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*Insights...*

### **Indian Culture & External Influence**

'...to live in one's self, determining one's self-expression from one's own centre of being in accordance with one's own law of being, swadharma, is the first necessity. Not to be able to do that means disintegration of the life; not to do it sufficiently means languor, weakness, inefficiency, the danger of being oppressed by the envioning forces and overborne; not to be able to do it wisely, intuitively, with a strong use of one's inner material and inner powers, means confusion, disorder and finally decline and loss of vitality. But also not to be able to use the material that the life around offers us, not to lay hold on it with an intuitive selection and a strong mastering assimilation is a serious deficiency and a danger to the existence. To a healthy individuality the external impact or entering energy, idea, influence may act as an irritant awakening the inner being to a sense of discord, incompatibility or peril, and then there is a struggle, an impulse and process of rejection; but even in this struggle, in this process of rejection there is some resultant of change and growth, some increment of the power and material of life; the energies of the being are stimulated and helped by the attack. It may act as a stimulus, awakening a new action of the self-consciousness and a sense of fresh possibility, — by comparison, by suggestion, by knocking at locked doors and arousing slumbering energies. It may come in as a possible material which has then to be reshaped to a form of the inner energy, harmonised with the inner being, reinterpreted in the light of its own characteristic self-consciousness. In a great change of environment or a close meeting with a mass of invading influences all these processes work together and there is possibly much temporary perplexity and difficulty, many doubtful and perilous movements, but also the opportunity of a great self-developing transformation or an immense and vigorous renaissance.'

**Sri Aurobindo**

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SRI AUROBINDO  
Bengal April, 1908

## **Interventions : Opportunities** **'Given to India'**

A clinical psychologist who has emerged as a 'leading social, political, cultural critic' in India & has specialized in the intricate areas of public conscience, political psychology, mass violence, nationalism & culture, recently made a rather startling comment on the interventions Sri Aurobindo made into the political arena after his retirement to Pondicherry in 1910. He expressed his reservations & indirectly questioned their advisability — calling them hash-making interventions — while writing a foreword to an otherwise admirable monograph on the intellectual history of India. Though he grossly violated the academic code of fair play by not qualifying his position we do not wish to name the polymath in question, nor do we aim to indulge in an intellectual nit — picking with his points of view & thus trivialize his contentions. We are not in the habit of resorting to polemics just for the sake of publicity & propaganda both of which we believe have their uses only in politics, in the marketing of patent medicines & now in the promotion of books too! But certain points need to be made; certain home truths call for constant reiteration even though they may seem repetitions of positions articulated long back. Thus the understanding of each of Sri Aurobindo's political interventions — which were initiated with the intention of securing a safe & united future for India, for safeguarding the progress of human civilization & for liberating the way towards a spiritual destiny of mankind where the ideal of human unity would not merely be an utopian proposition but a reality — is of as much contemporary relevance today as it was six decades ago in the early years of freedom.

The time-warped notion that Sri Aurobindo ceased to have political interest post his retirement to Pondicherry & other

skewed or motivated assessments of his immense political contributions; continue to colour most non-hagiographic reading of his life & work & defines the many academic assessments that they have undergone, our erudite protagonist in question is no exception, he too has been a victim of this warp & therefore questions Sri Aurobindo's later political judgments. We realize of course that this is not the problem of an individual but rather the malady of the age if not the century! It is seldom realized that 'the revolutionary leader [may have] become the yogi of Pondicherry' but even in that he was a revolutionary — he did not cease to have interest in life, country & world, he did not indulge in a withdrawal of the ascetic kind, [he] 'may have retired from active politics but his days as a thinker on the problems of ethics & politics [and much more] was far from over. This is the point to be understood, the coextensive nature of Sri Aurobindo's life — no compartmentalization, no false segregations between the spiritual & unspiritual, between the mundane & the sublime — that is perhaps what led him to write in a political letter to a political associate a decade after his political retirement regarding politics, 'I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile ambling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and

plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms, the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long.' A brief analysis will reveal how well updated Sri Aurobindo kept himself regarding political developments. Sri Aurobindo was referring here to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian National Congress held at Amritsar in December 1919 with Pandit Motilal Nehru as the President. C.R.Das, Sri Aurobindo's erstwhile political associate & counsel who continued to maintain a channel of communication with him was then one of the tallest figures of the freedom movement & moved the resolutions which reiterated the stand that, 'India is fit for full responsible Government,' and repudiated, 'all assumptions and assertions to the contrary wherever made.' It expressed its disappointment with the inadequacy of the reforms — it was universally felt that the diarchy proposed was a sham in reality because of the non-devolution of true fiscal powers to the Provincial Legislatures & the reserving of certain important subjects such as industry & primary education, this is the inadequacy Sri Aurobindo probably had in mind when talking of the 'inadequacy of Reforms'. The disappointment having been expressed the resolution further urged, 'that Parliament should take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination.'<sup>4</sup> It is thus evident that Sri Aurobindo was remarkably well-informed about the political developments even in his 'seclusion' — in fact the *Times of India* did observe in its 6<sup>th</sup> December issue of 1950 that, 'for a recluse he was remarkably well interested in and informed on politics' - & his reading of the political situation in the country continued to remain precise as his letter above goes to prove. The demand for self-determination that he had so resolutely championed from 1906 with the call for complete & unconditional freedom was at last being worked out with active cooperation from all sections of opinion

within the Congress. Again here too his was a path breaking formulation way ahead of its time & the whole movement had to eventually veer round to it in order to maintain its pace with the demands of the age. Though the responsive-cooperationist stand won the day, Amritsar signified the launching of the mass-struggle by a people with the 'settled will for freedom' firmly planted in their minds, if Plassey had 'laid the foundation of the British Empire, Amritsar [had] shaken it'.

Another of Sri Aurobindo's assertion made in the above letter, that he did not look down upon politics & political action emerges from his outlook that there was nothing to him that was secular, all human activity he believed was to be contained in the spiritual sphere including politics, his thoughts & vision in every sphere possessed the integrative outlook & force. Needless to say that one ought to take guard against interpreting the term 'secular' in its present conventional form. Strangely enough it is this integrative aspect of Sri Aurobindo's message that has been constantly missed by the liberal intelligentsia in their frantic quest for an inclusive & cohesive society. It was this vision of integration that led him never to look down upon political action throughout his life — though during a prolonged period he 'made it a rule not to write anything about politics' - & therefore we see this constant interest & farsighted analysis.

The first point thus, that he lost track of political developments & later lost interest in & judgment of political matters stands nullified. But it is the latter part of this letter which perhaps provides a deeper insight into his thinking then, 'What preoccupies me now,' he wrote, 'is the question what it [India] is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?'<sup>6</sup> In 1920, possessing a settled inner assurance that India was to be free, Sri

Aurobindo was already thinking about the future organization of freedom — a line of thought which if given timely national recognition then would have perhaps better prepared the country to face the onslaught of problems at the dawn of freedom. It can also be observed that this interest in politics was not limited only to the early phase as some would have us believe — it continued throughout, till 1925 he kept receiving senior leaders who wished to meet him & ascertain his views & guidance on political & spiritual matters — we know of C.R.Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr.B.S.Moonje, Purushotamdas Tandon, Abinash Bhattacharya, Sarla Devi Chowdhurani to be among the stalwarts who called on him during this phase. After his complete retirement in 1926, though he did not meet any one further — making an exception only in the case of Tagore who desired to see him in 1928 while passing by Pondicherry — he intervened in the political field whenever he believed India's & humanity's future to be in jeopardy. Since 1946 he remained available to the members of the constitution drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly whenever any of them wired to him for light & guidance. In fact we see this interest extending as far as 1949 & 1950 — when he encouraged his disciples in Bombay to venture into the complicated field of political journalism & start the fortnightly *Mother India* which was to include among other things 'comments on political themes of the day'. The Master did not stop just at that, each of the editorials written between 1949 & 50 were 'sent to him for approval [and] only when his "Yes" was wired' did the publication start. It was to the editor of *Mother India* that he wrote lucid analytical letters as late as May 1950 on the situation in Kashmir, Pakistan's attitude vis-à-vis the state's accession to India, condition of the Eastern wing — surely not a sign of disinterested withdrawal! But these were of a later period & to counter the false charge an analysis of Sri Aurobindo's various interventions needs to be made & its best to start with a brief review of those he made during his pre-Pondicherry days. A detailed look at this phase, which is for the moment beyond the scope of this discussion, will

reveal again his ingenuity, his farsightedness in political analysis, accurate reading of mass sentiments & his cogency in planning & power of organisation. We claim no recognized distinction in scholarship but an ignoring silence in face of such a charge, however shallow, shall belie the revolutionary spirit that Sri Aurobindo himself symbolized.

A brief survey will show quite a few firsts to be among Sri Aurobindo's early political initiatives; they may be mentioned here, even if repeated elsewhere. Sri Aurobindo first articulated the view that the political sense of the masses must be awakened if an effective movement for freedom is to be launched. He began writing a series between 1893-94 in the *Indu Prakash*, a Bombay paper edited by his Cambridge friend K.G.Deshpande, with the aim of 'trying to awaken the nation to ideas of the future'.<sup>9</sup> Within the first few installments he had created sufficient ripple among the leaders of the day for them to cry halt or for a toning down of substance. The strident criticism of the political methods adopted by the then Congress leadership, the call for including the masses, for Sri Aurobindo saw that 'the great mass of people' have not been touched & the demand for making the Congress a popular body were all thoughts quite foreign to the leaders of the day & proved to them 'beyond measure unpalatable.' The prevailing idea then was that because the masses were 'still unable to articulate definite political demands that the functions and duty devolve[d] upon their educated and enlightened compatriots to feel, to understand and to interpret their grievances and requirements, and to suggest and indicate how these [could] best be redressed and met,'<sup>10</sup> but no attempt need be made yet to bring them onto the forum & to make their voices heard firsthand. It was this arrogating notion that Sri Aurobindo opposed right from the beginning, he believed that unless the then Congress made an effort to represent the masses it could never rightly own the defining term 'national'. This is what led him perhaps to articulate the demand for the inclusion of the 'proletariate', which he felt, '[was] sunk in ignorance and

overwhelmed with distress.' He clearly saw long before most of his contemporaries had even formulated such a stand that with the 'distressed and ignorant proletariat... resides our sole assurance of hope, our sole chance in the future'. The usage of the word may have been made with its original French meaning in mind rather than the later colour it assumed but it cannot be denied that Sri Aurobindo did use the word in the sense of the 'sunken masses' & was thus the first political leader in the country to apply the term while discussing prevailing political events & conditions. The idea of turning the movement into an amalgamative mass action was one of the principle objective which Sri Aurobindo attempted to champion — through his writings & through the creation of the revolutionary network — though he had few years to consolidate all his plans into concrete action, the seeds of ideas that he implanted nationwide gradually made their way to the surface of the national consciousness. It was only when the 'proletariat' got included into the programmes of the Congress did the body really gain strength & credibility.

Continuing with the idea of the masses it is interesting to observe the effect Sri Aurobindo's political ideas had, among other things, on agrarian movements in the northern part of India - & we are not for the moment taking into account here the formidable impact it had on the regions revolutionary actions. In 1906 Jatindra Nath Banerjee (1877-1930), who had joined the Baroda state army at Sri Aurobindo's initiative to receive modern military training & became his 'lieutenant' in Bengal for organizing revolutionary activities, disassociated himself from Barindra Kumar Ghose's revolutionary organisation due to temperamental incompatibility & went off on a tour of north India & came to Punjab. It was here that he began spreading again revolutionary ideas imbibed from his mentor & organised a group of inspired young men committed to the ideal of achieving Swaraj if necessary by violent means. Among members of the group were Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Ajit Singh & Kissen Singh, both uncle & father respectively of the

legendary Bhagat Singh, & others [in fact both Kissen Singh & Bhagat Singh revered Jatindra Nath Banerjee, who was initiated later into *sannyasa* & assumed the name of Niralamba Swami, as their political 'guru' & Jatindra considered Sri Aurobindo to be his foremost political preceptor]. Lala Hardyal of the Ghadar movement fame also became a part of this group on his return from England in 1908 & began organising another group of committed youth for revolutionary work.

The idea that the revolutionary movement must be made broad based was an important point that all revolutionaries recognized, in fact it was with this idea of organising a broad network of revolutionary societies & through it to gradually spread disaffection among the 'proletariat' that Jatindra Nath Banerjee was sent by his mentor - the unassuming officer & hugely admired professor of the Baroda State Service & College — to Bengal & this was to be just one aspect of the whole movement. Thus we see that imbued by Jatindra Nath's ideas as implanted in him by Sri Aurobindo, the mass movement — the agrarian aspect of the operation — was initially put into action by Sardar Ajit Singh as early as February 1907, when he set up along with Syed Haider Reza the Indian Patriots' Association for ameliorating the condition of the peasantry & to protest against the agrarian policy of the government. Along with Lala Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh urged the peasants to refrain from paying enhanced revenue & water rates, openly advocated rebellion against colonial rule & impressed upon them the fact that unless freedom was achieved, their grievances would never really be redressed, thus we get here an example of how agrarian discontent was being gradually linked with the movement for freedom from colonial bondage.<sup>15</sup> Both Ajit Singh & Haider Reza are to be seen with Sri Aurobindo & Lokmanya Tilak in the famous group photograph of nationalist leaders at the Surat Congress of December 1907. That Sri Aurobindo closely monitored the movement is evident from a scrutiny of the pages of the *Bande Mataram*, supporting Ajit

Singh's initiative as another example of the application of passive resistance, Sri Aurobindo wrote that it was gladdening to see 'Passive Resistance being boldly carried into effect in the Punjab.' 'So long as the political ferment created by the new spirit was mainly confined to Bengal,' observed Sri Aurobindo in the same leader titled '**Passive Resistance in the Punjab**' on 23 April 1907, 'Anglo-India comforted itself by saying that the Bengalis were an unwarlike race unlikely to cause real trouble. Their main uneasiness was lest the agitation should spread to the martial races of whom alone they are afraid and whom they lose no opportunity of flattering and trying to separate from the Bengalis. Englishmen respect and fear those only who can strike and, being a race without imagination or foresight, they are unable to realise that national character is not immutable or that the Bengalis, who could once fight both on sea and land, might possibly revert to the ancient type and put behind them their acquired timidity and love of ease. Now, however, their fears are being realised. Anglo-Indian journals had already begun to perceive the truth that there is a real unity in India and that "Lahore has become a political suburb of Calcutta."... Sirdar Ajit Singh of the Lahore Patriots' Association has been doing admirable work among the masses. His most recent success has been to induce the Jat peasantry to boycott the Government canals as a protest against an iniquitous water-tax. As a result the Deputy Commissioner in imitation of the Fuller Administration, published this remarkable order, — "Ajit Singh of Lahore is forbidden to address any public meeting in Multan district. If he disobeys, he will be arrested." The only result was that Sirdar Ajit Singh addressed a meeting of 15,000 men in defiance of this ukase and the police stood helplessly by. We pointed out in our last article on Passive Resistance that Government by ukase would always be one of the methods the Government must instinctively resort to in order to snuff out our resistance and that it was the imperative duty of every patriot to resist such arbitrary orders. We are glad to see that the Punjab has promptly taken up the challenge thrown down by the bureaucrat.'<sup>16</sup>

The active resistance of the peasantry in Punjab also kept being highlighted in the pages of the 'notoriously seditious' *Yugantar* in Bengal which had at that time a wide readership & over which Sri Aurobindo exercised a general control.

We thus come a full circle, the early nationalist movement as initiated by Sri Aurobindo had, apart from turning Punjab into a stronghold of nationalists, also given a successful push to the early agrarian movement in the province — but again this aspect of the analysis is often ignored & Sri Aurobindo's role in initiating it is overlooked. The stamp of failure on the mass action front is summarily & unfairly put on the early nationalist movement. The explanation that these movements did not last long enough nor did they undergo a period of sustained application for them to have an impact have been the easiest & quickest ways of dismissing the utility & relevance of these attempts. A recognition that such early nationalist movements also served to arouse a province, to reignite in a people the ardour & discipline for mass movements, the point that since a province had been exposed to these ideas at an early stage could it much later automatically respond to the calls of mass civil disobedience & non-cooperation movements have all been ignored as if agrarian movements & peasants resistance are the sole monopoly of a particular ideological brand & that the early nationalists were merely a bunch of misguided youth who solely relied on religion & religious symbols to whip up mass hysteria in order to attain nebulous goals & had no idea of the dialectics of class & mass struggles in the Indian context. A careful & unbiased reading of Sri Aurobindo's writings of the *Bande Mataram* period will prove otherwise, had the early nationalist movement's mass mobilization operations — agrarian & labour — carried on for a sustained period they could have provided the much needed mass base considered in some circles to be a pre-requisite for revolutions to achieve fruition. Simply because a Hemchandra Kanungo,<sup>17</sup> totally bitter & disillusioned by his failures & limited in his understanding, blames the entire movement & its leadership for the collapse of the larger attempt at revolution in Bengal, must

for the collapse of the larger attempt at revolution in Bengal, must we accept it as the general assessment of the period or was it because Hemchandra displayed certain distinct ideological traits that his words must be acceded to as 'fascinating' & 'remarkable'. Should we not remember how Jyotindra [Nath Mukherjee], Amarendra [Nath Chatterjee], Upendra [Nath Banerjee], Abinash [Chandra Bhattacharya] & many others continued without murmur, without protest or regret, in their own ways to keep up the spirit of revolution & to uphold the standard of revolutionary nationalism bequeathed to them by their '*Karta*'? It would perhaps be worthwhile in this context to see the exhortation of another of Sri Aurobindo's revolutionary associate who later turned to the materialist philosophy of social evolution & took the 'initiative in forming' the Communist Party of India at Tashkent on October 17 1920 & even later espoused the cause of 'radical humanism'. Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (M.N.Roy-1887-1954) associated with Sri Aurobindo since 1906 called him the 'Supreme Commander of the Revolution'; part of Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee's group, M.N.Roy was active in Bengal till about 1915. Roy concluded a long letter from Moscow dated 12 August 1920 addressed to 'Arabinda Ghose, Pondicherry, French India' with the following appeal : "At last I take the liberty of imploring you to come back to active life, to take in your wise hands the direction of the revolutionary forces of India. The forces that are working in India and all over the world today are beyond the understanding of politicians and pacifists. People with great soul and spiritual vision are needed to lead the humanity to its salvation, - to real freedom & happiness. How I wish you can come here and see the old corrupted society destroyed, not by brute force, but by the dynamic power of a great idea, and a new world built in its place. This is the goal of every revolution. Anything short of it is not worthwhile to shed blood and add more misery to already suffering humanity.' The letter was sent through an emissary who was a representative of the IIIrd International in the East.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that this appeal was made by Roy at the height

of his involvement with Communism, no disillusionment, no trace of bitterness of any kind rather a firm belief that with Sri Aurobindo lay the key to understanding the world forces then at work convulsing men, societies & creeds. This aspect of Roy's stand is never discussed — one of the firmest reiteration of faith in the 'Supreme Commander's' leadership long after he was supposed to have forsaken his soldiers & fled! Whatever may have been the later assessments of Roy as a leader, thinker, nationalist & humanist, it would be useful perhaps to keep this point in mind while discussing Sri Aurobindo's interventions. A decade after his withdrawal to Pondicherry he was still called upon to help understand & control different & momentous forces that were at work trying to create a new society based on new ideals

The other first that Sri Aurobindo initiated, apart from the well-known fact of his being the first one to openly call for complete & unconditional freedom from alien rule, is the introduction of the 'New Thought' in Indian politics. The exposition that he undertook of a philosophy of nationalism & developed it and placed [it] on a scientific foundation through a series of articles written between April 11 & April 23 1907 on 'The New Thought: The Doctrine of Passive Resistance' created the foundation for the future mass movements of civil-disobedience & non-cooperation. The articles were widely read & generated intense discussion — the first time a method of mass struggle was being introduced in the country. Sir Harvey Adamson then Home Member of the Governor General's Council considered the series to be "well worth reading, as a complete exposition of the doctrine of passive resistance, its limitations, and its ultimate methods of reaching the goal 'India for Indians.'" The then Home Secretary to the Government of India H.A.Stuart while inviting the Government's attention to the series found them to be 'a rather remarkable series of articles.'<sup>20</sup> May be the future practitioner of the passive resistance method on a mass scale had read it too amidst his tumultuous political experiments in South Africa &

perhaps therefore wrote to him in 1934 that 'ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face...' It also led his political disciple & heir to assess Sri Aurobindo's contribution to the nationalist movement in the following words, 'he [Sri Aurobindo] shone like a brilliant meteor and created a powerful impression on the youth of India. The great anti-partition movement in Bengal gained much of its philosophy from him and, undoubtedly, prepared the day for the great movements led by Mahatma Gandhi.'<sup>22</sup> The formulation of the Doctrine of Passive Resistance was undoubtedly the Bengal school of politics — the new school's — 'most fruitful and potent contribution to India as a method' to be followed for 'winning liberty'. The Lokmanya perhaps summed up best the new direction given by Bengal in this respect when he acknowledged the province's leadership over the country in introducing the new trend in politics. Addressing a public meeting at the famous College Square in Calcutta on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1907 he described why previous methods of petition & logical persuasion had failed, he said that earlier when protests went 'unheeded' it was the practice to accept the 'settled fact' & that the Government was thus gradually tightening the bureaucratic chain by encircling the people with a series of settled facts but Bengal had 'for the first time, refused to accept the settled fact and insisted on keeping a grievance open till it was redressed. This is what [he proclaimed, must be done] systematically in future... This was what was meant by passive resistance; to make government under the present conditions impossible by a peaceful but firm passive resistance'<sup>23</sup> It was this method that the new school advocated, the new school's chief advocate being Sri Aurobindo.

Another uniqueness in Sri Aurobindo's political action is his definition of the word *Swaraj*, till then rather loosely used & projected in the annual Congress sessions, his formulation has been considered to be the 'clearest exposition... by declaring it [to be] synonymous with independence — 'a free national Government unhampered even in the least degree by foreign

control''<sup>24</sup>. It was only two decades after this exposition that the term 'Complete Independence — *Purna Swaraj*' became enshrined among the foremost demands of the Congress at its session at Lahore in 1929. A reassessment therefore of the whole anti-partition movement of 1905 can be done based on the series that Sri Aurobindo wrote on Passive Resistance & it will definitely go to prove the deep impression it had then created & the influence it wielded on subsequent movements.<sup>25</sup> Sri Aurobindo did not merely evolve a theory far removed from the ground realities of the day, he minutely defined each developing stage of the movement, clearly evolved the concept of self-help so as to render the alien bureaucracy redundant & even delineated future possibilities of the movement when he talked of the no-tax campaign which he felt could be initiated later only after 'a close organisation linking province to province and district to district and a powerful central authority representing the single will of the whole nation' had been created.<sup>26</sup> It was only after the Congress transformed itself into such an organisation was it capable of launching large-scale mass movements that posed serious challenges to the alien bureaucracy.

*Swaraj* having been defined what was needed was a clear formulation of the methods that would make the goal achievable, the series on Passive Resistance did just that, enunciating in clear terms the objectives of the new movement; to highlight the points briefly, the administration of India by aliens was sought to be made impossible: **1.** By an organised and relentless boycott of British goods to render the further exploitation of the country impossible. **2.** By an organised judicial boycott to make the bureaucratic administration impossible. **3.** [By refusing] to send ... boys to Government schools, or schools aided and controlled by Government. **4.** [By refusing] to go to the Executive for help or advice or protection. It is thus quite apparent that the 'New School of politics' laid down the goals of the struggle for *Swaraj* & the methods to be followed which contributed to success forty years



later. It 'will hardly be an exaggeration to say that India till last [up to independence] followed the ideals and methods which marked the genesis of new nationalism represented by the so-called Extremist School of politics', the schools chief ideologue & proponent being Sri Aurobindo.

We leave aside here for the moment Sri Aurobindo's epoch contribution to the concept of armed insurrection as a method for achieving national liberation because of its wide ambit of review & its being a subject by itself. But it suffices here to say that just about five decades after the revolt of 1857 it was he who dared first to visualize again the possibilities of acquiring freedom by the power of arms, this time not in a disjointed, arbitrary or loose manner but through careful preparation — the evolving of a cohesive all India network of revolutionary groups, the arranging for latest military training to be imparted to specially recruited youth, the spreading of disaffection among the rural masses, the inciting of regiments of Indian soldiers in the British Indian army to mutiny & then linking all of these in a general uprising. These were to be some of its aspects that had to be worked out in secrecy over an extended period of time. Sri Aurobindo's plan in this area of the struggle was to establish centres 'in every town and eventually in every village' & to set up societies 'of young men...with various ostensible objects, cultural, intellectual or moral and those already existing were to be won over for revolutionary use. Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement.'<sup>28</sup> That the need for a preparatory period was clear to Sri Aurobindo is evident, among other things, from his review of the '*Bartaman Rananiti*' ('Modern Science of War'), a stimulating book seeking to acquaint the general reader with the 'nature and use of modern weapons, the meaning of military terms, the uses and distribution of the various limbs of a modern army, the broad principles of strategy and tactics, and the nature and principles of

guerilla warfare...' & thus spread these. Speaking of the necessity of such literature especially when 'the heart of the nation [was] rising to higher things' & when '[t]he new born nation [was] eagerly seeking after its development and organisation' Sri Aurobindo pointed out how it would serve to prepare the ground for the future, 'It is perfectly true', he wrote, 'that no practical use can be made of its contents at the moment; but the will and desire of thousands creates its own field and when the spirit of a nation demands any sphere of activity material events are shaped by that demand in ways that at the time seem to be the wild dreams of an unbridled imagination. Our business is to prepare ourselves by all kinds of knowledge and action for the life of a nation, by knowledge and action when both are immediately permitted us, by knowledge alone for action which, though not permitted now, is a necessary part of the future nation's perfect development...' & then the final hint clothed in symbols, 'When the earnest soul prepares itself by what Sadhana is possible to it, however imperfect, God in his own good time prepares the field and the opportunity for perfect Sadhana and complete attainment.'<sup>29</sup> The 'Sadhana' was perhaps a silent preparation & the 'attainment' was perhaps the successful fruition of the 'armed insurrection'.

Whether it succeeded or not is another point, in fact Sri Aurobindo himself is on record having enumerated the reasons that led to the gradual modification of the line & why it was then [in the early 1900s] thought to be feasible,<sup>30</sup> but what concerns us here is his ingenuity, again a first, in thinking along these lines. And it is known what a stiff challenge was thrown to the colonial machinery by Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee & Rash Behari Bose who built up a pan-Indian revolutionary network based on these lines during the first World War & had succeeded in inciting regiments of the army to mutiny & in enlisting the help of foreign powers to assist in the war of Indian liberation.<sup>31</sup> Records discovered later in the Soviet archives gave an insight into some of the plots that the revolutionaries — militant nationalists — had hatched to disrupt

& uproot the colonial administration & showed how serious they were in their endeavours. On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1909 the Russian Consul-General in Calcutta who had been closely monitoring the political situation in India sent a report to St. Petersburg saying that despite the authorities attempts to keep the incident secret 'some details have come to light' & show the existence of a conspiracy 'connected with the liberation movement which had been gaining momentum in India in recent years' & that 'the conspiracy was nipped in the bud.'" It was revealed later — sometime in 1911 — that this conspiracy was planned by the Bengal revolutionaries who had established reliable contacts with the 10<sup>th</sup> Jat Regiment soldiers & had decided to decimate the entire colonial leadership in the winter of 1909 while they were busy attending a Christmas reception at the Bengal Governor's residence. The 10<sup>th</sup> Jat regiment was in charge of the security arrangements at the reception & a number of soldiers had been roped in to facilitate the whole operation. The idea was, as the Consul reported, to 'arouse in the country a general perturbation of minds and thereby afford the revolutionaries an opportunity to take the power in their hands.' A last minute betrayal undid the whole plot & the soldiers were arrested. This shows that the Bengal revolutionaries did not always act in an isolated manner & had to their credit a number of daring operations & the 'fact that this conspiracy originated at a time when the national liberation movement of 1905-1908 was being crushed... is of great historical importance.'<sup>32</sup>

Nor was it only 'purification through blood & fire' Sri Aurobindo also paid adequate attention to moulding the intellect of the youth & the masses, his nationalist organs *Yugantar* & *Bande Mataram* were launched with that aim in mind. One [*Yugantar*] was to openly appeal for the overthrow of British rule, if necessary by violent means, in fact at a stage its circulation went up to a whopping fifty thousand reflecting its popularity, & the other [*Bande Mataram*] was to set before the nation a clear path &

method to be followed to achieve liberation. He also inspired the writing of books that were to create a great stir among the masses & became indispensable reading material for those wanting to work for freedom. Sri Aurobindo requested the 'illustrious Maratha patriot & writer Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar' (1869-1912) then assistant editor of the Bengali newspaper *Hitavadi* & a master of Bengali to 'write a book on India's economic servitude and her exploitation by England. He responded and the result was the famous *Deshar Katha*, based on a vivid presentation of unchallengeable facts and figures.' The government honoured it with a prompt ban but it kept being read & had 'an enormous influence on the young men of Bengal and helped to turn them into revolutionaries.'

Thus we see the tremendous range of Sri Aurobindo's political action & in his political thought we perceive one of the clearest formulations of the path that the country could follow to achieve liberty. He presented a unique blend of the passive resistance as well as the revolution — the 'twin methods of non-violence [minus the dogmatic credal adherence to it because he saw it only as an expedient method to be put in practice when needed] & violence [again to be initiated when the situation so demanded, he considered this to be the 'third course open to an oppressed nation'. The method for attaining liberation to be adopted by a subject nation he felt was 'best determined by the circumstances of its servitude']<sup>34</sup> He did not simply give a theory but chalked out a whole path for the march of freedom to take, it has been rightly asserted that 'of all the statesman Modern India has produced, he [Sri Aurobindo] had the clearest vision of Indian *Swaraj* in its fullness as well as the practical means to attain it by strenuous & sustained struggle. In the political arena he exhibited two distinct but inwardly allied personalities, those of a passive resister & a revolutionary, and in both the capacities he cast a mighty influence over the future course of India's Freedom Movement which had its culmination in the transfer of power in

August 1947.'

A brief survey therefore of Sri Aurobindo's interventions in national politics during the pre-Pondicherry days shows that he was indeed a pioneer in every aspect that he introduced into the freedom movement; it also shows - & this is always a crucial aspect in political action & one which is sadly lacking in the contemporary scenario — that he retained at every step while formulating a certain political strategy the larger picture in mind & its future ramifications on the movement in particular & the country in general. This aspect is also seen in his later interventions made from Pondicherry to which the scholar in question has alluded & even there we see, at least we do, clear formulations, clear analysis & clear statements always with the larger picture in mind. We shall try & see in subsequent issues how those interventions were indeed opportunities given to India to try & preserve her unity, integrity & identity & to emerge on the world scene as a formidable entity conscious of her unique mission.

9.10.2008

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*...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.*

Sri Aurobindo

## Notes & References

1. Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, p:316, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973.
2. Sugata Bose, *The Spirit & Form of An Ethical Polity: A Meditation on Aurobindo's Thought*, p: 13, MCHV, IIM Calcutta, Kolkata 2005.
3. Sri Aurobindo, *Autobiographical Notes & Other Writings of Historical Interest*, pp: 255-56, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry, 2006. The letter was written to Joseph Baptista (1864-1930) well known barrister & nationalist collaborator of Lokmanya Tilak. Baptista stood as Tilak's counsel in the famous Sedition Case brought against the latter & assisted him henceforth in his nationalist activities. In 1915 when Tilak began organizing provincial conferences after his release from prison, the first such conference was held at Pune & was presided over by Baptista. He became the first president of the Home Rule League & was instrumental in mobilising political opinion in England in favour of it. Baptista organised the first All-India Postal strike in 1917. A pioneering labour leader he founded along with Lala Lajpat Rai in 1919 the All India Labour Conference & became its president in 1923. In 1924 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council & in 1926 to the Central Legislative Assembly from the Pune General Constituency reflecting his popularity among all sections of the masses. In 1926 he was elected the Mayor of Bombay. (Source: *Dictionary of National Biography Vol: I ed. S.P.Sen Calcutta, 1972*). This letter was written in connection with moves initiated by Tilak's nationalist followers to start a new party & bring out a daily newspaper as its organ. Baptista had written to Sri Aurobindo requesting him to assume editorship of the paper. It is interesting to note how a decade after his retirement Sri Aurobindo was called upon again to give a new direction to the national movement, this goes to disprove another argument that the nationalist movement he initiated did not have a pan-Indian effect & was limited only to the province of Bengal.
4. R.C.Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol.-III*: pp: 36, 42, Calcutta 1996.
5. Mahatma Gandhi's assertion when asked by reporters covering the event to give his assessment of the Amritsar session. Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru & After* p: 71, New Delhi, 1969.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Autobiographical Notes & Other Writings of Historical Interest*, p-256, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2006.
7. K.M.Munshi (1887-1971) while member of the Constitution Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly was in touch with Sri Aurobindo for guidance as was Surendra Mohan Ghose (1893-1976) disciple, member of the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly, member of the Jugantar Party, President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, & Member of Parliament, whom Sri Aurobindo called 'my man' in politics. It may be also mentioned that Dr. S.P.Mookerjee (1901-1953) who sought Sri Aurobindo's guidance from time to time through S.M.Ghose was also a member of the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee, Union Powers Committee, & Union Constitution Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Mookerjee was also a member of the Interim Cabinet in charge of Supplies & Industries & was to later become Chairman of the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention held at Pondicherry in April 1951.
8. K.D.Sethna, Foreword in *India & The World Scene*, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, 1997.
9. Sri Aurobindo, *Autobiographical Notes & Other Writings of Historical Interest*, p: 67, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2006.
10. Sri Aurobindo, *On Nationalism-Selected Writings & Speeches*, p: 21, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1996.
11. *Ibid*, p: 49.
12. Arun Chandra Guha, *Aurobindo & Jugantar*, p: 16, Calcutta. [date not stated]
13. Prithwindranath Mukherjee, *Sadhak Biplabi Jatindranath [Beng]* p: 66, West Bengal Govt. Book Board, 1990, Calcutta & Amalendu De, *Sri Aurobindo's Role in Indian Freedom Struggle*, p: 8, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 2003.
14. Uma Mukherjee, *Two Great Indian Revolutionaries*, pp: 114-115, reprint Kolkata, 2004. Prithwindranath Mukherjee op.cit. pp: 292-93
15. Ed. Amitabha Mukherjee, *Militant Nationalism in India 1876-1947*, pp: 109-110-111, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1995.
16. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA) Vol: 6* pp: 337-338, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry, 2002. Proponents of writing 'history from below' ought to look at this aspect of the early nationalist movement in an unbiased light.
17. Hem Chandra Das Kanungo's (1871-1950) Bengali work 'Banglay Biplab Prachestha' (1928), contains peculiar accusatory observations & portrays a deficiency in understanding Indian conditions & mindsets. Prof. Sumit Sarkar in his seminal 'Modern India' calls Hem Chandra 'probably the most remarkable figure among the first generation of revolutionaries' & bases a part of his assessment of the early revolutionaries on Hem's account of them & that period. Sarkar & many others overlook the contributions & spirit of other revolutionaries such as Ullaskar Dutt (1885-1965) who had learnt on his own the manufacture of explosives, was equally dexterous & bold but never rueful in spite of undergoing extreme hardship, they ignore the role of P.M.Bapat (1880-1967) who also went over to Paris & together with Hem Chandra learnt the technique of explosive making. Though Bapat did not meet Sri Aurobindo personally he met Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880-1959) & had links with the Maniktolla group. Bapat too underwent severe deprivations & hardships between 1908 when the Maniktolla group was busted & 1913, years he spent underground. Later Bapat was to reorganize his life, continue being part of the freedom struggle & was conferred the honorific of 'Senapati'-'General' because of his exemplary leadership role. A littérateur in his own right Bapat translated the *Life Divine* in Marathi, visited the Ashram in February 1960 had The Mother's Darshan & presented Her the first volume of his translation of the *Magnum Opus*, he maintained

Her the first volume of his translation of the Magnum Opus, he maintained in a sense a 'mystic liaison' throughout his life with The Master. A unique example of how an early revolutionary continued to be part of the movement without regret or rancour. Therefore too much must not be read & construed in Hem Chandra's assertions or Barindra Kumar Ghose's sometimes contradictory reflections of the early period. What concerns us & must matter to readers in general are this period's lasting contributions in terms of ideas, doctrines, inspiring workers & heroism, it is these aspects of inspirational history that finally outlast all dry pedantic dissections of the past.

18. **Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee** [Bagha-Tiger-Jyotin] (1879-1915) one of the foremost revolutionaries of the early phase who succeeded in organising a near pan-Indian revolutionary network. Was in touch with Sri Aurobindo since 1903 & after the arrest of the first batch of revolutionaries in connection with the Muraripukur Garden House raid, it was he who reorganized the whole revolutionary network on more solid foundations. Martyred while resisting an attack by the colonial police in September 1915 at Balasore, Orissa he had the unique privilege of being called by Sri Aurobindo as his 'right-hand man'. **Amarendra Nath Chatterjee** (1880-1957) an important revolutionary from Uttarpara, Hooghly district of West Bengal was also a close associate of Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee, met Sri Aurobindo in 1907 & was inspired into revolutionary action. A master at collecting funds for revolutionary work, Amarendra started a number of commercial ventures to support revolutionary operations. While Motilal Roy of Chandernagore arranged for Sri Aurobindo to be escorted from Chandernagore to Ariadaha-Agarpara then in the outskirts of Calcutta, Amarendra escorted Sri Aurobindo from there to Calcutta where with the help of others he managed to have Sri Aurobindo board the S.S. Dupleix which left for Pondicherry on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1910. While a Member of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi between 1937 & 1945 Amarendra had written to Sri Aurobindo requesting him to play a more active role during the Cripps Mission of 1942. Sri Aurobindo had sent him two telegrams in response, one of which read — 'My Blessings on your effort to serve & defend Motherland now in danger.' **Upendra Nath Banerjee** (1879-1950) one of the early revolutionaries, close associate of Barin Ghose in the Yugantar venture where he was one of the chief writers, Upen joined the Bande Mataram in 1906 as a sub-editor. Given the position of 'leader & teacher' he was in charge of imparting religious & moral instruction to the boys at the Muraripukur Garden House. Arrested there in 1908 he was sentenced to transportation for life to the Andamans along with Barin, Ullaskar & others & was not released until January 1920. His book on the tales of exiled life is a classic in Bengali literature. Was rearrested in 1923 & after release joined C.R.Das's Swarajya Party, in 1945 became editor of the Dainik Basumati, joined the Hindu Mahasabha to resist partition, and became Chairman of the All India Hindu Mahasabha in its Calcutta Session in December 1949. Sri Aurobindo once observed that Upendra along with Debavrata Bose, another revolutionary co-worker were 'masters of Bengali

- prose.' **Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya** (1882-1962) one of Sri Aurobindo's principle co-workers in the nationalist movement was Barin's first recruit in Bengal. Abinash joined the Yugantar as its manager & had close personal contact with Sri Aurobindo & lived with him between 1906-08 looking after his household & office. Author of two books which stirred the imagination of youth Mukti Kon Pathe (Which Way Liberation) & Bartaman Rananiti (Modern Warfare), Sri Aurobindo considered the latter to be a 'new departure in Bengali literature and one which show[d] the new trend of the national mind,' Abinash was arrested along with Sri Aurobindo from 48, Grey Street in the early hours of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1908. He was imprisoned in the Andamans till 1912 & then served in prisons on the mainland. Released in 1915 he joined C.R.Das's Swarajya Party in 1920 & edited his paper Narayana. Abinash met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry around 1924 & discussed with him the effects of adopting separate electorates. Sri Aurobindo warned him that separate electorates would pave the way for partitioning the country.
19. Prof. Amalendu De makes this rather interesting point in his editorial note in the monograph-Sri Aurobindo & The Mother on Indian Independence & on War & Peace, Sri Aurobindo Samiti, Calcutta 1999. He quotes from the Indo-Russian Relations 1917-1947 Select Documents from the Archives of the Russian Federation edited by Purabi Roy, Sobhanlal Datta Gupta & Hari Vasudevan, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, to support his view.
20. Haridas & Uma Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo & The New Thought in Indian Politics, Introduction, p: xviii, 2nd ed. Calcutta, 1997.
21. Mahatma Gandhi's letter to Sri Aurobindo dated 2 January 1934, Autobiographical Notes & Other Writings of Historical Interests, p: 442, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2006.
22. Pandit Nehru's foreword in Karan Singh's, Prophet of Indian Nationalism, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 3<sup>rd</sup> imp. 1991.
23. Haridas & Uma Mukherjee, op.cit. p: xxxi.
24. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo- A biography & a history, p: 228, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Pondicherry, 2006. Prof. Iyengar quotes Daniel Argov's position formulated in his Moderates & Extremists in the Indian National Movement (1883-1930) 1967.
25. Prof. Amalendu De calls for a re-look at the anti-partition movement in Bengal based on a close analysis of the writings of Sri Aurobindo during the years that followed the event & of his Passive Resistance series in particular, see his monograph on the Anti-Partition Movement in Bengal- An Analytical Study [Beng] Kolkata, 2005.
26. Sri Aurobindo, Doctrine of Passive Resistance, On Nationalism-Selected Writings & Speeches, p: 143, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1996.
27. R.C.Majumdar, The Genesis of Extremism, pp: 170-71, Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised ed. 2002, Kolkata.
28. S.K.Mitra, The Liberator, p: 54, Jaico, 1954.
29. Sri Aurobindo, Bande Mataram, October 7, 1907, Bande Mataram, pp: 563-64, 5<sup>th</sup> imp. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry, 1997.
30. Discussing the three sides of his 'political ideas & activities' Sri Aurobindo

pointed out that at that time in the early years of the last century when he started his political action, 'the military organisation of the great empires and their means of military action were not so overwhelming and apparently irresistible as they now are : the rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not yet been developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became. India was disarmed, but Sri Aurobindo thought that with proper organisation and help from outside this difficulty might be overcome and in so vast a country as India and with the smallness of the regular British armies, even a guerilla warfare accompanied by general resistance and revolt might be effective. There was also the possibility of a general revolt in the Indian army...' A close study of the 'temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their instincts' had convinced Sri Aurobindo that although they [the British] would 'resist any attempt at self-liberation by the Indian people and would at the most only concede very slowly such reforms as would not weaken their imperial control, still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamant to the end: if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistence they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands.' [Sri Aurobindo, On Himself pp: 21-22, 5<sup>th</sup> imp. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1989]

31. For a detailed study of this phase see Prithwindranath Mukherjee's *Sadhak Biplabi Jatindranath* [Beng] Calcutta, 1990 & Uma Mukherjee's *Two Great Indian Revolutionaries*, reprint Kolkata, 2004 both these pioneering researchers on the early Indian revolutionaries trace the concept of armed insurrection, mutiny & the revolutionary network to Sri Aurobindo's formulation of the methods to be followed for national liberation.
32. R.C.Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India Vol.II* pp: 281-82, Reprint 1997, Calcutta.
33. S.K.Mitra, *op.cit.* pp: 61-62.
34. Sri Aurobindo, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, On Nationalism-Selected Writings & Speeches*, pp: 134-135, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1996.
35. Haridas Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita & the Bengal Revolutionaries*, Dr. S.P. Sen Memorial Lecture, appendix-II in *Sri Aurobindo & The New Thought in Indian Politics*, p:356, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Calcutta 1997.

\*

*Inspiration...*



Bipin Chandra Pal

Now that Bipin Chandra is coming out of prison, we look to his triumphant oratory, the Pythian inspiration of his matchless eloquence to reawaken the spirit of lofty idealism, of unflinching devotion to principle which it was his mission to confirm if not awaken, ...The voice of the prophet will once more be free to speak to our hearts, the voice through which God has more than once spoken. We shall remember once more that the movement is a spiritual movement for prophets, martyrs and heroes to inspire, help and lead, not for diplomats and pinchbeck Machiavels;... Bipin Chandra stands before India as the exponent of the spiritual force of the movement, its pure “Indianity”, its high devotion to principle; this has been the kernel of his teaching, the secret of the almost miraculous force which often breathed from his eloquence. To give this message was the work particularly chosen for him. We need that message to be repeated in yet mightier language and with more convincing logic; the voice has been too long silent, the word of inspiration wanting. We welcome back today not Bipin Chandra

Pal, but the speaker of a God-given message; not the man but the voice of the Gospel of Nationalism. He comes to us purified by an act of self-immolation, with a soul deepened by long hours of solitude and self-communion to repeat the word of hope and inspiration, to call us once more to the task of national self-realisation. Welcome to him and thrice welcome.

### **Sri Aurobindo**

*(The above excerpt is from a leader titled 'Welcome to the Prophet of Nationalism' that appeared in the Bande Mataram issue of 10<sup>th</sup> March 1908. Bepin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) was sentenced to six months imprisonment in September 1907 for refusing to testify in the Bande Mataram Sedition Case against Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo was part of the committee of nationalist leaders formed to celebrate nationwide Bepin Chandra's release. We remember Bepin Chandra Pal on his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2008.)*

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## Some Activities at Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture

Sri Aurobindo's Birth Anniversary was celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> August. The children of The Future Foundation School saluted the Relics with a march past & performed a drill with music. Meditation at 10.00 a.m. was followed by an offering of songs by Shri Devajit Bandyopadhyay & Smt. Riddhi Bandyopadhyay. Senior artist Shri Amit Sarkar lit the inaugural lamp for the exhibition 'Freedom' at the Institute art gallery.

The Institute's founder Chairman Shri Pradyot Kumar Bhattacharya's birth anniversary was celebrated on 31<sup>st</sup> August as Founder's Day & the Institute held its 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting where the Secretary presented the activity report.

Smt Arundhati Roychowdhury passed away in the month of September. We gratefully remember her active contribution of over two decades towards enriching the cultural activities of the Institute.

On September 28<sup>th</sup> Mahalaya was observed at the Institute with a meditation. The exhibition 'Durga' was inaugurated on the occasion by Smt. Reba Som, Director of the Rabindranath Tagore Centre of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (I.C.C.R.) at Kolkata. The Dilip Kumar Roy Resource Centre at the Institute organized a series of programmes on 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> September. The film *Meerabai* with the legendary exponent & 'queen of music' M.S.Subbulakshmi in the lead role was screened for students. Shri Dilip Kumar Roy had composed the music for the film. Shri Shankar Bandyopadhyay, Secretary, Hari Krishna Mandir Trust, Pune gave an introduction to the film. On the 30<sup>th</sup> a lecture-demonstration was organized on 'Diverse Aspects of Dilip Kumar Roy's Music'. Noted essayist, scholar & researcher Dr. Sudhir Chakraborty conducted the session. Smt. Swastika Mukhopadhyay rendered some of the timeless songs of Dilip

Kumar Roy. The Secretary & Principle spoke of the necessity & importance of such programmes.

Mahashtami, Vijaya Dashami & Lakshmi Puja were observed with meditations at the Institute.

The Future Foundation School held an 'Athletic Camp' from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October. The children were given an intense training in various aspects of athletics - such as starts, sprints, jumps etc. It must be observed that physical education occupies an important place in the scheme of Integral Education as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo & The Mother.

The Golden Chain, the alumni journal of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry in its August 2008 featured The Future Foundation School as part of its series on sister schools.

Atul Prasad Sen's birth anniversary was observed at the Institute on 20<sup>th</sup> October through a programme of his songs. Smt. Swastika Mukhopadhyay conducted the programme & a number of young artists participated.

Kali Puja was observed with meditation on 28<sup>th</sup> October.





SRI AUROBINDO  
Baroda circa 1893