus it may be interpreted that as a believer in humanist Hinduism Sri Aurobindo emphasized tolerance, acceptance, peace, harmony and co-existence.

Actually, Sri Aurobindo was true secular in spirit and action. He personified all that was best and brightest about the Indian civilization and culture. So he stressed spiritual regeneration and rediscovery of the cultural roots of India for an emphatic assertion of nationalist identity. According to him, Indian concept of civilization and culture is inclusive enough to accept others as they are. From this standpoint, he said

*"…..We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom….."* **26**

Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that more than 90% of Indian Muslims are descendants of converted Hindus and thereby they also represent Indian culture and civilization. He believed that Indian Muslims had also contributed to a large extent in the nourishment of Indian culture and civilization. That is why, Sri Aurobindo was always in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Sri Aurobindo's vision of a free nation urged him to get involve in India's freedom movement and he believed that only Hindu-Muslim unity took overthrow the British rule. So it can be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo shaped the meaning of the word 'Secularism' in the light of harmony, peace and co-existence of the future generation of the mankind. From this standpoint, he wanted to create a common sentiment of nationalism and Indians by awakening a feeling of brotherhood cutting across religious differences. With his secular temperament Sri Aurobindo strongly advocated advancement towards a humanized global community not limited any theistic religion of the past. **27**

From the beginning of the nationalist movement since early 20th century leading political and social personalities realized the need for framing a national education policy to serve the nationalist interests and awaken nationalism in the minds of the youths. In this sector Ashutosh Chowdhury, Sister Nivedita, Raja Subodh Mallick, Satish Chandra Mukherjee, Rabindranath Tagore and many other distinguish personalities came forward to establish the National Council of Education in March, 1906. This council was able to establish the Bengal National College in Calcutta and Sri Aurobindo joined as its Principal in August, 1906. He was chosen for this post as he got disgusted with the British system of education in India. Sri Aurobindo as a nationalist thinker himself expressed his dissatisfaction with the way of the education policy which was carried out in practice in the *Karmoyogin* (January, 1910). In his own words,

“*National Education languishes because the active force has been withdrawn from it; it does not absolutely perish because a certain amount of Nationalist self-devotion has entrenched itself in this last stronghold and holds it against great odds and under the most discouraging circumstances….. Unless this movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as a part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visible to all, a nursery of patriotism and a mighty instrument of national culture,…It is amazing that men calling themselves educated and presuming to dabble with public movements should be blind to the fact the success or failure of National Education is intimately bound up with and, indeed, entirely depends upon the fortunes of the great resurgence which gave it birth….They cannot ignore the service done by that enthusiasm, but they regard it merely as the ladder by which they climbed and are busy trying to kick it done. They are really shutting off steam, yet expect the locomotive to go on.*” **28**

Further, Sri Aurobindo had clear ideas of what kind of education would be needed the most for India for its all-round progress. However, he continued for a little period as the Principal and ultimately resigned from the post on2nd August, 1907. But Sri Aurobindo did not give up thinking on national education as part of his thinking regarding India. Sri Aurobindo wrote a series of articles on education in the *Karmoyogin* during1909-1910 under the title*—‘A System of National Education’* and ‘*The National Value of* *Art’*. In *‘A System of National Education’,* Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilization and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature; not between the present and the future. He further said that “*The living spirit of demand for national education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or the forms of system of Nalanda than the living spirit of Swadeshi, a return from railway or motor traction to the ancient chariot and the bullock-cart.”* **29** Thus it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo sought a new education policy based on proper Indianness and with a scientific outlook for future generations. He argued that the aim and principle of a true national education was not to ignore truth and modern knowledge, but to take our foundation on India’s own being, own mind and own spirit. Thus viewed it may be said that according to Sri Aurobindo the one central object of the national system of education should be the growth of the soul, its power and possibilities. In other words, Sri Aurobindo wanted to rise of both the individual soul and the national soul into the powers of the life and the ascending mind and the soul of humanity. Thus it becomes clear that Sri Aurobindo’s education policy has originality considering the then existing education system in British-India.

Thus viewed Sri Aurobindo’s nationalism represents a synthesis of the Western and Indian political thoughts. It is inspired by the Greek history and the ancient Indian thought contained in the Rig-Veda, the Upanishad, the Geeta, and Tantra. As a theorist Sri Aurobindo reconciles nationalism with his ideal of human unity. This is his most significant contribution to the Indian political thought. He conceives of nationalism as a stage or step in the social and political evolution of man and human unity as a political necessity for mankind. Further, he conceived the transcendence of nationalism by the ‘Religion of Humanity’. He was an ardent advocate of the world union based on the confederal basis. One may term these ideas as a prophetic formulation of new world order, which according to Sri Aurobindo is a part of Divine scheme. These New world order postulates development of a higher man. Sri Aurobindo’s new concept of new world order realized later on when the United Nations Organization came to operate. However, for the total realization of this concept many miles and many years have to go. Sri Aurobindo by introducing this concept in the history of world politics has placed himself in the seat of a pioneer and fundamental political thinker.

Sri Aurobindo though was a nationalist thinker yet he was also strongly in favour of internationalism. In his book *‘The Ideal of Human unity’* Sri Aurobindo had explained the process of realization of world unity. And this word ‘unity’ would be based on a religion of humanity which would mean the growing realization that there is a secret spirit---a Devine Reality, in which we are all one. Prior to him, Swami Vivekananda also talked of a ‘Universal Religion’. He also sought to preach the concept of Universal Unity. Both of them talked of a synthesis of spirituality with reality (social and political life). In this way, the concept of nationalism from the Indian context as expressed by them (Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo) is to some extent different from that of the Western concept. Thus one can find the concept of internationalism in Sri Aurobindo’s political thought. That is why, Sri Aurobindo may be called not only a mere political thinker but a visionary who focused not only the contemporary issues but also addressed the issues which would matter in future. In his own words*---“It must be remembered that a greater social or political unity is not necessarily a boon in itself; it is only worth pursuing in so far as it provides a means and a framework for a better, richer, more happy and puissant individual and collective life…..”***30** He was certain that the ideal of human unity was likely to figure largely among the determining forces of the future. In other words, he wanted to assign an insignificant role to the state. He wanted the emancipation of man from the incubus of bondage. Thus he favoured the creation of a free-society---a truly egalitarian society based on loving trust and justice. He believed that society is not a machine; rather it is an organic institution. His ultimate goal was to establish a perfect society at international level. His such a view may be termed as spiritual communalism. Sri Aurobindo’s ideas regarding an egalitarian society need greater cooperative in different spheres of social, economic and political life accrossing political boundaries of sovereign nation states. Towards this objective one can find some developments already have taken place, the EU, SAARC, ASEAN, and OAU, are some examples of such developments. These organizations work at regional level for better cooperation and understanding among the member states. Further, the establishment of United Nation Organization after the Second World War as a global government reflects to some extent the idea of internationalism of Sri Aurobindo. Undoubtedly, these organizations work for greater human relationship by promoting social, economic, political and cultural cooperation. Sri Aurobindo had firm belief in human unity and in course of time it would become a reality. According to Sri Aurobindo, *“Unity is an ideal which is not at all arbitrary or unreal, for unity is the very basis of existence.”* **31**As a true observer of human civilization Sri Aurobindo was always in search of the process of global unity since time immemorial. According to him,

*“We have seen that the building of the true national unit was a problem of human aggregations left over by the ancient world to the mediaeval. The ancient world started from the tribe, the city-state, the clan, the small regional state-all of them minor units living in the midst of other like units which were similar to them in general type, kinsually in language and most often or very largely in race, marked off at least from other divisions of humanity by a tendency towards a common civilization and protected in that community with each other and in their diversity from others by favourable geographical circumstances.”* **32**

Another great Indian---Swami Vivekananda also talked of the concept of internationalism by generating tolerance, integrity and co-operation among different human groups on the basis of equality and fraternity cutting across religious practices. In fact, Sri Aurobindo’s idea regarding internationalism is a continuation of Swami Vivekananda’s concept of international brotherhood. Both of them actually highlighted the spirit of ancient Indian culture embodied in the Upanishad. It would not be out of place to mention here that poet Rabindranath Tagore also talked of internationalism in his own words on the line of the Upanishad.

The ancient Indian culture actually inspired all great Indians like---Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, in shaping their ideas and vision. Universal humanism, the inherent spirit of Indian culture, thus matter for their work and thought. Sri Aurobindo through his work has given a glimpse of what humanity in moving towards. If one can take his message and act consciously, then our way in evitable would move forward to a fuller progress. In the words of Sri Aurobindo---

*“The whole aim of a great culture is to lift man up to something which at first he is not, to lead him to knowledge though he starts from an unfathomable ignorance, to teach him to live by his reason, though actually he lives much more by his unreason, by the law of good and unity, though he is now full of evil and discord, by a law of beauty and harmony though his actual life is a repulsive muddle of ugliness and jarring barbarisms ,by some high law of his spirit, though at present he is egoistic, material, unspiritual, engrossed by the needs and desires of his physical being . If a civilisation has not any of these aims, it can hardly at all be said to have a culture and certainly in no sense a great and noble culture. But the last if these aim, as conceived by ancient India, is the highest of all because it includes and surpasses all the others. To have made this attempt is to have ennobled the life of the race; to have failed in it is better than if it had never at all been attempted; to have achieved even a partial success is a great contribution to the future possibilities of the human being.”* **33**

The political thinkers from Plato onwards had vision regarding ideal society and state. In fact, political thinkers were concerned for constructing their ideas in the meaningful world order. In our country Sri Aurobindo made an attempt to this direction. His world order is not merely an exercise in fantasy. Rather he visualized it as a part of the progressive evolution of man. According to him the ‘Age of Reason’ has given to the modern individual the cult of humanism which is an offshoot of humanitarianism. He accepted the principles of democracy, such as, liberty, equality and fraternity. But he was not satisfied with these democratic principles above as these principles had so far been only token these values. He was of the opinion that the New World Order would affirm and espouse the greatest freedom on the part of the individual and the greatest fraternity in the sense that individuals would be free to form groups and pursue and develop their interests. Thus the New World Order as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is based on the triune principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. However, it is important to know the nature and content of these terms from the perspective of Sri Aurobindo’s thought:

“*When the soul claims freedom, it is the freedom of its self -development, the self development of the divine in man in all his being. When it claims equality, what it is claiming is that freedom equally for all and the recognition of the same soul, the same godhead in all human beings. When it strives for brotherhood, it is founding that equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling founded upon the recognition of this inner spiritual unity. These three things are in fact the nature of the soul; for freedom, equality, unities are the eternal attributes of the spirit. It is the practical recognition of this truth, it is the awakening of the soul in man and the attempt to get him to live from his soul and not from his ego which is the inner meaning of religion, and it is that to which the religion of humanity also must arrive before it can fulfill itself in the life of the race.”* **34**

According to Sri Aurobindo liberty is an attribute of the soul, it is the entelechy through which the individual’s soul realizes itself in accordance with its nature and laws of development. Therefore, it is the Vedantic principle per excellence. Further, Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that there should be equality of opportunities for individual in order to develop and realize himself or herself independently. According to him the union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by embracing the feeling and sentiment of fraternity and human brotherhood. In the words of Sri Aurobindo---

*“Perhaps liberty and equality, liberty and authority, liberty and organised efficiency can never be quite satisfactorily reconciled so long as many individual and aggregate lives by egoism, so long as he cannot undergo a great spiritual and psychological change and rise beyond mere communal association to that third ideal which some vague inner sense made the revolutionary thinkers of France add to their watchwords of liberty and equality…… the greatest of all the three, though till now only an empty word on man’s lips, the ideal of fraternity or, less sentimentally and more truly expressed an inner oneness. That no mechanism social, political, religious has ever created or can create; it must take birth in the soul and rise from hidden and divine depths within”*. **35**

As an extraordinary leader Sri Aurobindo went through examinations of different institutional devices which could serve as a “means” and a “frame work” for a better, happier and prosperous life both for individuals and state, from the perspective of the New World Order aiming at human unity. The different institutional devices can be detailed as follows---

(**1)** Instead of nation, empire can be the basis of human unity in the New World Order. Such an empire can be possible only when it becomes a ‘psychological entity’ and

(**2**) A great empire can be formed through the federation of free nations.

Thus viewed, Sri Aurobindo wanted the combination of empires and the federation of free nations to be converted into a living unity which’ in turn, would form the basis of an enduring New World Order. He was also of the opinion that such a federation would make enormous economic, social and cultural development apart from making life easy for the greater section of people by way of eliminating conflict and war. In other words, Sri Aurobindo does not suggest that there will be a single World State from the nation states. Rather, he suggests that the nation states will aggregate into larger units, into a federation and these larger aggregates in Asia, Africa, America and Europe, in cores of time, will confederate for purposes of all rounds economic, social, cultural development of mankind.

Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that despite numerous obstacles the process of materialization of certain conditions in the wake of science, technology and a world economy in which all nation-states had their share and stake towards the established of a New World Order. The idea of human unity, for Sri Aurobindo is not merely as intellectual slogan, but a psychological sentiment and a spiritual beckoning. The ideal human unity must become a part of our nature.

According to Sri Aurobindo the individual is to be treated as a ‘soul’ and the nation as a ‘group-soul’. He is of the opinion that the individual is the highest product of progressive evolution. His personality must be respected. In other words, respect for individual personality is an important factor towards the direction of an enduring world order. Individual plays an important role to form the New World Order. The key notion in the establishment of the New World Order is that within every distinct human personality there is a ‘self’--a being which has the right to grow in its own way. This principle is applicable to the individual as well as the institutions. Thus the transformation of the individual is a sine qua non to the establishment of the New World Order. Any system which eternalize injustice and inequality, compulsion and forced subjection cannot be a permanent system. Here in lies the need for a New World Order based on the spirit of peaceful coexistence, cosmopolitan output, spiritual fraternity and love. According to Sri Aurobindo education is an effective means by which these moral values can be inculcated. New attitudes and new skills are acquired for converting them into realities and facts. Values of liberty, equality and fraternity must be practiced at the level of nation-state so that these can spread to the international organization as such.

**II**

Sri Aurobindo was a towering figure of the Indian Renaissance who personified all that was best and brightest about Indian culture and civilization. His vision of a free nation urged him to get involved in India’s freedom movement. He believed that only unity among Indians could overthrow the British rule. India achieved her independence from the British colonial rule on 15th August, 1947 through a series of movements. In fact, these movements can be marked as a contribution of revolutionary and moderate. There are two trends of Indian freedom movement are not antagonistic to each other, rather they are complimentary to each other. Sri Aurobindo is the first Indian national leader who could understand the effective use of these two methods for the realization of India’s freedom. History of India’s freedom movement, no doubt, ratifies such stand. Sri Aurobindo took a leading role in India’s freedom movement. He, in fact, laid down the formulated strategies of struggle for India’s independence by putting emphasize on the combination of revolutionary or militant and peaceful mass struggle (Doctrine of Passive Resistance or DPR). In his short political career he was able to inject a militant tone to India’s freedom struggle. In fact, he could inspire the Indian’s youths to take part in the freedom movement.

However, it would be wrong to brand Sri Aurobindo as the propagator of terrorist movement against the British rule. The term ‘terrorist’ is highly objectionable and aggressive, as it bears the legacy of colonial concept of history. In fact, the partition of Bengal in 1905 and emerging situations following that event created a conducive situation leading to the proliferation of revolutionary activities all over India. From 1893 to 1906 Sri Aurobindo spent nearly twelve years of his early life in shaping a new out look to the political activities of India under the British colonial rule. After the foundation of the Indian National Congress (INC), Sri Aurobindo came forward to lay down a radical plan and programme for the Congress aiming at developing constructive nationalism with revolutionary outlook. He was of the opinion that the ‘soft’ policy of the moderate Congress leaders, begging for concession from the British bureaucracy, would not serve the national cause of self-rule or government. In fact, Sri Aurobindo by his unerring instinct of a prophet and a seer pointed freedom is our birth right.

Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal from Baroda in June, 1906 and got involved in anti-British movement. However, since the beginning of 20th century, Bengal was galvanized into new life by Swami Vivekananda who set the legacy of an ardent patriotism. In fact, Swami Vivekananda initiated to awake Indians in the guise of spirituality. He expressed his profound sympathy for ‘humblest, the lowliest and the lost’, ‘the Chandalas and the untouchables’ of India. Besides Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore championed the cause of these forgotten and marginal Indian masses. He (R.N.Tagore) took initiative in building national education and reconstruction through different writings published in the *‘Banga-Darshan’*, *‘Prabasi’* and other magazines, as well as through educational centre at Santinekatan and Srinekatan. These initiatives led to create on multitudinous currents of nationalism in Bengal and other parts of India. Sri Aurobindo kept his eyes on these events and he was preparing himself for these grant consummation for our national activities leading to awakening of Indian nationalism.

He was also influenced very much by the history of Irish revolution gathering experience and from there he emphasized on propagation for struggle against the colonial power by daily newspapers, weekly, journals and books concerned. Sister Nivedita, though was an Irish lady and was totally converted to an Indian after coming contact with Swami Vivekananda. Teachings of Swami Vivekananda made her complete person with Indian values and cultures. Sister Nivedita, took active role in inviting Sri Aurobindo to come to Bengal for leading revolutionary activities against the British ruler. In this context mention may made of that like many other Indian patriots Sister Nivedita too was very much eager to see India’s freedom from the British control. Sister Nivedita was a true sister to all revolutionaries of India realized from her ardent Irish sympathy that the Indian revolutionaries were fighting the case not only of India, but of the oppressed humanity in all parts of the globe. The silent collaboration between Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita still remains an unexposed chapter of India’s freedom movement. In fact, Sister Nivedita was such a magnificent personality who could brought of Indian Renaissance–Sri Jagadish Chandra Bose, a scientific revolutionary, Rabindranath Tagore, a cultural revolutionary and Sri Aurobindo the spiritual revolutionary. All of them nourished the emerging freedom movement of India. Sister Nivedita had an active and profound role in India’s national life. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore called her ‘Lokmata’. This objective–‘Lokmata’ bears tremendous significance in the context of Indian culture and society. Famous British writer Nevinson compared Sister Nivedita with flame. In his words, ‘there was indeed, something flame like about her and not only her language but her whole vital personality after reminded me of fire’. Nivedita had in her mind the spirit of Irish revolution, strong revolutionary spirit haunted her to become aggressive against exploitation, supersession and repression or oppression of Indians colonial power. In her own words: --- “*Aggression is to be the dominant characteristic of the India that is today … Merely to change the attitude of the mind, in this way is already to accomplish a revolution”*.**36** Such a great personality, a true friend of India, Sister Nivedita took interests in social, religious, cultural and political affairs of India. Besides Sri Aurobindo, she had contact with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Bipin Chandra Pal, Ramananda Chattapadhayay, Ratcliff, Nevinson, Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Jadunath Sarkar and many others. Sister Nivedita’s close contact with Sri Aurobindo injected some sort of dynamism in India’s freedom movement, particularly in the field of revolutionary activities. One should must keep it in his or her mind that among them Sri Aurobindo had only the experience of leading an active life as an activist as well as theoretician of India’s freedom movement.

Since the beginning of the 20th century different forms of social and political organizations were formed in different parts of India, more particularly in Bengal under the leadership of persons having revolutionary idealism aiming to liberate India from the clutch of the British imperialism. In this respect mention may be made of ‘**Anushilan Samity’** and ‘**Yugantar Dal’** of Bengal, ‘**Gadar Party’** of Punjab, etc. These groups thought of adopting revolutionary path for liberating India. In this direction the leaders of these groups emphasized on recruitment of volunteers spirited with nationalism and dedicated to scarify their lives for the cause of Motherland. Further, these organizations concentrated their efforts on collecting arms and ammunition, gathering secret information of the British administration and collecting money for running organizations through dacoits, looting, government money and killing brute and oppressive civil and police administrators. Such techniques, no doubt at the beginning made the British administration, to some extent, at a puzzle. However, with the frequent application of these techniques by different secret groups, the British administration gradually made them prepared to cope up with such situation and tackle the incident.

The politics of revolutionary nationalism initiated by Sri Aurobindo towards liberating India from the clutches of the British rule began to take a shape due to moderate politics of the INC, the then only platform of Indians. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, belief that revolutionary path was the best possible way for India to achieve independence at the same time he was also of the opinion that peaceful or non-violent procedure might also be used to achieve freedom. Actually, he rightly read the socio-political situation which was very much conducive for violent revolutionary movement. Here in lies the political maturity of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo did not publicly propagate about his revolutionary activities but from his statements and different writings it becomes evident that he was of the opinion of using force to achieve political ends. Many years before his direct involvement in nation’s freedom movement on 18th September, 1893 in *‘InduPrakash’*, a Bombay based newspaper published an article of Sri Aurobindo where he remarked, *“The work done by revolutionary in France in ‘five short years’ had had more lasting effects than 7th century of parliamentary democracy in England.”* **37** Later on in the *‘BandeMataram’* in 1906, he wrote a series of article on the *‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’*. In the third issues of the serial article, he strongly commented that he did consider the use of violent methods to be morally unjustified in every case. He also maintains this stand in his later life. It is found from *‘On Himself’*, Sri Aurobindo stressed *---“…that a nation is entitled* *to attain its freedom by violence’’*. **38** However, Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that the decision to use violent means or abstain from their use would be made on the basis of expediency and not only moral grounds. In fact, Sri Aurobindo was a political strategist. In 1940 after 30 years of retirement from active political life he wrote about three aspects of his political ideas and activities. These are:---a secret revolutionary propaganda and organization with an armed insurrection, the second and third sides were termed by Sri Aurobindo, as public propaganda seeking to convent the whole nation to the ideal of independence and the organization of the people to carry on public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance. **39** Sri Aurobindo and his followers attempted to implement this plan into practice from 1902. In this connection mention may be made of the emergence of secret societies in different parts of Bengal. It will be not out of place to mention here the Maniktola Secret Society was organized in 1905 under the leadership of Barindra Kumar Ghosh (brother of Sri Aurobindo) and it started its revolutionary activities in 1906 and it continues till 1908. In fact, this society is regarded as the first organized ‘Gupta-Samiti’ (Secret society) with a specific political aim. After its extinction a good number of secret societies were organized in different parts of Bengal. Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that, a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence. The decision to use force or abstain from its use, according to Sri Aurobindo would be finalized on the basis of expediency and not on moral grounds. Such a stand taken by Sri Aurobindo clearly indicates his inclination to adopt revolutionary means for achieving independence.

The second side of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought emphasizes on public propaganda aiming at awakening of general masses for the ideal of independence. Beside, revolutionary activities he also realized the relevance and importance of mass-participation and mass-movement for attaining independence. Without awakening of the general masses, without their passionate involvement in freedom movement the objective of independence cannot be fulfilled. In fact, subjection to foreign rule makes a nation mentally and physically weak. Its people lose confidence and dignity. That is why general people remain aloof from any kind of activities leading to freedom movement. This kind of attitude of the general masses is not conducive for freedom struggle. Like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo was aware of this kind of attitudes of the general masses. That is why they both stressed awakening of the general masses for the freedom of the nation as well as it’s all round well-being or prosperity. As a strategist of freedom movement Sri Aurobindo could read the political scenario of the British India and came to the realization that for achieving India’s independence both the revolutionary and the peaceful means of struggle were necessary. The former means, according to Sri Aurobindo, is no less important than the later one. In fact, these two means are complementary to each other. However, the former means is basically confined to underground activities. At the same time, it is basically based on violence. A vast country like India, Sri Aurobindo properly realized, cannot attain independence only through revolutionary activities. The British colonial power which captured India was a pioneer global power at that time. So such a mighty power couldn’t be overthrow by force alone. In this context, Sri Aurobindo did no mistake seeking mass-involvement in India’s freedom movement. But such an attempt could realize only after a long preparation of awakening general mass for freedom movement. To make general people conscious about the value and goals of freedom a constant propagandist programme is required. Here in lies the importance of public propaganda seeking to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence. Sri Aurobindo rightly mentioned this point in his strategy for India’s freedom movement. In fact, this point is more or less connected with the concept of national-awakening. National-awakening is possible through the spread of nationalism. The concept of nationalism, no doubt, emerged in the context of western environment. Indian thinkers came to contact of this concept through western education introduced by the British colonial ruler. This concept tries to unite and glorify a nation as against others. Thus, the western concept of nationalism, at its initial stage, encourages hatred towards other nations developing a kind of mechanical differences among nations. In other words, western concept of nationalism clearly distinguishes between *‘we’* and *‘others’*. But the Indian variety of nationalism, as developed by Bankimchandra, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo differ from such western concept as it put stress on the revival of self-dignity and nobility.

Against this backdrop the role of propaganda for accelerating the process of freedom movement in India was rightly understood by Sri Aurobindo. The peaceful ordinary people of India at the initial stage of freedom movement, particularly during 1885-1902, did not take part actively in freedom movement. Only elite class, who joined the Indian National Congress, came forward to put some demands or concessions before the British Government. They didn’t demand are targeted total independence or ‘Purno Swaraj’. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, was of the opinion that only total independence would be the goal of freedom movement nothing short of it was accepted to him. But the political scenario at that time was not conducive for such a goal. To prepare the field for achieving complete independence. Sri Aurobindo emphasized both the tactics of armed revolution as well as peaceful movement involving the general masses. The first method was needed, according to Sri Aurobindo, to understand the British Government that Indians were ready to sacrifice their lives for the motherland. In fact, Sri Aurobindo wanted that the British Government should make understand that Indian was not coward as a nation. Armed revolution, according to him, was the finest expression, of such a standpoint. But at the same time, he also realized that for achieving total independence by mass participation in the freedom movement was the only way. This part of national movement could get momentum, according to Sri Aurobindo only through the propagation of the importance of mass participation in our freedom movement. Thus this act of propagation occupies a central position in Sri Aurobindo’s political thought. In building his theory of the Doctrine of Passive Resistance, Sri Aurobindo had shown the importance of mass participation in freedom movement. Prior to this event the task of making understand common people to join freedom movement was an importance step in our freedom struggle. Sri Aurobindo had rightly emphasized this state and advocated to make people conscious about their involvement in freedom movement through propaganda.

The third pertinent point in Sri Aurobindo’s political thought is the importance of organization in India’s freedom movement. An effective organization is a pre-condition for the success in a struggle against foreign rule. Sri Aurobindo rightly realized that the existing organization of the Congress, i.e. the moderates were not capable for achieving Indian’s independence. In fact, their emphasis on appeal for limited reforms in the ruling system under the British colonial government did not attract Sri Aurobindo. He vehemently opposed the begging policy of the moderates. Such a policy, for Sri Aurobindo, was humiliating, disgraceful and absurd. In the history of mankind no nation has achieved independence without courage, vigor, struggle and proper strategy depending on the situation. In this context, Sri Aurobindo emphasizes both revolutionary tactics as well as peaceful resistance by the masses as a part of an effective strategy of Indian’s freedom struggle. Both these aspect require effective organization with foresighted, calculative, courageous leadership. He took active part in Indian’s freedom struggle and involved himself with both these tactics. He correctly read the political situation under the British control and advocated for both these tactics of freedom movement. He left active politics in early 1910 and initiated a spiritual life at Pondicherry. But his outlook had proved right after India secured her independence on 15th August, 1947.

As an activist and leader of Indian’s freedom movement Sri Aurobindo was not against revolutionary activities against the British ruler. But there is still a debate regarding Sri Aurobindo’s direct involvement in revolutionary activities during Swadeshi period. One group of Bengali writers on the freedom movement presents him as the organizer of secret society under the leadership of his brother Barindra Ghose. According to this group of writers Sri Aurobindo was not opposed to violent revolution in principle. However, he was never associated directly with revolutionary activities and he had no control over such activities. But such a statement only reduces his leadership to a nullity. For example Prof. Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee in their book *‘Sri**Aurobindo* *and the New Thought in Indian Politics’* depicted him as the *“Philosopher**of revolution***”40**. In fact, early Bengali writers on the freedom struggle portrayed him as an apostle inspirer of militant nationalism who had faith in violence and took part in organizing revolutionary secret societies. Other group of persons includes some revolutionaries of his time; they include Charu Chandra Dutta, Jadugopal Mukherjee, and Arun Chandra Guha, etc. According to them Sri Aurobindo was not only a founder of the revolutionary party, but also directly associated with revolutionary activities. However, they did not produce any document in support of their claim. Their claims are based on stories originating from their memories. In the context of such a debate Prof. Amalesh Tripathi made a study in 1967 highlighting connections of Sri Aurobindo Ghose in revolutionary activities. According to Prof. Amalesh Tripathi: ---

“*It is Aurobindo’s equivocal attitude*, *his silences more than his speeches, which are intriguing. Did he or did he not know* *what was brewing at the Maniktala gardens? Did he or did he not order Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki to assassinate Kingsford?...What was his role vis-à-vis Barin, his younger brother, and the Yuagantar Group he led? It is the historical problem sketched out in this passage that I intended to study in the essay. It breaks down into three questions of increasing specificity: (1) what, was Aurobindo’s connection with the revolutionary movement in both its militant and its terrorist form? (2) What if anything did he have to do with actual terrorist acts? (3) What, in particular did he have to do with the bombing at Muzaffarpur that led to the arrest of himself, his brother and many others? I will show that Aurobindo believed strongly in the efficacy of violent revolution and had clear and definite links with active terrorists. The evidence does not permit a positive conclusion in regard to his connection with the Muzaffarpur bombing or other terrorist attempts; but I will demonstrate that there is good reason to believe that he not only was cognizant of several attempts but also may have had something to do with initiating them”.*  **41**

To Sri Aurobindo the first and foremost duty of sons of India, when this was in chains, was to free their motherland from chains. He was of the opinion that in this direction there can be no compromise, there is no question of bargaining with the mother’s liberty. Only total emancipation can be the sole demand. To fulfill this demand India must be prepare willingly to sacrifice everything in the service of the mother. To achieve freedom for India Sri Aurobindo also chalked out a great scheme of boycott, swadeshi, and national education and such other activities. In his letter of 30th August, 1905 to his wife Mrinalini Devi he explained his madness of peculiar patriotism:

“*Whereas others regards the country as an inert object, and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her as the Mother. What would a son do when a demon sitting on the breast of his mother is drinking her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he, rather, run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race……This is not a new feeling within me, it is not of a recent origin, I was born with it, it is in my marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed of it had begun to sprout and at eighteen it had been firmly rooted and become unshakable***……**” **42**

Thus, it may be interpreted that as an activist and leader Sri Aurobindo not only dreamt of freedom for India, but also proposed in detailed a programme of activities leading to securing nation’s freedom as well as progress. Further, his scheme was related with the process of nation-building. This proves his higher quality as a national leader and activist. In fact, among the Indians, he first proposed a national scheme as a part of the movement. Thus, a comprehensive way of fighting against the imperialist British power was constructed by Sri Aurobindo. Such a constructive method for achieving freedom certainly denotes the quality of leadership of Sri Aurobindo. In fact, he emphasized more on awakening and organizing Indians with a positive role to play in the struggle against the British ruler. By this process he attempted to make Indians get involved in the freedom movement. It was not merely a political object. Thus, Sri Aurobindo sought to inject a new spirit of nationalism in the minds of Indians. From the very beginning Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that Indians must have to depend on their own for achieving freedom for motherland. So he was very much critical of the method adopted by the moderates. In fact, he termed the moderate’s policy as a bankrupt policy---‘prayer, petition and protest’. The political goal that moderates set before them, according to Sri Aurobindo, was less inspiring and bold than that of the extremists. If anybody look at the Indian National Congress Resolution before the rise of the extremist groups will see that resolutions were full of praises for the British rulers. This approach was vehemently condemned by Sri Aurobindo as an activist. That is why from the very beginning Sri Aurobindo grasped clearly that if India had to achieve anything from the British ruler she must do so by doing of own sacrifices, by an appeal to her own immense potential of political power rather than the condescension of her own ruler. So he rejected the moderate policy and emphasized on the revival of the national spirit or pride and power as a part of awaking India’s masses against alien ruler.

Sri Aurobindo was fully aware of the fact that a large country like India cannot achieve independence without mass participation. That is why he always emphasizes on setting up a national centre for conducting nationalist movement by upholding the demand for total independence or ‘Purno Swaraj’. To that aim, he advocated for building nationalist movement in the form of Passive Resistance of the parts of common people. Organizing such a movement finally depends on effective organizational capacity and network. So the importance of organization in conducting mass movement got proper attention of Sri Aurobindo who was also an activist as well as a theoretician having the blueprint aiming at India’s freedom. Thus, it appears that Sri Aurobindo accepted and supported revolutionary politics as a strategy for achieving freedom. He did not solely rely on this method. At the same time like Gandhiji, he did not reject use of force in the process of freedom struggle. To him revolutionary politics and passive resistance were complimentary to each other and these two methods would give freedom movement a complete success. In fact, his such a view had become true in the later course of freedom movement of India. This fact proves his political sagacity and foresight as a national leader and revolutionary activist.

The initial life of Sri Aurobindo reflects the truth that since his studenthood in England, he was very much involved in thinking freeing India. While the prominent Irish freedom fighter Parnell died. The death news made Sri Aurobindo very much disappointed. He wrote a short poem in memory of Parnell to convey his heart-felt respect for Parnell in 1891:

“*Deliverer lately since by our lords*

*Most feared, most hated, hated*

*Because feared*” **43**

This short poem was written to express his respect and eagerness for freedom which Parnell dreamt of. At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo began first to be interested in Indian politics of which previously he knew nothing. His father began sending the newspaper *The Bengalee* (edited by Surendranath Banerjee) with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless Government. At this age Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalized into the idea of the liberation of his own country. **44** But the ‘firm decision’ took full shape only towards the end of another four years. It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for some time secretary of the ‘Indian Majlis’–a society of Indian students at Cambridge. As the secretary he had to deliver many revolutionary lectures in favour of freedom. His lectures were penetrative and influenced Indian students very much. During this period he was influenced by the idea of revolutionary politics as the part of Indian freedom movement. His elder brother BinoyBhusan remarked that the idea of terrorist activity came at that time. Incidentally, he was also a member of ‘Lotusand Dagger’–a secret association of Indians in London. This association was thinking of getting Indians independence by removing the British colonial power through revolutionary method. Thus, it may be interpreted that while in England he had been not only a serious student but also a burgeoning patriot and growing politician. **45** In 1893 he returned India but did not take employment under the British colonial power. However, he used to keep all information regarding the activities of Indian National Congress. Thus he kept himself aware about activities associated with India’s independence. In the initial stage, Sri Aurobindo had a friendly attitude towards INC. But since 1890 after the 6th general session of INC his attitudes towards it begin to change. The soft on moderate policy of the INC towards the British colonial power was not like by him. He always favoured total independence or Purno Swaraj. To get this he was also ready to recourses armed struggle movement against the British Raj. He understood that a revolutionary method of struggle against the British rule was necessary in the context of contemporary situation in India. His revolutionary ideas are found in his book *‘Bhawani Mandir’*. At the same time we should not forget that he also realized about the peaceful application of struggle. Sri Aurobindo very much influenced by the history of French Revolution. The general illiterate mass of that country was able to remove 13th century old suppression and exploitation only in five years. These historical event spirited Sri Aurobindo’s mindset. Further, the history of freedom movements of Ireland, United States of America, Athens and Rome put deep impact on the mind of Sri Aurobindo. The courage and indomitable struggle of the general masses attracted and inspired him in drafting a blue-print of freedom struggle by Indians against the British colonial power. Prior to Russian Revolution, Sri Aurobindo gave immense importance on the role of general working people in freedom movement. His such thinking undoubtedly expressed his originality and novelty of thought. His historical consciousness and lessons from historical events of freedom movement made him different from moderates. Returning India in 1893 Sri Aurobindo wrote nine articles in the *‘InduPrakash’* (7th August, 1893—5th February, 1894)edited by K.G. Deshpande, Published from Bombay. **46** In these articles Sri Aurobindo clearly rejected the moderate path followed by the then leaders of Indian National Congress. His aggressive plan involving general masses in the one hand and direct action by the members of the secret societies on the other gave a new direction and shape in our freedom movement. In other words, Sri Aurobindo’s emphasis on peaceful movement as well as revolutionary tactics accelerated the courts of India’s freedom movement.

During the first phase of his early political life Sri Aurobindo made an attempt to awaken general Indians against colonial rule by his writings emphasizing self-confidence and honour. That is why he contributed many such articles blended with revolutionary spirit, his book ‘Bhawani Mandir’ influenced and directed revolutionaries to a great extent. The moderate leaders along with the British government could not ignore the appeal of the writings of Sri Aurobindo as these influenced Indians for ‘Purno-Swaraj’. The moderate leader Mahadev Gobinda Ranade requested Sri Aurobindo to stop such writings. These incidents clearly indicate that moderates too become apprehend about the appeal of revolutionary politics in Indian freedom movement.

Sri Aurobindo returned India in 1893 from England and started his career here as the Vice- principal of the Baroda College. It is a significant event because returning India Sri Aurobindo did not get involved any work under the Government of British India. This is significant because Sri Aurobindo was fully aware of the exploitation and torture of Indians by the British ruler. Gradually, Sri Aurobindo got involved in different programmes plannings aiming at independence of India. In this regard his role and involved has already been discussed and analysed. To avoid repetition no further mention of that part is done here. Further, it also gives a reply of the question why did Sri Aurobindo take part in India’s freedom movement. It is Sri Aurobindo, who was directed by the 'Supreme Authority', initiated the proper process of freedom movement against the British ruler. Sri Aurobindo’s active participation and leadership in India’s freedom movement, though for a little period, influenced the course of freedom struggle to a large extent. Actually, he set the goal---total independence or ‘Purno Swaraj’, of freedom movement. At the same time he also showed the way of conquering India’s independence from the British colonial power. He was the first among national leaders who clearly led the freedom movement in right direction. In Alipore Bomb Case he clearly confessed his such a role. In his own words,

*“It is suggested that I preached the ideal of freedom to my country which is against the law, I plead guilty to the charge. If it is an offence to preach the ideal of freedom, I admit having done it. I have never disputed it. I have adopted the principles of the political philosophy of the west and I have assimilated that to the immortal teaching of Vedantism.”* **47**

Anyway, after fulfilling his political mission he withdrew himself from active freedom movement and ultimately left for Pondicherry for higher spiritual objective. He himself declared that his participation in Indian freedom movement was an ‘Order of God’ (Supreme Power). Similarly, his withdrawal from it was an act of God’s wish. In April, 1908, he wrote in the *BandeMataram,* that *"England’s mission in India is over and it is time for her to recognize the limit of the base given to her"*. **48** However, his departure from the scenario of freedom movement raised many questions regarding his such a step. This is also a basic research question of the present work. The basic answer of this question was given by Sri Aurobindo himself which had already been mentioned in this paragraph.Further, in October, 1932 Sri Aurobindo said that

*“I did not leave politics because I felt. I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct adesa in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was no least motive of despair or sense of* *futility behind my withdrawal.”* **49**

It is interesting to us that though Sri Aurobindo left politics yet he had keen interests in the major political events of the freedom movement till 1947. Moreover, he came forward to express his opinion regarding various national and international issues. So he was never psychologically alienated from the thinking process about India’s freedom.

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3. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’ Chapter-iii, *The* *BandeMataram* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 99. Also in Dasarathi Sengupta, ‘*Doctrine Passive Resistance: Some Observations’,* Vol.3, No.2, an article of RBHU, a half-yearly Magazine, (Kolkata: Centre for Sri Aurobindo Adventure of Consciousness, 15th August, 2006), 52.

4. Dasarathi Sengupta, ‘*Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Some Observation*’, RBHU, 52.

5. Sri Aurobindo, *‘The Ideal of Human Unity’,* CWSA, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1952), 36.

6. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*The InduPrakash’*, SABCL, Vol.1 (Pondicherry:, Sri Aurobindo Ashram 4thDecember, 1983).42-44. [In the time of First World War, Lenin advised all the proletariats throughout the world to remain aloof from the war and not to be influenced by the powerful cries of the militarists and the nationalist. In this respect Sri Aurobindo's connection was reflected in Lenin's writings subsequently. Of course, prior to Sri Aurobindo, Karl Marx called on the workers of the world to unite and championed the causes of the proletarian internationalism.]

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**Chapter – 5**

**SRI AUROBINDO AND GANDHIJI’S POLITICAL THOUGHT----A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Sri Aurobindo Ghose and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi are the both pivots of the freedom movement of India. Both actively participated in nation’s freedom movement and both of them not only influenced different phases of Indian freedom movement, but also determined to a great extent the courses of this movement. Sri Aurobindo directly entered active politics in 1905, but he had a long preparation for joining active politics. After coming back from England on 6th February, 1893 and served Baroda State Service till 18th June, 1907. However, during these phases at Baroda Sri Aurobindo expressed his views regarding contemporary situation in India through a newspaper the**–‘*InduPrakash’*** published from Bombay. The editor of this newspaper was Mr. K.G. Deshpande, was classmate of Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge.

At Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo used to spend most of his sphere time by reading English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, medieval and modern Europe. He also captured many European languages such as French, German, Italian, Greek, and Latin. He was an extraordinary scholar and had gone well through different phases of European history. During his stay at Cambridge, Indian students organized a forum–**‘Indian Majlis’**. This association played an important role in moulding social and political views of Indian Students. As a member and for some time as the secretary of the ‘Indian Majlis’ Sri Aurobindo got activity involved in the activities of this association. He was generally influenced by the activities of this association and gave some lectures here which were vibrant with the overtones of political fervor. Again he joined a secret society–**‘Lotus and Dagger’** in London in which members had to take oath to work for the liberation of India. So it cannot be said that Sri Aurobindo had no background of participation in active political activities as such.

Through Sri Aurobindo’s writings in the *‘InduPrakash’* under the caption*–‘New Lamps* *for Old’*, He denounced the newly born political organization– the Indian National Congress (**INC**) and its policy of appeasement and called for a dynamic and effective leadership based upon self-help, dignity and fearlessness. His writings created a stir and reaction among the INC leaders because they became afraid of issuing charge against Sri Aurobindo on sedition. As such he kept himself aloof from writings such articles. Rather, he engaged himself in preparing for a secret organization aiming at revolutionary activities against foreign rule. He came forward to unite small secret societies of undivided Bengal with a common programme of activities. Side by side he maintained a close contact with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whom he considered an effective leader capable of leading Indian’s freedom movement. Thus it becomes clear that Sri Aurobindo come the very beginning could realize that revolutionary activities were needed for freedom struggle.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950 A.D.) came to the Indian political scenario much earlier than Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948 A.D.). In fact, Sri Aurobindo was the person who for the first time sought to change the direction of political activities aiming at India's freedom movement. He rejected moderate politics aiming at appeasement of the British government and pleaded for extremist politics. To him the battle of freedom was *‘yogna’* as well as *‘dharma yuddha’*. So he was in favour of accepting any means to win freedom movement. According to Sri Aurobindo the emancipation of India was a *yogna* because freedom is the fruit of it. To him the motherland was the goddess and for emancipation of the motherland one should ready to sacrifice. He compared the British government with *‘rakshasas’* and accordingly wanted to apply moral or spiritual force (*Brahamateja*) as well as physical force (*Kshatriya strength*), simultaneously. **1** Thus it appears that Sri Aurobindo derived support from the practice of ancient India in favour of his strategy aiming at nation's freedom movement.

During the partition movement in Bengal the application of moral force guided the courses of movement under the leadership of Sri Aurobindo Ghose. Under his inspiration the protest movement against the partition (1905) was converted into a broader movement of swadeshi aiming at **‘Purno Swaraj’**. It took the shape of full scale non-violent, non-cooperation and passive resistance movement. It will not be out of place to mention here that Sri Aurobindo laid the theoretical basic of this new mass movement in a series of articles in the ***‘BandeMataram Patrika’*** under the caption–‘***Doctrine of Passive Resistance****’* (DPR).

‘Passive Resistance’ is not merely about techniques of movement against a formidable colonial rule. It is also, or rather mainly, concerned with involvement of the people, the common people, in a national revolution. Involvement of the masses cannot come about without proper mobilization in a colonial situation. It is a common knowledge that Sri Aurobindo propounded passive resistance as a technique of national struggle. But it also may be viewed as his way mobilizing the people, the common man, and the disgruntled generation. ‘The Prophet of Nationalism’ had sought to delink the whole process from elitism. Nationalism and elitism cannot go hand in hand. Sri Aurobindo’s DPR is stridently anti-elitist in tone. It also represents his total rejection of moderate politics. In fact, the DPR outlined a strategy of nationalist struggle, refined and applied more successfully at a later stage of our freedom movement by a great political leader known universally as Mahatma Gandhi.

The concept of Passive Resistance was not a new event in early 20th century unarmed people applied this form of resistance against tyranny down the ages. Incidents of such resistance have mostly gone unrecorded in main stream historical narratives. Boycott was originally a form of resistance to an oppressive landlord by the Irish peasant of a particular region. The name of the landlord stuck to the form of protest against his tyranny. Sri Aurobindo was great admirer of the struggle of the Irish people against their English masters. No wonder, the concept of boycott finds such a prominent place in Sri Aurobindo’s concept of passive resistance. Mahatma Gandhi who was an activist and mass-leader of Indian freedom movement also applied the concept of passive resistance as a technique of peaceful war against the British colonial ruler. However, concept of passive resistance as pended by Sri Aurobindo put forward radical substitute of the moderate politics aiming at reformist activities. Sri Aurobindo denounced to the elitist and collaborationist character of the congress movement and called for its replacement by direct mass-movement. His DPR, in fact, laid down the strategy and tactics of the direct mass-movement. Mahatma Gandhi in fact, followed, in an essence the blue-print developed by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo’s anti-elitist stand proceeds from his fiery radicalism which generated from his commitment to and admiration for the ideals of the French Revolution.But it is really strength that thought Sri Aurobindo spent his most formative years in England as a student, yet after returning India he emerged as an uncompromising nationalist and an ardent admire of French political development. **2** Britain advanced towards a democratic system through reforms. As a result, many of its legacies continued to be carried over from generation to generation. Thus in England the process of advancement from a feudal-monarchical set up towards a democratic system took more than six centuries. But in France, the feudal system came to an end by qualitative leap–through purification by blood and fire .**3** In other word, it becomes clear that the people have to sacrifice if they want to cut-off their past legacies. Further, the active and decisive role lay by the masses during the French Revolution attracted very strongly to Sri Aurobindo’s mind. But in England, on the other hand, the common people played a little role in the so called Glorious Revolution (1688). This event did not go unnoticed by Sri Aurobindo. Comparing both the British and the French political development Sri Aurobindo observed that the former had been very much mechanical and elitist, whereas, the latter had been organic and democratic. In England, political development brought about suitable political machinery through a series of mechanical adjustment initiated by microscopic political elite. On the other hand, in France high quality and noble ideas got preference and as a result and irresistible outlook came to dominate the process of socio-political development. This French philosophy and outlook socio-political development very influenced to Sri Aurobindo. In fact, the same concept of political development constructs the basic of Sri Aurobindo’s Doctrine of Passive Resistance.

Thus Viewed Sri Aurobindo’s Doctrine of Passive Resistance provides a radical outlook. According to him, the future of India would depend on how and to what extent conditions and planning of a Grand National development is laid down. His DPR is such a means and directed to the goal or end. Such a view becomes transparent when Sri Aurobindo writes, ----

“*There are certain moral qualities necessary to self–government, which have become atrophied by long disuse in our people and can only be restored either by the healthy air of a free national life in which alone they can permanently thrive or by their vigorous exercise in the intensity of a national struggle for freedom…Passive Resistance affords the best possible training for these qualities.*” **4**

It appears from the above discussion that the goals and means expressed in the Doctrine of Passive Resistance developed and conceived by Sri Aurobindo, overlap each other. In some cases they cannot be separated from each other, for example, the case of settlements of disputes through arbitration instead of law–suits may be mentioned. It is a boycott of foreign or colonial judiciary as well as an achievement in respect of swaraj in the administration of justice. According to Sri Aurobindo, by depending less on a foreign government people become more accustomed to free and healthy national thought and action. Such a development is impossible in a state of servitude. At the same time such a development inspires the entire population, not a more part of it. In his own words*, ----*

*“Just as individual liberty is necessary for the richness and variety of national development, so self–government is necessary for its completeness and the full deployment of national strength. If certain classes are dominant and other depressed, the result is that the potential strength of the depressed classes is so much valuable force lost to the sum of* *national* *strength….The great weakness of India in the past has been the political depression and nullity of the mass of population. It was not from people of India that India was won by the Mogul or Briton, but from a small privileged class.”* **5**

Another salient feature of the Doctrine of Passive Resistance developed by Sri Aurobindo is its positive view of state-power. It also indicates a generation gap between patriots belonging to early phase of freedom movement of India like---Raja Rammohan Roy, Dadabhai Noiraji, Mahadev Gobinda Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Surendranath Banerjee and nationalist like---Sri Aurobindo , Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, etc, who emerged as the extremist group. Sri Aurobindo through his writing came forward to explain the condition of Indian-origin bureaucrats under the British rule. In his own words, -----

*“….. an Englishman serves the Government as a member of the same ruling race and can afford to be occasionally independent ; but the Indian civilian is a serf masquerading as a heaven –born and can only deserve favour and promotion by his zeal and it Fastening the yoke heavier upon his fellow countryman. As a rule the foreign government can rely on the ‘native’ civilian to be more jealously oppressive than even the average Anglo- India official.”* **6**

Thus it becomes clear that Sri Aurobindo was not interested in increasing the number of Indian origin bureaucrats in the British administration. According to him, such an attempt would not produce any good for common Indians. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo stressed on political freedom and said it is the life-breath of a nation. He was of the opinion that social and educational reform, industrial expansion and moral improvement could hardly be achieved without political freedom. He identified two things for national progress, these were---‘free habit of free and healthy nationalthought and action’and ‘a strong national organization having central authority’. Here one can find a similarity with Raja Rammohan Roy, who also had almost identical outlook towards state-power. In fact, Raja Rammohan was the first Indian who realized that state-intervention was a must for socio-economic change and problems. To Raja Rammohan the state-power under the British was treated as a progressive force. He rightly felt that to overcome the reactionary forces and entrenched orthodoxy the supports of the British state-power would be needed. Thus Raja Rammohan sought to use the state-power of the emerging the British colonial state against the obscurantist forces in his fight for social change and reform. In fact, to Raja Rammohan the British colonial power representing the progressive West was a breath of fresh air in the closed society in traditional India. **7**

Sri Aurobindo had a same kind of outlook regarding such instrumentalist view of state, but he fundamentally differs from Raja Rammohan’s ideas about the role of colonial state in India. This is because Sri Auribindo was born clearly a century later than Raja Rammohan. During Raja Rammohan’s life the British colonial power in India was in a formative stage aiming at consolidating its nationalist interests. On the other hand, during Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime the consolidated and mighty British colonial power did not pay proper attention to native interests. As such Sri Aurobindo witnessed the growing poverty of India under the British colonial power. Thus though Raja Rammohan and his followers saw in the British colonial power and instrument of social change and reform, Sri Aurobindo and his fellow nationalist did focus on total independence or 'Purno Swaraj' as a condition of social change and progress. Sri Aurobindo’s ideal was total independence and he carried on an unceasing campaign for that both through writing and action. His main thing was – *“India must live her own life and not the life of a part or subordinate in a Foreign Empire.”* **8** Even he want to declare that, - “*The whole world is interested in seeing that India becomes free, so that India may becomes herself.”* **9** Perhaps no other leader of his time unambiguously and as persistently as he.Raja Rammohan Roy, who is known as the father of Indian renaissance, was of the opinion that the moribund Indian society would be given a fresh air life by the ‘West-wind’ blowing through the window opened by the English rule. But to see Sri Aurobindo, this rule was extremely enervating for the spirit and sole of India. That is why Sri Aurobindo called for non-confrontation and non-cooperation with the British rules. The DPR was in fact, a theory of Non-cooperation in its programmatic. No doubt, Sri Aurobindo’s DPR sharply differs from subsequently Gandhian doctrine.**10** In Sri Aurobindo’s DPR one can find the place of force which is totally absent in Gandhian concept. According to Sri Aurobindo, the option for application of force would depend upon the attitude adopted by the foreign Government. In a word, he had no aversion or apathy to the use of force if circumstances so demanded. His such outlook become very clear when he writes, ---*“There is a limit however to passive resistance. So long as the action of the executive is peaceful and within the rules of the fight, the passive resister scrupulously maintains his attitude of passivity; but he is not bound to do so a moment beyond.”* **11** He further opinioned, ---*“passive Resistance cannot build up a strong and great nation unless it is masculine, bold and ardent in its spirit and ready at any moment and at the slightest notice to supplement itself with active resistance.”***12** Gandhiji, on the other hand, in no circumstance, was ready to accept force or coercion in organizing a political movement against the British rule.

However, there is a striking similarity between Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji’s idea on the following issue. Sri Aurobindo believed that no government not even a despotic colonial government could rule by force alone. It, according to him rules by consent. Sri Aurobindo’s Doctrine of Passive Resistance was a clear call for withdrawal of this political concept. According to him, the visible sign of such withdrawal would be*…’’lawful abstention from any kind of cooperation with the government”.***13** Similarly, Gandhiji writes –*“The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are in India not because of their strength, but* *because we keep them.”* **14** According to Gandhiji, it was division and disunity among the Indians that led to accept the East-India Company’s control over India. It was the assistance and cooperation from the Indians that held the British to remain in India. Both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji stressed on non-cooperation with the foreign rule as a technique of freedom movement. Sri Aurobindo gave top priority to economic boycott in his programme of passive resistance. The Gandhian economic programme of **‘Khadi’**, similarly called for cessation of economic collaboration with the British. Thus both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji sought to hit at upon commercial interest of the British colonial power.

Further, it is stated that passive resistance, as developed by Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji is apparently negative in character. For it insists on boycott of and non-cooperation with foreign economic and political set-up. World poet Rabindranath Tagore stood against the boycott movement for its negative thrusts. He as a humanist did not accept the spirit to alienate one group of human race from another. But through study of the concept of passive resistance makes it clear that such evolution is one-sided. **15** For the DPR, as developed by Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji also focused on the need for positive action aiming at self-dependence as well as self-sufficiency. In formulating the DPR, Sri Aurobindo constructed a blue-print of ‘self-rule’ that could make the entire imperial system irrelevant. According to Sri Aurobindo, self-development and passive resistance are supplementary and necessary to each other. He made it clear that without swadeshi the policy of industrial boycott could not be realized. Similarly, Gandhiji was of the opinion that,---“*It is swaraj, when* *we learn to rule ourselves*” **16** Thus it appears from the above discussion that both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji viewed passive resistance as a form of struggle and a progamme of action. This programme of action is definitely a positive aspect as it emphasizes constructive swadeshi (nationalism) and in this process generates **‘Atmashakti’**. Poet Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda both emphasized on attaining of Atmashakti by Indian masses. According to them, without Atmashakti no nation can awake and can fight against foreign power for attaining independence. But there is a vital difference between Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath regarding the role of state and society. Rabindranath emphasized more on society than on political system**. 17** On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo’s priority was a swadeshi state, not a swadeshi swamaj.

Rabindranath’s conviction that the awakening of India was a part of the awakening of the entire world. He was of the opinion that no nation can take an isolated view of humanism. From this standpoint, Rabindranath was very much critical of Gandhian non-cooperation movement. He could not accept any deviation from the ideal of international brotherhood. He stood for cosmopolitanism which he identifies with universalism. **18** He (Tagore) defined freedom as "*complete awakening in full self* -expression**"19** According to Rabindranath only those will be able to attain swaraj and keep it that has realized the dignity of ‘self-reliance’ and ‘self-mastery’ in the spiritual world. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, during his active political life assigned highest priority to political activities leading to independence of India. The difference between Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore lies in the fact that the former was not only a political thinker but also a leading political activist, while Rabindranath was a humanist and poet, who emphasized universalism accrossing political boundaries. That is why, Brahma Bandhab Upadhyay called Rabindranath a ‘world poet’.

A detailed study and in-depth analysis of Sri Aurobindo’s passive resistance in comparison to Mahatma Gandhi’s ‘Satyagraha’ reveals the following facts. First, just after one year of the publication of the DPR by Sri Aurobindo, Gandhiji’s *‘Hind**Swaraj’* in Gujrati comes out. Its English version was published afterwards. Secondly, the title of the Chapter-XVII of *‘Hind Swaraj’* is Passive Resistance. But one have to keep it in mind that Gandhiji laid down the principles of his concept of Passive Resistance later on and he applied this principle to develop his philosophy of Satyagraha. But Gandhiji himself said that “*Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North Pole from the South”.* **20** It is a fact that so far as the former is basically an ethical philosophy and the latter essentially a political doctrine. In ‘*Hind Swaraj’* Gandhiji put the concept of Passive Resistance to mean the application of soul-force. According to him it aims at arousing the conscience of and a sense of justice in the adversary or conflicting situation. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo put importance on collective self-suffering in his concept of DPR. But its aim is not a psychological or spiritual transformation of the adversary. According to Sri Aurobindo, its main aim is to achieve national independence and national democracy. As an ethical doctrine, Gandhian Satyagraha prescribes a method that is applicable to any conflict-situation. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of DPR, on the other hand, pertains mainly to conflict situation that exists between a foreign power and a subjugated community.**21**

However, Gandhiji himself makes it clear that his concept of Satyagraha differs from the concept of Passive Resistance. But a careful study draws our attention to the areas where they overlap each other and to the points of their convergence. In the eyes of Gandhiji Satyagraha and Passive Resistance are poles apart. But in its application to the latter (Passive Resistance) followed essentially the programme chalk-out by Sri Aurobindo in 1907---comprehensive boycott and constructive Swadeshi, development of an alternative educational and judicial system. It is noticed that non–payment of taxes and rents was envisaged in the final stages of the Gandhian movements. But the Non–Cooperation Movement (1920-1922) or the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934) could not reach the final stage for its withdrawal by Gandhiji. So it can be said that Gandhiji did only add an ethical dimension to Passive Resistance in the context of India’s freedom movement. Gandhiji himself said, *-“Non-Cooperation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state--more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive Resistance is a misnomer*”. **22** No doubt, Satyagraha involves intense political activities. Passivity of any kind is not allowed to a satyagrahi. Whether it takes the form of non-cooperation, civil disobedience or movement against untouchability, Satyagraha calls for action on a mass scale. So in the case with DPR advocated by Sri Aurobindo, both in its negative and positive aspects. What Sri Aurobindo meant by DPR was unarmed but active resistance. DPR becomes creatively active when it gets engaged in the development of a swadeshi economy or a national education, in building alternative institutions of governance or in implementing schemes of national reconstruction. Such programmes preceded Gandhian prescriptions regarding ‘**Khadi’** and ‘**Panchayati raj’**. So it becomes clear that social and political activities and programmes followed by Gandhiji were anticipated in Sri Aurobindo’s Doctrine of Passive Resistance.

Further, Passive Resistance and Satyagraha seen to run in close connection with each other from theoretical perspective also. Both the ideologies appear to demand self-sacrifices to secure rights, control and justice. According to Gandhiji, Passive Resistance ---*“is a method of securing rights by personal self–suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms”*. **23** Similarly, Sri Aurobindo advocated DPR as an alternative to both organized aggressive resistance and around revolt. Both a Satyagrahi and a Passive Resister must have qualities of courage, selflessness, endurance, and perseverance. Both are committed to use *‘*soul-force’. Thus it becomes clear that a Satyagrahi and a passive Resister both depend on the application of untiring ‘will-force’ what Gandhiji regards ‘soul-force’.

Similarly, both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji appear to have spoken from the same standpoint regarding civil-disobedience. The refusal to obey laws, decrees and commands issued by the state authority lies had the core of civil-disobedience. Actually in Passive Resistance and Satyagraha, civil-disobedience is a form of non-violent or non-aggressive rebellion. A satyagrahi or a passive resister throws a challenge to the state authority in his or her normal interaction while following the ideal of civil-disobedience. It is not merely a form of political protest but also a moral obligation on the part of the passive resister or the satyagrahi when injustice and suppression become the fashion of government. Both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji held such a view. Gandhiji even expressed that ***‘***soul-force’ was the refusal to do a thing that was opposed to conscience. According to Gandhiji, if we obey laws inconsistent with the spirit of our conscience then it would be contrary to our humanity. A man who is bold and a follower of truth, according to Gandhi, disregards, unjust and unethical commands. In this light of Gandhian thought it can be interpreted that a law derives its legitimacy from norms of justice and humanity and not from the governing authority. A law that generates from power and authority only may be valid but such a law without justice must not have value from ethical and moral standpoint.

Such a Gandhian stand on political obligation is not unnoticed in Sri Aurobindo’s political thought. Sri Aurobindo has also mentioned that a law imposed from outside can’t have the moral sanction of a law enacted and accepted by the people themselves. According to Sri Aurobindo, if a law appears unjust and oppressive then it is a duty of the people to disobey it and quietly accept the punishment for the violation of the said law. According to him (Sri Aurobindo), the primary duty of a passive resister is to break an unjust coercive law. It is not only justifiable, but, under circumstance, a duty. Any comparative discussion between Passive Resistance and Satyagraha reveals that there exists the ‘**violence—non-violence dichotomy’** in their relationship. Gandhi himself introduced this debate when he said that Passive Resistance does not rule out violence, where as non-violence is inseparable from Satyagraha. In his own words, ---

*“---- in passive resistance there is scope for the use of arms when a suitable occasion arrives , in Satyagraha physical force is forbidden even in the most favorable circumstance---- in passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing the other party----in Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent.”* **24**

Critics, commentators, and biographers of Mahatma Gandhi have mentioned the difference Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, a noted scholar on Gandhiji, has defined Satyagraha as a ‘*way of conducting war by means of non-violence’***. 25**  A similar view is held by Prof. K. Sridharani, according to him Satyagraha is non-violent direct action. All of them regard that 'ahimsa' or non-violence is at the core of Gandhian thought and it marks the fundamental or basic difference between Satyagraha and other forms of resistance.

It is generally supposed that in Sri Aurobindo’s thought and action the issue of non-violence appears to some extent marginal. It is a fact that Sri Aurobindo’s concept of passive resistance rules out violence as a matter of policy and not as a matter of principle. As a strategy Passive Resistance was a political programme for Sri Aurobindo. It was not a moral choice for him. According to him, *“.... the present circumstances in India seen to point to passive resistance as our most natural and suitable weapon.”* **26** For Gandhi, on the other hand, non-violence was the first as well as the last article of his faith.

Further, it appears that Gandhiji constructed his philosophy of Passive Resistance on moral basic. Yet in practice, many non-moral elements or considerations played an important role in shaping Gandhiji’s strategy of non-violent resistant. In fact, it was not possible for a completely disarmed population to engage in violent movement against the British colonial power. For, any attempt of procuring arms was prohibited in post-Mutiny India. Any attempt to procure arms could have led to a tragedy like---Buribalam which witnessed the scarify of life of immortal revolutionaries including Bagha Jatin. **27** Gandhiji, after Swami Vivekananda, visited different parts of India for developing and understanding with the common masses. He experienced many traditions---social and religious---throughout India. He also came into close contact of people belonging to different religious, casts, ethnic and linguistic groups. As such he could have developed a sense of understanding the psychology of Indian people accrossing the country. He observed that Indian people were basically peace-loving and non-violent by nature. But such an observation was too simple to generalize Indian psyche. But it appears from the recorded history that peasant and tribal uprisings against oppression in different parts of India bear ample testimony to this oversimplified observation of Gandhiji. So it can be safely said that the only method of organizing a successful struggle against alien oppression and exploitation must be based on non-violent direct action from Indian standpoint, in the given situation. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, understood the psyche of Indian people and made it clear categorically that objective situation might guide the nature of struggle against foreign ruler. In his own words, --- *“...each nation must practice the political creed which is the most suited to its temperament and circumstances; for that is the best for it which leads most surely and completed to national liberty and national self-realisation.”***28** Like Sri Aurobindo, Gandhiji emphasized in the question of practicability of organizing movement at macro-level. He chooses non-violence not only because of the high moral quality of 'ahimsa' at individual level, but also because of it practicability at mass-level. His following statement may be taken as a note in this connection: ---*“I adhere to the opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non- violence as an expedience. I could not done otherwise, if I was to introduce it to politics. In South Africa, too, I introduced it as an expedient.”* **29**

Further, Gandhiji regarding violence expressed that if the government (British colonial government) unleashed unprecedented violence on unarmed people then they would commit to untoward acts in desperation. Such a stand of Gandhiji regarding violence simply echoes the following words of Sri Aurobindo: ---*“…beyond a certain point passive resistance puts a strain on human endurance which our natures cannot endure.”* **30** So in the light of above mentioned view made by Gandhiji it can be safely said that he preferred to distinguish between non-violence as a personal value and non-violence as a political practicability. His following statement supports this view: ---

*“…..Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India …. I placed it before the Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of political questions….The various measures that I adopted there* (i.e. in South Africa)*.....were work of an essentially practical man dealing with practical political questions. As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered, and even given up in preference to another.”* **31**

Both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji did not eager to draw any conclusion or final outcome of any non-violent movement. According to Gandhiji a non-violent movement as a political method can always be changed, modified, altered and even given up in a certain point of situation if circumstances demand so. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo clearly declares that the politics of Passive Resistance is not based upon abstraction, formulas and dogmas, but on practical necessities and the teaching of political experience, common sense and the world’s history. In his own words, --- “*We have not the slightest wise to put forwards passive resistance as an inelastic dogma.”* **32**

Regarding the question of violence opinion of Gandhiji and that of Sri Aurobindo are not very different. According to Gandhiji, situation compulsions only give birth to non-violence. He attached supreme value to courage and the highest form of courage for him, was the courage of non-violence. Though Gandhiji declares non-violence to be the ‘first article’ of his faith and ‘last article’ of his creed, he never went to absolutise it. Any way, he did not favour cowardice attitude in any situation and said that, *“....where there is a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain helpless witness to her own dishonour.”* **33** Hehas supported violence used for self-defence. One who is unable to be brave and non-violent in the face of physical threat to his life, family, property, religion, etc. should use violence in order to defend them. But he also points out that "…*when violence appears to do good, the good is only temporary, the evil it does is* *permanent****"*.34** Likewise, Sri Aurobindo also put highest value to courage which would lead a person to sacrifice his life for his motherland. In other words, he called for a courage that would not flinch from the consequences of his violent actions taken in pursuit of nation’s emancipation from alien rule.

Thus, both Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo aspire for mankind a peaceful and harmonious life and existence, but the ways showed by them for its achievement have been different. The difference emanates from the ways they have interpreted violence and non-violence, which should be properly understood. While Gandhiji has regarded them as two different and opposite forces, to Sri Aurobindo, they are but the two sides of same coin, the difference consists in their applications only. Violence no doubt means conflict and destruction, but Sri Aurobindo looks at it from positive point of view, that such conflict often implies the origination of a new life or the commencement of a new age. In other words, violence does not always mean the end of all existence, it can lead to the welfare of mankind if properly guided and controlled. But for Gandhiji, except in some cases, violence is harmful and has to be avoided as far as possible. Non-violence, Gandhiji holds, is a rule of conduct for social being in order to live in the society with harmony and dignity and make progress towards the attainment of peace of which men have been yearning for ages.**35**

Anyway, while enunciating and expounding his political theory, Sri Aurobindo preached the importance of ‘Vedanta’ in political context and introduced a new terminology in his political philosophy**--**‘**Political Vedantism’**. Sri Aurobindo termed his nationalist beliefs and programmes as ‘Political Vedantism’. It is nothing but a specific attitude towards politics in which he was involved. According to him the words ‘Political Vedantism’ actually mean that political development is a process towards an end. The nature of that process is determined by the end and political goals are the determinants of political means. Anyway, his concept of ‘Political Vedantism’ does not make a hard and fast distinction between true and false methods. It only emphasizes that is the best which leads most surely and completely too political goals aspired by the nation. In fact, the concept of ‘Political Vedantism’ as developed by Sri Aurobindo may be linked to Aristotle’s philosophy of Nature. According to this, philosophy the end or the goal determines the nature and process of development. In explaining the character of the polity of his dreams Sri Aurobindo said,

*“Our attitude is a Political Vedantism. India, free, one and indivisible,**is the divine realisation to which we move, emancipation our aim; to that end each nation must practice the political creed which is most suited to its temperament and circumstances; for that is the best for it which leads most surely and completely to national liberty and nation self-realisation.”* **36**

Further, in his theory of Political Vedantism Sri Aurobindo sought to secularize Vedanta for political and material purpose of human life, he, at the same time, made it clear that his idea of secularization does not seek to negate spiritual and absolutist idea**. 37** Keeping this object in views, Sri Aurobindo expounded his philosophy of Political Vedantism. Further, in his own words, *“The dignity of human existence, given it by the thought of the Vedantic and the classical ages of Indian Culture, exceeded anything conceived by the* *noblest idea of humanity. Man is a spirit veiled in the works of energy and moving to self-discovery.”* **38**

In the eye ofSri Aurobindo justice and righteousness is the atmosphere of political morality. He clearly said that freedom from the yoke of imperial slavery was highly expedient. Thus, it appears that the conception of Political Vedantism as chalked out by Sri Aurobindo is no doubt a novel idea for protecting and also expanding the sphere of humanity. Anyway, Sri Aurobindo’s concept of ‘Political Vedantism’ is something different from Gandhiji’s concept of ***‘***Political Jainism’. Prior to Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda used the word ‘PoliticalVedanta’ by which he wanted to mean service to the nation. Thus he established a new dimension to the realm of spirituality. In other words, he advocated for selfless work for better society and nation. To him –‘work is worship’*.*

The issue of violence in Sri Aurobindo’s political thought no doubt has great significance. One has to consider the sociological and psychological contexts while discussing this issue. The ideological roots of political thinking of Sri Aurobindo were continental, more particularly French. Thus oriented political progress or development through a purification by blood and firewas not an anathema to Sri Aurobindo. **39** It also fitted with his concept of ‘Political Vedantism’. Further, he was molded and inspired by the ‘*Gita’* in constructing his political thinking. In his own words*,”Gita is the best answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin, and aggression as a lowering of morality.”* **40** The philosophy of the ‘*Karmayoga****’*** in the *‘Gita’* influenced Sri Aurobindo very much and shaped his views about the place of violence in political activities. It becomes evident from the following statement:--*“Politics is the ideal of the Kshatriya and the morality of the Kshatriya ought to govern our political actions. To impose in politics the Bramhanical duty of saintly sufferance is to preach Varnasankara”.*  **41**

Sri Aurobindo was not only a political thinker and warrior of Indian independence; he was also a poet, a mystic and practitioner of yoga. So it cannot be claimed by searching his mindset and no evidence can be produced from his writings in favour of the following statement that he preferred bloodshed and violence as the easier way to his political goal. But the opposite statement is true about him. He rather accepted ‘love’ as a sacred and divine quality. At the same time he did admit that such a quality could only be possessed by a saintly person and be pursued only at individual level and not at mass level. Politics, on the other hand, is a mass-phenomenon involving millions of people. But such an issue should not be paid more than due attention. Because in a political movement the question of violence or non-violence is not more important than the question that whether it is a democratic movement. Here one may attempt to compare Machiavelli (1469-1527 A.D.) with Sri Aurobindo. But such an attempt will not be proper one as while Machiavelli advocated for even non-ethical method for political achievement, Sri Aurobindo did not prescribed any such short-cut method. His main concern was independence of India and to awake the Indian masses for that end. Sri Aurobindo always emphasized mass-participation in India’s freedom movement. He was an admirer of the great French Revolution and the Irish Freedom Movement for their popular character. From such a psychological standpoint he criticized the Indian National Congress as it represented a small elite group and not the Indian masses.

One interesting fact is the before Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda first talked of mass-awakening of Indians. He was in no way as a political thinker as well as an activist like Sri Aurobindo. He was basically a Hind monk. Yet he was not aloof from Indian society as such. Rather he was a keen observer of Indian society and political scenario of his time. Further, he had detailed study of world history. With his sensitive and kind heart, he paid attention to the causes of misery of common Indian under the British colonial rule. Among Indians, Swami Vivekananda was the first person who identified the causes responsible for the misery of the Indian masses. In this way Swami Vivekananda too, like Sri Aurobindo, criticized the then national leaders of Indian National Congress. But at the same time Swami Vivekananda put forward his suggestions regarding making Indian people aware of their strength and weakness. Because he for the first time realized that Indian could become independent only when they would be able to kick-out the foreign rulers from Indian soil. Thus Swami Vivekananda prepared the ground for making Indian masses committed to win the struggle for freedom. He left for heavenly abode in July, 1902. Significantly it is the first decade of nineteenth century which witnessed a dramatic change in the scenario of Indians freedom movement. It is Sri Aurobindo Ghose who came to Bengal in the early phase of this decade to participate in socio-political movements to be initiated under his leadership later on. Sister Nivedita one of the dear disciples of Swami Vivekananda took initiative to bring Sri Aurobindo in active and leading role in Indian freedom movement. She made him understand that such a move on part of Sri Aurobindo was the need of the hour. Thus a link between Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo in respect of their role in India’s freedom movement can be established. So it can be interpreted both Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo called for mass-participation and self-sacrifice of Indian in the freedom movement. They established a new path for achieving independence which rejected politics of appeal and mercy. After Sri Aurobindo who withdrew himself from active participation in India’s freedom movement in February, 1910 this new path of battle for independence did not come to an end. Subhas Chandra Bose who was an admirer and follower of Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy took leading role in continuing the path of battle for freedom on the basis of Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy and on the political programme laid down by Sri Aurobindo.

One can easily find democratic and egalitarian values in Sri Aurobindo’s political method which he prescribed. In fact, the Doctrine of Passive Resistance was the first blue-print of a democratic mass movement. Later on, Gandhiji’s movement based on non-violent and non-cooperation scheme was more or less a practical application of Sri Aurobindo’s Doctrine of Passive Resistance. In Gandhian movements **‘**Ahimsa**’**, no doubt, was placed in the forefront yet, democratic and egalitarian character of his movements enabled them who acquires strength and effectiveness. In fact, any political or social change occurs only when mass participation and mass-mobilization and also mass-action take place in a given situation and context. Sri Aurobindo was the first Indian national leader who realized the importance of mass participation. He wanted that the Indian National Congress would give up its elitist character. Like Swami Vivekananda before him, he identified the poor and the deprived as the driving force of future India. In one of his most politically significant statement, he writes, --- *“….The proletariat is…the real key of the situation....he is a very great potential force….whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength, becomes by the very fact master of the future.”* **42**  In fact, these lines dictated the Champaran Satyagraha (1916) led by Mahatma Gandhi in which millions of the poor and the deprived Indians participated.

**Notes &References: ---**

1. Ramraj, '*Evolution of Thought'*, (Madras: Asian Printers, 1961), 1-2.

2. Asis Kumar Basu, *'Sri Aurobindo O Niskrio Pratirodh Ttatto'*(in Bengali), (Kolkata: Sri AurobindoPathamandir, 2009), 15.

3. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*New Lamps for Old’,* Chap.4, CWSA,(Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1893-94), 23.

4. Sri Aurobindo, *‘The Doctrine Passive Resistance’*, (DPR) Chap.3, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 99.

5. Sri Aurobindo, *‘Shall India be Free? National Development and Foreign Rule’*, *Bande Mataram*, CWSA, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 307-308.

6. Sri Aurobindo, *'The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, Chap. 2. Also in Dasarathi Sengupta, *'*SriAurobindoer Rashtrachinta'(in Bengali*)* '*Bartika*', a quarterly Magazine, (Kolkata: Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir Prakashana, November, 2012), 78.

7. Sourendramohan Gangopadhyay, *'Bangalir Rastrachinta'*, (in Bengali), Vol.1, (Kolkata: G.A.E.Publishers, 1991), 26-38. According to Rammohan, the British power was " …*for having unexpectedly delivered this country, from the long continued tyranny of its former rulers and placed it under the Government of the English, a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free enquiry into liberty and religious subject, among those nations to which that influence extend…" ----*Sourendramohan Gangopadhyay, *'Bangalir Rastrachinta',*32*.*

8**.** Arun Chandra Guha, *‘Sri Aurobindo’s Contribution to the Freedom Movement’,* (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, June, 2004), 51

9. Arun Chandra Guha, *‘Sri Aurobindo’s Contribution to the Freedom Movement’,* 51.

10.Karan Singh, *‘Prophet of Indian Nationalism’,* (Mumbai: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 4th Edition, 2000), 141.

11. Sri Aurobindo, *‘The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, 62-65

12. Sri Aurobindo, *‘The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, 62-65

13. Sri Aurobindo, *‘ The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’*’, 106*.

14. Mahatma Gandhi,*‘Hind Swaraj’*,Chap.7, (Ahmedabad, Navajiban Publishing House), 34.

15. Asis Kumar Basu, *'Sri Aurobindo O Niskrio Pratirodh Ttatto',* 47.

16. Gandhi, *‘Hind Swaraj’*, Chap. 7, 34.

17. Prof. V.P. Verma stated the fact as*—"Rabindranath was a societarian to the extent that he regarded the society as having greater primacy than the State. Hence in the place of the negative criticism of the government he urged the necessity of constructive social efforts. He regarded the society as a spiritual organism." ---* V.P. Verma, *'Modern Indian Political Thought'*, (Agra: L.N.Agarwal, 1996), p…….)

18. V.R.Mehta, *'Foundations of Indian Political Thought'*, (New Delhi, Monohar Publishers, 2008),266.

19.R.K. Prabhu and Ravinder Kelker, *'Truth Called Them Differently—Tagore Gandhi Controversy'* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1961), 64.

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21.Ashok Chousalkar, *'Indian Idea of Political Resistance'*,( New Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1990),31-38.

22. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, ‘*Evolution of Political Philosophy of Gandhi’*, Chap.9, (Ahmedabad: Navajiban Publishing House, 1950), 307.

23. Gandhi, ‘*Hind Swaraj’*, Chap. 17, 69.

24. Mahatma Gandhi, *‘Satyagraha in South Africa’, (*Ahmedabad: Navajiban Publishing House, 1950), 114.

25.Nirmal Kumar Bose, *'Selection from Gandhi'*, (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1948), 148.

26. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, Chap.3, 98.

27.Jatindranath Mukherjee, popularly known as Bagha Jatin, the daredevil young man contributed a lot in revolutionary movement in India. He devoted himself for the emancipation of motherland by the guidance of Sri Aurobindo. He recognized Bagha Jatin as the "righthand man" in organizing a vast network of underground fighters for nation's liberty. Henry Wheeler, a staff of Bengal Secretariat described Jatin as the most dangerous and desperate enemy of the British Raj. When the most of the revolutionaries were arrested, imprisoned in connection with Alipore Bomb Case, Sri Aurobindo gave the responsibility to Jatin to spread the revolutionary organizations in undivided Bengal.--- Nisith Ranjan Ray and Others (ed.), *'Challenge—A Saga of India's Struggle for Freedom'*, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1984), 264-273.

28. Sri Aurobindo, ' *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, Chap. 6, 116.

29. Dasarathi Sengupta, ‘*Doctrine Passive Resistance: Some Observations’,* Vol.3, No.2, RBHU,25.

30. Sri Aurobindo, ' *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, Chap. 6, 116.

31. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, ‘*Evolution of Political Philosophy of Gandhi’* Chap.9, reference.

32. Dasarathi Sengupta, ‘*Doctrine Passive Resistance: Some Observations’,* Vol.3, No.2, RBHU,26.

33. Gandhi, ‘*Young India’*, 11th August 1920. Also in Indrani Sanyal& Krishna Roy (ed.),*'Sri Aurobindo And His Contemporary Thinkers'*, 301.

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35. Sushmita Bhowmik, *'Violence or Non-violence Interpretations by Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma* *Gandhi*', in *'Sri Aurobindo And His Contemporary Thinkers'*, edited by Indrani Sanyal & Krishna Roy, 294-324.

36. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*’, Chap. 1, 122.

37.V.P. Verma, *'Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo'*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1960), 232.

38. Shamalesh Das, *'Sri Aurobindo From Militant Nationalism to Political Vedantism'*, (Kolkata: The Printobooks, 2006), 21.

39. Sri Aurobindo, ***'****New Lamps for Old'*, Chap.4, 23.

40. Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Morality of Boycott’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), 124.

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**CHAPTER---6**

**SRI AUROBINDO AND OTHER NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARIES**

In 1885 the Indian National Congress (INC) emerged as a common national platform of anti-British movement of Indians. The starting years of the INC were controlled by the Indians who belonging to western-educated middle class. This class was basically moderate in their attitude and activities. The moderates within the INC demanded various reforms so that they might be benefitted as a class. The then Congress leaders were very much loyal to their British masters and they also had a profound faith in the British honesty, justice and fairplay. They believed that the British had come to serve India and uplift Indians from their misery and sufferings. They wanted that the British rule should continue. The moderate leaders like Dadabhai Noiraji, Mahadev Gobinda Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, and Surendranath Banerjee had also profound faith on the efficacy of petition and prayer. However, as a protest against the moderate politics of those days the extremist group emerged within the INC. the extremists came forward to liberate the motherland even by adopting revolutionary methods.

In the late 19th and early 20th century the revolutionary activities started in some parts of India including Bengal. This newly emerged technique of war against the British created a deep sense of nationalism. This group of freedom fighters came to be known as the extremist within the Congress. They got influenced by patriotic writings and thoughts of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Swami Vivekananda. Bankim Chandra in his writings, particularly through his great novel the ‘*Anandamath’* and famous song *‘BandeMataram’* made a great impact on the revolutionary youths of India. In this anthem Bankim Chandra lauds Mother Bengal as *“a richly-watered, richly fruited land of beauty and strength and abundance, showering wealth from well-stored hands*”**.1** Vivekananda too through his passionate speeches of ‘Parliament of Religion’ in Chicago influenced revolutionaries to a great extent. Thus a conflicting situation arose within the INC in respect of clashes between the objectives of the moderates and the extremists or nationalists.

Outside Bengal revolutionary groups emerged in Maharashtra and Punjab province. Maharashtrians from 1894-1895 took the revolutionary path for freeing India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak openly preached revolt through his newspapers the *‘Maratha’* and *‘Kesari’*. He organized ‘Ganapati’ and ‘Shivaji Utsav’ for awakening Maharashtrians for over throwing the chains of the British rule in India. Sri Aurobindo regarded Tilak as the one possible leader of revolutionary party, took him out of the pandal (Congress pavilion) and talked him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra**. 2** Chapekar brothers, Damoder and Balkrishna, established secret revolutionary organization in Poona (1897).**3** Another secret society was organized by Savarkar brothers, Ganesh and Vinayak in Nasik in 1899. Its name was ‘Mitra Mela’. So Maharashtrians under the dynamic leadership of Tilak organized many secret societies for emancipation of India from the British rule by violent revolutionary method. **4** In Punjab Lala Hardayal founded ‘Gadar Party’ for accelerating revolutionary movement. Their objective was the establishment of an 'Independent Republic of India'. Lala Hardayal imparted to the movement an egalitarian and democratic ideology towards independence. **5**

The extremist politics in Bengal reached its zenith during the Swadeshi movement of 1905. The British government adopted a number of repressive measures against the extremists. Side by side a parallel movement was taking shape during the last part of the 19th and early 20th century. It was known as revolutionary movement. The aim of this movement was to eliminate the colonial rule through arms struggle. A number of organizations for this purpose emerged during this period. Among them the most notable was the **‘Anushilan Samiti’** and the **‘Jugantar Dal’**. The leaders of the samities played a very important role in this revolutionary movement. Sri Aurobindo Ghose got involved and played an important role in this revolutionary movement. The prominent figures of this revolutionary movement, particularly in Bengal were Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Pramathanath Mitra (popularly known as P. mitter), Satishchandra Basu, Barindra Ghose, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Bhupendranath Dutta, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and many others. Sister Nivedita took a leading role in uniting different groups of revolutionaries under the leadership of Sri Aurobindo. Sister Nivedita was invited to Baroda in 1904 by the Maharaja of Baroda. There she stayed as a State-guest. Sri Aurobindo and Khaseroa Jadhav went to receive her at Baroda station. It was the first meeting between them. They spoke of existing political situation in India and other subjects. Sri Aurobindo was present at Sister Nivedita’s interview with the Maharaja. Later Sri Aurobindo said that Nivedita requested the Maharaja to support the secret revolution. She remain told him that the Maharaja could communicate with her through Sri Aurobindo. Thus a connection between Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda grew up. Sister Nivedita had been very much attracted to Sri Aurobindo for his inclination to the secret revolutionary activities. **6**

After partition of Bengal in 1905 the revolutionary activities spread in Calcutta and different parts of Bengal. Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal permanently in 1906 and took an active role in guiding and shaping revolutionary activities and spreading nationalism through the *‘BandeMataram’* and *Yugantar’***.** Besides them, the *‘Sandhya’* by Brahma Bandhab Upadhyay, the *‘Nabasakti’* by Monoranjan GuhaThakurata, the *‘Sanjibani’* by Krishna Kumar Mitra, the *‘New India’* by Bipin Chandra Pal, etc, took leading role in creating nationalistic sense among Indians. During this period Sri Aurobindo emerged as a national leader by shaping Indian nationalism through ‘*The* *BandeMataram*’. Through his writings he also presented an alternative route to overthrow the British rule. At the same time he also pointed out an alternative scheme of self-reliance in different spheres of individual and social life. These include education, economy, judiciary and general administration. In fact, Sri Aurobindo chalked out a comprehensive social, economic, political and judiciary system for Indians to be followed after achieving independence. No other Indian national leader could even imagine such a comprehensive scheme for Indians.

At the same time Sri Aurobindo also chalked out an alternative strategy for struggle against the British rule for achieving complete freedom or ‘Purno Swaraj’. Sri Aurobindo as a national leader advocated for a direct mass-movement for changing the course of national movement. He explained that the actual enemy of India was not any external force, but its own weakness. Cowardness, selfishness, hypocrisy and purblind sentimentalism of Indians were the main causes of its imprisonment by foreign rule. He wanted that Indians must become fearless, firm and strong enough to fight against foreign dominance and aggression. He favoured and advocated strong revolutionary activities as a part of tactics of the struggle. He wanted to raise the level of psychological and moral strength of Indians, so that they did not fear to sacrifice their lives for motherland. He always believed that ‘Swaraj’ meant absolute autonomy, i.e., freedom from foreigncontrol. He was able to establish a cultural base of Indian nationalism and wanted to awake Indians along that line. In this respect he may be regarded as the pioneer and theoretician of Indian freedom struggle. He was of the opinion that there could be no compromise, no question of bargaining with the total emancipation of motherland. To achieve freedom for India Sri Aurobindo also chalked out a great scheme of boycott (foreign product, British education and legal system), swadeshi (national economy, planning, industry, etc.), and national education. This proves his sagacity and higher quality of leadership. He sought to inject a new spirit of nationalism in the minds of Indians. His views on individual, nation and nationality make him different from other leaders and revolutionaries such as---Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das, Pramathanath Mitra, Brambha Bandhab Upadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutta, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Charu Chandra Roy, Motilal Roy, Kanailal Dutta and many others. Further, he also introduced a spiritual tone to his above concepts following Swami Vivekananda.

In fact, none of the above mentioned revolutionaries could not present a total scheme of freedom movement as well as nation-building and state-formation. Among the revolutionaries Bal Gangadhar Tilak took a leading role in organizing secret societies for armed struggle against foreign rule. He also published newspapers for awakening Indians with the spirit of nationalism. In this respect we find some commonalities in his thought and action with that of Sri Aurobindo. But he had no contribution in developing a political theory like the ‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’ of Sri Aurobindo. In this respect he was lagging far behind as a national leader than Sri Aurobindo. So Tilak cannot be said a political thinker like Sri Aurobindo. Further, he did not present any alternative scheme for self-reliance for Indians in general, such as---swadeshi, national education, etc.

Like Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai of undivided Punjab may be treated as a national figure in India’s freedom movement. Like Sri Aurobindo he also wanted to inspire Indian masses with nationalist spirit by writing books and editing newspapers. He started his revolutionary activities first in Punjab province and then spread it rest of India. Like Sri Aurobindo and Tilak he strongly opposed to the reformist policies and programmes of the moderates within the INC. However, he was not at all a political thinker like Sri Aurobindo as he did not present any particular theory of revolution or freedom movement as well as any developmental scheme for state-formation.

Another important nationalist leader of Indian freedom movement was Bipin Chandra Pal. Though he started his political career under the influence of renowned moderate leader Surendranath Banerjee, yet he was closer to Sri Aurobindo for his revolutionary spirit. Like other revolutionary leaders he also took pen for inspiring common people against the colonial rule. Like Sri Aurobindo he was associated with the well-known *BandeMataram Patrika* for awakening nationalism in the minds of Indians. Both Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra were of the opinion that nationalism was a spiritual concept. Similarly, he also put importance for national education, swadeshi and boycott as Sri Aurobindo did. BipinChandra made difference between independence and swaraj. To him swaraj meant ‘autonomy’; on the other hand independence was an idealist concept. He also constructed a theory of ‘composite patriotism’ incorporating individuals belonging to different religions. By ‘composite patriotism’ he meant, in short composite Indianness. In this respect BipinChandra may be compared with Sri Aurobindo as both them were political thinker and against any sort of communalism. His theory of ‘Imperial Federation’**7** is some sort of similar to that of Sri Aurobindo’s theory ‘World Union’. So it may state that Bipin Chandra had also some basic contribution to Indian freedom movement like Sri Aurobindo. However, Bipin Chandra’s theories did not get much publicity as the ‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’ penned by Sri Aurobindo. However, Bipin Chandra Pal had paid an eloquent tribute to Sri Aurobindo. In his own words,

“*The youngest in age among those who stand in the forefront of the Nationalist propaganda in India, but in endowment, education and character, perhaps, superior to them all—Aravinda seems distinctly marked out by Providence to play in the future of this movement a part not given to any of his colleagues and contemporaries…..His only care is for his country—the Mother, as he always calls her. Nationalism, at the best a concern of the intellect with some; at the lowest a political cry and aspiration with others, is with Aravinda a supreme passion of his soul. Few, indeed, have grasped the full force and meaning of the Nationalist ideal as Aravinda has done…..*

*The call (of India) went to the heart of Aravinda. His own native Province called for him. It laid on him the vow of poverty. It offered him the yoke of the saviours of their people and the uplifters of humanity—the yoke of calumny, persecution, imprisonment and exile. Aravinda obeyed the Mother’s call, accepted her stern conditions, and cheerfully took up her chastening yoke. He gave up his place in Baroda, worth £ 560 a year, to take up the duties of Principal in the college started at Calcutta under the new National Council Education at a bare subsistence allowance of £10 a month….*

*He went to Calcutta as an educationist. He knew that the foundations of National independence and national greatness must be laid in strong and advanced system of national education…. Aravinda is an apostle of modern education….*

*….Wider fields of public usefulness were soon opened up for Aravinda. The National School was without a daily English organ. A new paper was started. Aravinda was invited to join its staff. A joint-stock company was shortly floated to run it, and Aravinda became one of the directors. This paper—“BandeMatarm”—at once secured for itself a recognised position in Indian journalism. The hand of the master was in it, from the very beginning. Its bold attitude, its vigorous thinking, its clear ideas, its chaste and powerful diction, its scorching sarcasm and refined witticism, were unsurpassed by any journal in the country, either Indian or Anglo-Indian. It at once raised the tone of every Bengali paper, and compelled the admiration of even hostile Anglo-Indian editors. Morning after morning, not only Calcutta but the educated community almost in every part of the country, eagerly awaited its vigorous pronouncements on the stirring questions of the day….It was a force in the country which none dared to ignore, however much they might fear or hate it, and Aravinda was the leading spirit, the central figure, in the new journal. The opportunities that were denied him in the National College he found in the pages of the—“BandeMatarm”, and from a tutor of a few youths he thus became the teacher of a whole nation.”* **8**

Desbandhu Chittaranjan Das (C.R.Das) and Sri Aurobindo were contemporary. At his initial political career C.R.Das was associated with the secret society--Anushilan Samiti. He and Sri Aurobindo played the role of joint-vice president of that society. C.R.Das did not engage himself as a full-timer in Indian freedom movement. He was renowned lawyer of his time. Sri Aurobindo on the other hand engaged himself totally in India’s freedom movement. C.R.Das openly propagated the concept of ‘Swaraj’. To him it was not a political concept generating mental force. Further, as the president of Goya session of the INC (1922) he expressed his view on Swaraj, as "*I look upon the attainment of freedom* *and Swaraj the only way* *of fulfilling, oneself as individuals, as nations. I look upon all national activities as the real foundation of the service of that greater humanity which again is the revelation of God to man."* **9** His concept of nationalism was influenced by Sri Aurobindo as C.R.Das took his spiritual outlook. However, C.R.Das was not a mass leader and political thinker like Sri Aurobindo. He supported the vision of self-rule by Indians through peaceful reformist measures. So C.R.Das cannot be compared with the revolutionary as well as nationalist image of Sri Aurobindo. Actually, Mahatma Gandhi following the blue-print of India’s freedom movement penned by Sri Aurobindo in his ‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’ emerged as the most important national leader after Sri Aurobindo. Other national leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Surendranath and C.R.Das did not get prominence in national scenario what Gandhiji could occupy.

Another important leader of Indian freedom struggle and a follower of C.R.Das, Subhas Chandra Bose had also been very much influenced by Sri Aurobindo’s nationalist philosophy and revolutionary activities. In his own words,

*“In my undergraduate days Arabindo Ghose was easily the most popular leader in Bengal, despite his voluntary exile and absence since 1909. His was a name to conjure with. He had sacrificed a lucrative career in order to devote himself to politics. On the Congress platform he had stood up as a champion of left-wing thought and a fearless advocate of independence at a time when most of the leaders, with their tongue in their cheeks, would talk only of colonial self-government. He had undergone incarceration with perfect equanimity. His close association with Lokmanya B.G.Tilak had given him an all-India popularity, while rumour and official allegation had given him an added prestige in the eyes of the generation by connecting him with his younger brother Barindra Kumar Ghose, admittedly the pioneer of the terrorist movement. Last but not least, a mixture of spirituality and politics had given him a halo of mysticism and made his personality more fascinating to those who were religiously inclined. When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Arabindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seenpeople speak of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man….*

*As a college student it was not the mysticism surrounding Arabindo’s name which attracted me, but his writings and also his letters. Arabindo was then editing a monthly journal called Arya in which he expounded his philosophy. He used also to write to certain select people in Bengal. Such letters would pass rapidly from hand to hand, especially in circles interested in spirituality-cum-politics. In our circle somebody would read the letter aloud and the rest of us would enthuse over it. In one such letter Arabindo wrote, “We must be dynamos of the divine electricity so that when each of us stands up, thousand around may be full of the light, full of bliss and Ananda.” We felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective nation service.*

*But what made lasting appeal to me was no such flashy utterances. I was impressed by his deeper philosophy….. Vivekanamnda had no doubt spoken of the need of Jnana (Knowledge), Bhakti (devotion and love) and Karma (selfless action) in developing all-round character, but there was something original and unique in Arabindo’s conception of a synthesis of Yoga. He tried to show by a proper use of the different Yogas one could rise step by step to the highest truth. It was so refreshing, so inspiring, to read Arabindo’s writings as a contrast to the denunciation of knowledge and action by the latter-day Bengal Vaishnavas…..*

*\**

*Swami Vivekananda died in 1902 and the religio-philosophical movement was continued through the personality of Arabindo Ghose. Arabindo did not keep aloof from politics. On the contrary, he plunged into the thick of it, and by 1908 bacame one of the foremost political leaders. In him, spirituality was wedded to politics. Arabindo retired from politics in 1909 to devote himself exclusively to religion…..*

*\**

*A life of sacrifice to start with, plain living and high thinking, whole-hearted devotion to the country’s cause—all these are highly enchanting to my imagination and inclination. Further, the very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy is intensely repugnant to me. The path of Arabindo Ghose is to me more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramash Dutt.*

*\**

*Besides, the first step towards equipping oneself for public service is to sacrifice all worldly interests—to burn one’s boats as it were—and devote oneself wholeheartedly to the national cause…. The illustrious example of Arabindo Ghose looms large before my vision. I feel that I am to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me.*

*\**

*Arabindo Ghose is to me my spiritual guru. To him to his mission I have dedicated my life and soul. My decision is final and unchangeable.”* **10**

Rashbehari Basu was another daring revolutionary. The British government could not get him in hand during his stay in India. Later he went to Japan and there he organized an army group in 1924 named—‘Indian Independence League’. He was very much respected to Sri Aurobindo for giving a meaningful shape to Indian nationalism. He also paid heart-felt tribute to Sri Aurobindo. In his own words,

*“This is a salute to him to whose inspiring call we owe the birth of positive Indian nationalism. Sri Aurobindo is the foremost of those seers of Indian nationalism, who are still hale and hearty and due to whose burning speech and thundering pen, patriotism came to have a fresh and profound meaning for modern Indians. To him this salute is offered*.

*If spiritual culture is granted to be the soul of the Indian nation, then Sri Aurobindo is a living embodiment of it. He has succeeded in measuring the depths of its mysteries, which are as old as the Indian nation itself. Today he is seen leading a life of silence in communion with God, having fully realised that silence is the precursor of mighty creation. This salute is offered to him.*

*Sri Aurobindo’s faith and ways of searching after the ultimate truth accord well with the faith and ways of the noblest of Sufis, the mystics of Islam. And in the eyes of hundreds of millions of Hindus he is a Yogi of a very high order. Thus, in him is seen harmonized the essence of those two noble faiths, Hinduism and Islam, on the balanced fusion of whose spirits depends the rejuvenation of future Indian culture and the re-establishment of the future Indian State. This salute is offered to him.*

*Sri Aurobindo has long realised the true mission of India. According to him a free India would serve the world by preaching to it the great heritage of her spiritual culture. Today Mother India stands to be free from foreign bondage. The time seems to be ripe for Sri Aurobindo to come forward, as he did decades ago, and give us lead in the fulfilment of Mother India’s national mission. This salute is offered to him with a prayer that he may respond to the call of the Mother.*

*This salute is offered to him in the time-honoured Indian custom of asking for the blessings of the elders and pioneers before undertaking a great and noble task. May he be pleased with my fresh determination to do my bit in the cause of making India of the Indians and Asia of the Asia of the Asiatics*.” **11**

Among other important revolutionaries of Bengal Pramathanath Mitra, Brambha Bandhab Upadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutta, Amarendranath Mukherjee, Rashbehari Basu, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Charu Chandra Roy, Motilal Roy, Kanailal Dutta, Jyotish Chandra Ghose came in contact either with Sri Aurobindo or with his revolutionary philosophy. They also shared common views regarding the path of removing the British rule in India. Many of them had been inspired by Sri Aurobindo and accepted him as their leader. Though they played important role in organizing secret societies, yet they were not in a position of leading them. They were basically workers. Among them Brambha Bandhab Upadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutta had the quality of awakening Indians with nationalist spirit through their writings. But unfortunately Brambha Bandhab died in 1907 at an early age. Bhupendranath Dutta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda inspired Indians to participate in freedom struggle thorough his weekly ‘The Jugantar’. He in his later life became associated with the communist movement. He was not at all a popular leader like Sri Aurobindo. Further, he did not invent any political theory like the ‘Doctrine of Passive Resistance’. Pramathanath Mitra was a good organizer but had not that capability of leadership which Sri Aurobindo had.

A number of revolutionaries other than those directly involved with Maniktola Secret Society had also written on Sri Aurobindo’s connection with the revolutionary movement. Among them M. N. Roy, Arun Chandra Guha, Jadugopal Mukherjee are prominent revolutionaries who had commented on Sri Aurobindo. For example, Narendranath Bhattacharya, better known as M. N. Roy, commented that Sri Aurobindo was the “*Supreme Commander of the Revolution*” **12** Another important member of Jugantar Party, Arun Chandra Guha was of the opinion that Jugantar Party was the “*brain-child of Aurobindo*”. **13** Similarly, the revolutionaries associated with the Anushilan Samiti regarded Sri Aurobindo as the founder or co-founder of their organization. Pulin Behari Das, the leader of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti wrote of meeting with Sri Aurobindo at which revolutionary activities and organizational issues were discussed. Further, many members of Maniktola Secret Society had some sort of connection with Sri Aurobindo. Nalini Kanta Gupta had recognized Sri Aurobindo’s connection with them. Thus, it becomes evident that Sri Aurobindo made deep impression in the minds of young revolutionaries seeking end of the British rule in India. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo came forward in recognizing the role of young revolutionaries in spite of his following statement may be mention:

*“The young men of Bengal who had rushed forward in the frenzy of the moment, in the inspiration of the new gospel they had received, rushed forward rejoicing in the new-found strength and expecting to bear down all obstacles that came in their way, were now called upon to suffer. They were called upon to bear the crown, not of victory, but of martyrdom. They had to learn the real nature of their new strength. It was not their own strength, but it was the force which was working through them, and they had to learn to be the instruments of that force.”* **14**

In the context of above discussion the importance and place of Sri Aurobindo among Indian revolutionaries becomes evident like sunlight. He categorically remarked that ‘our ideal is that of Swaraj or absolute autonomy free from foreign control’. He was not ready to accept nothing sort of it. His such a stand inspires not only freedom fighters but also many eminent Indians belonging to difference walks of social life. Among them world poet Rabindranath Tagore was very prominent who came in contact with Sri Aurobindo and paid his tribute to him in the following manner:

“*For a long time I had a strong desire to meet Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. It has just been fulfilled. I feel that I must write down the thoughts that have come to my mind....*

*Time after time, man must discover new proofs to support the faith in his own greatness, the faith that gives him freedom in the Infinite. It is realised anew every time that we find a man whose soul is luminously seen through the translucent atmosphere of a perfect life. Not the one who has the strength of an intellect that reasons, a will that plans, the energy that works, but he whose life has become one with the Word, from whose being is breathed Om, the response of the everlasting yes....*

*We badly need today for the realisation of our human dignity a person who will preach respect for man in his completeness....We should never be allowed to forget that spiritual perfection comprehends all the riches of life and gives them a great unity of meaning.*

*While my mind was occupied with such thoughts, the French steamer on which I was travelling touched Pondicherry and I came to meet Aurobindo. At the very first sight I could realised that he had been seeking for the soul and had gained it, and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light and his serene presence made it evident to me that his soul was not crippled and cramped to the measure of some tyrannical doctrine,* *which takes delight in inflicting wounds upon life. He, I am sure, never had his lessons from the Christian monks of the ascetic Europe, revelling in the pride of that self-immolation which is a twin sister of self-aggrandisement joined back to back facing opposite directions.*

*I felt that the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him, “You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, ‘Hearken to me.’”*

*In her earlier forest home Sakuntala had her awakenment of life in the restlessness of her youth. In the later hermitage she attained the fulfillment of her life. Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him,*

*“Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Ranbinranath.”*

*Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of a reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence,*

*“Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Ranbinranath.”* **15**

Thus it may be interpreted that Sri Aurobindo was both an activist, theoretician, political philosopher of Indian freedom movement. In comparison to others mentioned above he had far ahead of them in respect of political sagacity and farsightedness as well as leadership capacity.

**Notes & References: ---**

1**.** Sri Aurobindo, ‘*Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda’*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Second Edition, 2006), 7-8.

2. Sri Aurobindo, **‘***On Himself’***,** (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol.-26, 1972), 25. Also in Peter Heehs, ‘*The Bomb in Bengal’*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46-47.

3. Chapekar brothers murdered English Plague Commissioner Rand and his colleague C. E. Ayrst for their brutal torture to the citizens of Poona during plague epidemics. They were later hanged.

4. Peter Heehs, ‘*The Bomb in Bengal’*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8-12.

5. Bipan Chandra, *'India's Struggle for Independence'*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), 155-158.

6. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, *‘Sri Aurobindo as I Understand Him’*, (Pondicherry: Unpublished manuscript, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives), 20-21. Let us note as an aside that Nivedita carried Swami Vivekananda's message of strength into the national awakening, and though this is rarely investigated, most of the early nationalists were impelled by spiritual motive.

7. Sourendramohan Gangopadhyay, *‘Bangalir Rastrachinta’* (in Bengali), Vol.1*,* (Kolkata: G.A.E. Publishers, Third Edition, 1991), 253. Further, he stated that *"The empire idea is essentially larger and broader than the nation idea. It aims at the unification of widely separated territories, of widely divergent interests, of widely different cultures, into one organic whole."*

8. Manoj Das, *‘Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Twentieth Century’,*

9. Bipan Chandra, *''India's Struggle for Independence'*, 235.

10. Sisir Kr. Bose (ed.) *‘Netaji--Collected Works’*, Vol.1, (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1980), 18,111,112.

11. Sabitri Prasanna Chatterjee (ed.), ‘*Rash Behari Basu and His Struggle for India’s* *Independence*’,( Calcutta: Biplabi Mahanayak Rash Behari Basu Smarak Samity,1963),162-163.

12. Peter Heehs, *‘Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism’*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 50.

13. Peter Heehs, *‘Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism’*, 50.

14. Sri Aurobindo, '*SABCL'*, Vol.1 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), 659.

15. Chanda Poddar,Mona Sarkar and Bob Zwicker (ed.), *‘Sri Aurobindo and the Freedom of India’,*( Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2012),130-131.