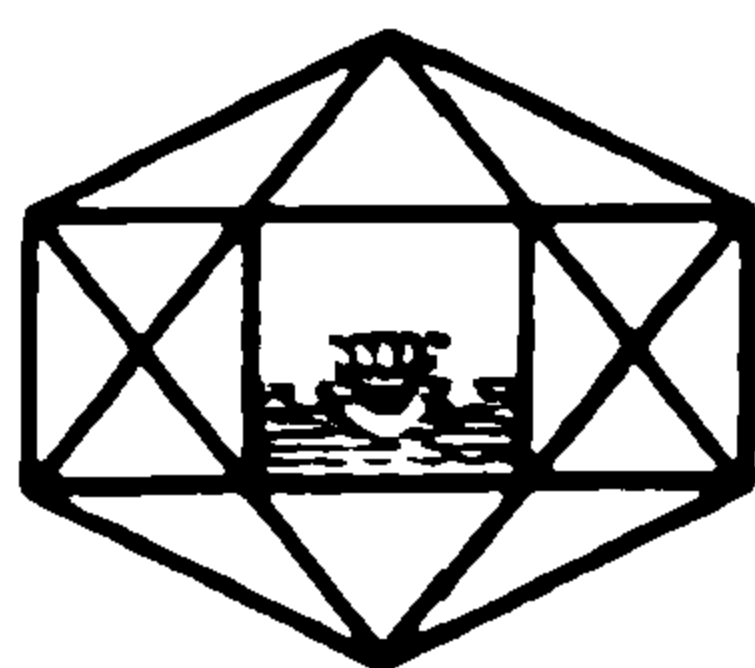


A Journey from Politics to Yoga

*From the early political writings of
Sri Aurobindo*

Compiled by
G. P. Gupta



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Preface

This book is a compilation from the writings and the editorials which Sri Aurobindo had written in the *Bandemataram* and the *Karmayogin* when he was at the summit of active politics between 1906 and 1910. His writings were considered by the British rulers in those days as 'most dangerous' but for the people of India these were revelations packed with patriotism and inspiration to attain *swaraj* for the country. They reveal how even politics can and has to be reoriented and imbued with spirituality.

Though written several decades ago, at a particular time in Indian history, they present thoughts which are still very relevant and provide guidelines to present-day politicians and statesmen. Many of these articles appeared as unsigned editorials due to the circumstances prevailing at that time. Hence at some places Sri Aurobindo speaks about himself in the third person.

We hope that this compilation will help in reforming our political system on the lines of Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision. The editorial comments and introductory sentences have been put in *italics*.

G.P. Gupta

Introduction

‘Politics is the last refuge of a scoundrel.’

- Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Does this mean that politics has no morals, no ethics, no love and no scruples? Sri Aurobindo, a staunch revolutionary of his time, observes at one place:

... I have done politics and the most violent kind of revolutionary politics, *ghoram karma*, and I have supported war and sent men to it, even though politics is not always or often a very clean occupation nor can war be called a spiritual line of action. But Krishna calls upon Arjuna to carry on war of the most terrible kind and by his example encourage men to do every kind of human work, *sarvakarmāṇi*. Do you contend that Krishna was an unspiritual man and that his advice to Arjuna was mistaken or wrong in principle?.... All depends on the spirit in which a thing is done, the principles on which it is built and the use to which it is turned....

India today is faced with a war of nerves in politics and personalities, a clash of reactions and repartees and aspersions and a regression of ideas, thoughts and values. The immaturity of politicians is eminently visible in their behaviour all over the country. It is worthwhile, therefore, to reproduce these words of Sri Aurobindo, written in the beginning of the 20th century, and yet, how appropriate and instructive are these at the beginning of the 21st century.

A Seer's Dream of Mother India

And so, in the fullness of time, the great Friday dawned – Friday, 15th August, 1947, the day of India's Independence and Sri Aurobindo's seventy-fifth birthday as well. In his Message for the day, Sri Aurobindo dwelt on the significance of the double event and the possibilities for the future –

I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition.

Revealing his convictions in one of his letters to his wife Mrinalini, Sri Aurobindo declared his relationship with the country of his birth, India, thus –

...whereas others regard the country as an inert piece of matter and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, and mountains and the rivers, I know my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her accordingly... I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; not a physical strength, I am not going to fight with a sword or a gun, but with the power of knowledge... not by *kshatratej*, but by virtue of *brahmatej*.

Sequel to the division of India, Sri Aurobindo had warned that –

India... [has won] only a fissured and broken freedom.... It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted

as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated.

Since this prophetic declaration was made we have witnessed the fulfilment to the letter of the many fears then expressed. One of his distinguished pupils, KM. Munshi, has recorded how Sri Aurobindo once pointed to a wall map of India and called it the portrait of Bharat Mata, Mother India.

The geography was the body of the Mother: the people were the cells that made the living tissues: the languages and literatures were the Mother's memory and speech: the spirit of the nation's culture was Her living soul: and the nation's freedom and happiness Her only salvation!

Salvation, according to Sri Aurobindo, could come to India not through dialectical skill and intellectual subtlety but through renewed faith and stern spiritual discipline; not by a brazen mimicry of western models and western mores but rather by recapturing, amplifying and reliving the eternal truths of the Veda, the Upanishad and the Gita. The traditions of the past are very great in their own place in the past. But there is no reason why we should go on repeating the past. In the evolution of spiritual consciousness upon earth, a great past ought to be followed by a greater future. Al-

though born and brought-up in English culture, Sri Aurobindo was proud of India and proud of Asia, and from the beginning he had cultivated a global outlook, and his concern ultimately was with the future health of the human race itself. His dispassionate global view helped us to appreciate the admirable traits in other nations and peoples – England's practical intelligence, France's clear logical brain, Germany's speculative genius, Russia's emotional force, America's commercial energy – but he also thought that the West's mastery of the art of material life was certainly not enough. Asia's awakening was necessary to restore the balance. Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. And out of the nations of Asia, India was a land apart and unique. India was a hermitage of thought and peace – Her thoughts flashed out over Asia and created civilisations, her sons were the bearers of light to the peoples; philosophies based themselves on stray fragments of her infinite wisdom; sciences arose from the waste of her intellectual production.

In fulfilment of aims and ideals cherished by Sri Aurobindo as early as in August 1947 he promised a solemn hope for India and for the mankind. Said Sri Aurobindo –

... Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated:... [The] unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably in-

crease and conquer... the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun.... The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness... Here too ... the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement will be hers.

Such is the content which Sri Aurobindo put into this date of India's liberation. Whether and how far this hope will be justified depends upon free India.

India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples. And that which must seek now to awake is not an anglicised oriental people, docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti recovering her deepest self, lifting her head higher towards the supreme source of light and strength and turning to discover the complete meaning and a vaster form of her Dharma.

Sri Aurobindo

Politics and Politicians

And so all along the line. An ordinary man may be illogical and silly and everybody realises that he is illogical and silly; but the literary man when he goes about the same business will be brilliantly foolish and convincingly illogical, while the philosopher will be logically illogical and talk nonsense according to the strictest rules of philosophical reasoning. An ordinary man may turn his back on his principles and he will be called a turncoat or he may break all the commandments and he will be punished by the law and society, – unless of course he is an American millionaire or a member of the ruling race in India; – but the literary philosopher will reconcile his principles with his conduct by an appeal to a fur-coat or a syllogism from a pair of jackboots; he will abrogate all the commandments on the strength of a Solar Topee. A politician again will lie and people will take it as a matter of course, especially if he is in office, but a literary philosopher-politician will easily prove to you that when he is most a liar, then he is most truthful and when he is juggling most cynically with truth and principle, then he most deserves the name of Honest John; and he will do it in such well-turned periods that one must indeed have a very bad ear for the rhythm of a sentence before one can quarrel with its logic. Oh yes, a literary philosopher-politician is the choicest work of God, – when he is not the most effective instrument in the hands of the Prince of Darkness. For the Prince of Darkness is not only a gentleman as Shakespeare discovered, but a gentleman of artistic perceptions who knows a fine and carefully-worked tool when he sees it and loves to handle it with the best dexterity and grace of which he is capable....

Man has been defined sometimes as a political animal and sometimes as a reasoning animal, but he has become still more pre-eminently a literary animal. He is a political animal who has always made a triumphant mess of politics, a reasoning animal whose continual occupation it is to make a system out of his blunders, a literary animal who is always the slave of a phrase and not the least so when the phrase means nothing. The power of the phrase on humanity has never been sufficiently considered. The phrase is in the nostrils of the vast unruly mass of mankind like the ring in the nose of a camel. It can be led by the phrase-maker wherever he wishes to lead it. And the only distinction between the sage and the sophist is that the phrases of the sage mean something while the phrases of the sophist only seem to mean something.

*

We must remember that we are a nation not yet trained in the vaster movements of modern politics. Not only our rank and file, but our captains and our strategists need the training of events, the wisdom of experience to make them perfect. Fire, impetuosity, self-sacrifice, intellectual vigour, subtlety, wealth of idea, fertility of resource to meet unexpected happenings, these have been given to us in abundance. But the perfect experience of the veteran in great battles, the acute political intelligence which comes of long familiarity with the handling of high affairs and national destinies, these are yet in us immature and in a state of pupillage. But God Himself is our master and teacher, for He would give to His chosen nation a faultless training and a perfect capacity. Only we must be ready to acknowledge our mistakes, to change our path, to learn. Then only shall we victori-

ously surmount all obstacles and move steadily, impetuously, but without stumbling or swerving, to our goal.

Moreover, we have weaknesses that are still rampant and uncorrected in our midst. It is our first duty to purge these out of our hearts with a merciless surgery. If the intellectual equipment is deficient, the spiritual equipment is also far from perfect. Our leaders and our followers both require a deeper Sadhana, a more direct communion with the Divine Guru and Captain of our movement, an inward uplifting, a grander and more impetuous force behind thought and deed. It has been driven home to us by experience after experience that not in the strength of a raw unmoralised European enthusiasm shall we conquer. Indians! It is the spirituality of India, the Sadhana of India, *tapasyā*, *jñānam*, *śakti* that must make us free and great. And these great things of the East are ill-rendered by their inferior English equivalents, discipline, philosophy, strength. *Tapasyā* is more than discipline; it is the materialisation in ourselves by spiritual means of the divine energy creative, preservative and destructive. *Jñānam* is more than philosophy, it is the inspired and direct knowledge which comes of what our ancients called *dṛṣṭi*, spiritual sight. *Śakti* is more than strength, it is the universal energy which moves the stars, made individual. It is the East that must conquer in India's uprising. It is the Yogin who must stand behind the political leader or manifest within him; Ramadas must be born in one body with Shivaji, Mazzini mingle with Cavour. The divorce of intellect and spirit, strength and purity may help a European revolution, but by a European strength we shall not conquer.

The movements of the last century failed because they were too purely intellectual and had not an enlightened heart behind them. Nationalism has striven to supply the deficiency; it has poured the inspirations of the heart into a swifter and more discerning intellectual activity. But Nationalism also has been defective; it has been Indian in sentiment and aspiration, European in practice and actuality. It has helped itself with the intellect, rejoicing in its own lightness, clearness, accuracy, shrewd insight, but it has not been sufficiently supported by inspired wisdom. It has attached itself to imaginations and idealisms, but has not learned to discern the deeper Truth and study the will of God. It has been driven by ardent and vehement emotions, but was defective in clear will-power and the pure energy that is greater and more impetuous than any passionate feeling. Either Nationalism will purify itself, learn a more sacred truth and command a diviner impulse, or it will have to abandon utterly its old body and get itself a new. The pressure of events seems to be pointing in the later direction. But in either case, defeat cannot be the end, victory must be the end.

*

Nothing of the kind can be asserted of the modern politician in any part of the world; he does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations. What he does usually represent is all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental incompetence and moral conventionality, timidity and pretence. Great issues often come to him for decision, but he does not deal with them greatly; high words and noble ideas are on his lips, but they become rapidly the claptrap of a

party. The disease and falsehood of modern political life is patent in every country of the world and only the hypnotised acquiescence of all, even of the intellectual classes, in the great organised sham, cloaks and prolongs the malady, the acquiescence that men yield to everything that is habitual and makes the present atmosphere of their lives. Yet it is by such minds that the good of all has to be decided, to such hands that it has to be entrusted, to such an agency calling itself the State that the individual is being more and more called upon to give up the government of his activities.

The nature of man and of things is at present a discord, a harmony that has got out of tune. The whole heart and action and mind of man must be changed but from within and not from without, not by political and social institutions, not even by creeds and philosophies, but by realisation of God in ourselves and the world and a remoulding of life by that realisation.

Sri Aurobindo

Politics is not Exclusive

This is the difference between a man and an institution; a great man who has done great things for his country, demands from us our reverence, and however he may fall short in his after-life, a great and high-hearted nation – and no nation was ever justly called great that was not high-hearted – will not lay rude hands on him to dethrone him from his place in their hearts. But an institution is a very different thing. It was made for the use and not at all for the worship of man, and it can only lay claim to respect so long as its beneficent action remains not a memory of the past, but a thing of the present. We cannot afford to raise any institution to the rank of a fetish. To do so would be simply to become the slaves of our own machinery. However I will at once admit that if an institution has really done miracles for us – and miracles which are not mere conjuring tricks, but of a deep and solemn import to the nation, – and if it is still doing and likely yet to do miracles for us, then without doubt it may lay claim to a certain immunity from criticism.

*

Life creates institutions; institutions do not create, but express and preserve life. This is a truth we are too apt to forget. The Europeans and especially our Gurus, the English, attach an exaggerated importance to machinery, because their own machinery has been so successful, their organisation so strong and triumphant. In the conceit of this success they imagine that their machinery is the only machinery and that the adoption of their organisation by foreign peoples is all that is needed for perfect social and

political felicity. In Europe this blind attachment to machinery does not do fatal harm, because the life of a free nation has developed the existing institutions and modifies them by its own irresistible law of life and development. But to take over those institutions and think that they will magically develop European virtues, force and robustness, or the vivid and vigorous life of Europe, is as if a man were to steal another's coat and think to take over with it his character. Have not indeed many of us thought by masquerading in the amazing garb which nineteenth century Europe developed, to become so many brown Englishmen? This curious conjuring trick did not work; hatted, coated and pantalooned, we still kept the Chaddar and the Dhoty in our characters. The fond attempt to become great, enlightened and civilised by borrowing European institutions will be an equally disastrous failure.

*

...if India is to arise and be great as a nation, it is not by imitating the methods and institutions of English politics and commerce, but by carrying her own civilisation, purified of the weaknesses that have overtaken it, to a much higher and mightier fulfilment than any that it has reached in the past. Our mission is to outdistance, lead and instruct Europe, not merely to imitate and learn from her....

...an exclusive preoccupation with politics and economics is likely to dwarf our growth and prevent the flowering of originality and energy. We have to return to the fountainheads of our ancient religion, philosophy, art and literature and pour the revivifying influences of our immemorial Aryan spirit and ideals into our political and economic development.

The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which the young Nationalism has always insisted. The practical destruction of our artistic perceptions and the plastic skill and fineness of eye and hand which once gave our productions pre-eminence, distinction and mastery of the European markets, is also a thing accomplished. Most vital of all, the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which we ought to devote ourselves. And as the loss of originality, aspiration and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective. The primary aim of the prophets of Nationalism was to rid the nation of the idea that the future was limited by the circumstances of the present, that because temporary causes had brought us low and made us weak, low therefore must be our aims and weak our methods. They pointed the mind of the people to a great and splendid destiny, not in some distant millennium but in the comparatively near future, and fired the hearts of the young men with a burning desire to realise the apocalyptic vision. As a justification of what might otherwise have seemed a dream and as an inexhaustible source of energy and inspiration, they pointed persistently to the great achievements and grandiose civilisation of our forefathers and called on the rising generation to recover their lost spiritual and intellectual heritage. It cannot be denied that this double effort to realise the past and the future has been the

distinguishing temperament and the chief uplifting force in the movement, and it cannot be denied that it is bringing back to our young men originality, aspiration and energy....

The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content....

We have to learn and use the democratic principle and methods of Europe, in order that hereafter we may build up something more suited to our past and to the future of humanity. We have to throw away the individualism and materialism and keep the democracy. We have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising its impulses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. In order that we may fulfil our mission we must be masters in our own home. It is out of no hostility to the English people, no race hatred that we seek absolute autonomy, but because it is the first condition of our devel-

oping our national self and realising our destiny. It is for this reason that the engrossing political preoccupation came upon us; and we cannot give up or tone down our political movement until the lesson of democratic self-government is learned and the first condition of national self-fulfilment realised....

We cannot arrest our development of industry and commerce while waiting for a new commercial system to develop or for beauty and art to reconquer the world. As in politics so in commerce, we must learn and master the European methods in order that we may eventually rise above them. The crude commercial Swadeshi, which Dr. Coomaraswamy finds so distasteful and disappointing, is as integral a part of the national awakening as the movement towards Swaraj or as the new School of Art. If this crude Swadeshi were to collapse and the national movement towards autonomy come to nothing, the artistic renaissance he has praised so highly, would wither and sink with the drying up of the soil in which it was planted. A nation need not be luxuriously wealthy in order to be profoundly artistic, but it must have a certain amount of well-being, a national culture and, above all, hope and ardour, if it is to maintain a national art based on a widespread development of artistic perception and faculty. Moreover, aesthetic arts and crafts cannot live against the onrush of cheap and vulgar manufactures under the conditions of the modern social structure. Industry can only become again beautiful if poverty and the struggle for life are eliminated from society and the co-operative State and commune organised as the fruit of a great moral and spiritual uplifting of humanity. We hold such an uplifting and reorganisation as part of India's mission. But

to do her work she must live. Therefore the commercial preoccupation has been added to the political. We perceive the salvation of the country not in parting with either of these, but in adding to them a religious and moral preoccupation. On the basis of that religious and moral awakening the preoccupation of art and fine culture will be added and firmly based. There are many who perceive the necessity of the religious and moral regeneration, who are inclined to turn from the prosaic details of politics and commerce and regret that any guide and teacher of the nation should stoop to mingle in them. That is a grievous error. The men who would lead India must be catholic and many-sided. When the *Avatar* comes, we like to believe that he will be not only the religious guide, but the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of co-operative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist. He will be in short the summary and grand type of the future Indian nation which is rising to reshape and lead the world.

Most vital of all, the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great.

Sri Aurobindo

The Ideals of Politics

All political ideals must have relation to the temperament and past history of the race. The genius of India is separate from that of any other race in the world, and perhaps there is no race in the world whose temperament, culture and ideals are so foreign to her own as those of the practical, hard-headed, Pharisaic, shopkeeping Anglo-Saxon. The culture of the Anglo-Saxon is the very antipodes of Indian culture. The temper of the Anglo-Saxon is the very reverse of the Indian temper. His ideals are of the earth, earthy. His institutions are without warmth, sympathy, human feeling, rigid and accurate like his machinery, meant for immediate and practical gains. The reading of democracy which he has adopted and is trying to introduce first in the colonies because the mother country is still too much shackled by the past, is the most sordid possible, centred on material aims and void of generous idealism. In such a civilisation, as part of such an Empire, India can have no future. If she is to model herself on the Anglo-Saxon type she must first kill everything in her which is her own. If she is to be a province of the British Empire, part of its life, sharing its institutions, governed by its policy, the fate of Greece under Roman dominion will surely be hers. She may share the privileges and obligations of British citizenship, – though the proud Briton who excludes the Indian from his colonies and treats him as a lower creature, will perish rather than concede such an equality, – but she will lose her Indian birthright. She will have to pass a sponge over her past and obliterate it from her life, even if she preserves the empty records of it in her schools....

It is sheer political atheism, the negation of all that we were, are and hope to be. The return of India on her eternal self, the restoration of her splendour, greatness, triumphant Asiatic supremacy is the ideal of Nationalism. Is it doubtful which ideal will be more acceptable to the nation, that which calls on it to murder its instincts, sacrifice its future and deny its past for the advantage of an inglorious security, or that which asks it to fulfil itself by the strenuous reassertion of all that is noble and puissant in the blood it draws from such an heroic ancestry as no other nation can boast?

The ideal creates the means of attaining the ideal, if it is itself true and rooted in the destiny of the race. All that can be said for the Convention's ideal is that it saves the professor of the ideal from the wrath of the bureaucracy. Otherwise it is as grotesquely out of proportion to the strength of the people who profess it as any which the Nationalist can uphold. It has no exciting virtue of divine enthusiasm which can inspire to heroic effort and enable a fallen nation to shake off its weakness, turn cowards into heroes and selfish men into self-denying martyrs of the cause, and yet the effort it demands for realisation is as heroic as anything which the Nationalist expects from the people. The pride of race, the pride of empire, the pride of colour are the three invincible barriers which stand between it and its realisation. What force have the Conventionalists to set against these? Tears and supplications, appeals to British justice and British generosity – nothing else. They are not serious in their ideal and do not really hold it but flaunt it as a counterpoise to the Nationalist ideal so that the country may be deceived into thinking they have an aim and a policy. They have none. A

false ideal is always a veil for something else, and the Convention creed is with some a veil for secret hopes of liberty which they dare not avow and with others a veil for the absence of any aim except the hope of securing a few peddling reforms in the existing system of administration.

The future is with the Nationalist ideal because there is no other. But the danger is that the false shadow of an ideal which is now being put forward as a reality will be accepted as a convenient instrument for self-protection against the anger of the bureaucracy.

*

“Work, there is no need to aspire; labour for small things and the great will come in some future generation”, is the spirit which seems to be in the ascendant. But the voices of the martyrs from their cells cry to us in a different key, “Work, but aspire, so that your work may be true to the call you have heard and which we have obeyed; labour for great things first and the small will come of themselves. Cherish the might of the spirit, the nobility of the ideal, the grandeur of the dream; the spirit will create the material it needs, the ideal will bring the real to its body and self-expression, the dream is the stuff out of which the waking world will be created. It was the strength of the spirit which stood with us before the alien tribunal, it was the force of the ideal which led us to the altar of sacrifice, it is the splendour of the dream which supports us through the dreary months and years of our martyrdom. For these are the truth and the divinity within the movement.”

Awakening Political Consciousness

The preparation of the national mind was the first necessity. All that the old schools of politics did was to prepare the way for the new thought by giving a full trial to the delusions that then possessed the people and demonstrating their complete futility. Since the awakening of the nation to the misdirection of its energies a fresh delusion has taken possession for a time of the national mind, and this is the idea that a great revolution can be worked out without the sacrifices of which history tells in the case of other nations. There is a general shrinking from the full danger of the struggle, a wish to try by how few sacrifices the work can be accomplished and at how cheap a cost the priceless boon of liberty can be purchased. This reluctance to enter on the real struggle was a necessary and salutary stage of the movement, because the nation, after the long pauperisation of its energies and enervation of its character by a hundred years of dependence and mendicancy, would have been unequal to the sacrifices the real struggle demands. A fresh stage is at hand in which this reluctance can no longer be indulged. A nation cannot afford to haggle with Providence or to buy liberty in the cheapest market from the Dispenser of human fate. The sooner the struggle now commences, the sooner the fate of India is fought out between the forces of progress and reaction, the better for India and for the world. Delay will only waste our strength and give opportunities to the enemy. A band of men is needed who can give up everything for their country, whose sole thought and occupation shall be the stimulation of the movement by whatever means the moment suggests or opportunity

allows. If such a band can be got together, then only will real work as distinct from the work of preparation be possible; for the salvation of a country cannot be the work of our leisure moments, the product of our superfluous energy or the result of a selfish life in which the country comes in only for the leavings. Devoted servants of India are needed who will ask for no reward, no ease, no superfluities, but only their bare maintenance and a roof over their heads to enable them to work for her. This attitude of utter self-abandonment is the first condition of success. *Sannyāsa*, utter and inexorable, *tyāga*, unreserved and pitiless, *mumukṣutva*, burning and insatiable, must be the stamp of the true servant of India. Academic knowledge, power of debate, laborious study of problems, the habit of ease and luxury at home and slow and tentative work abroad, the attitude of patience and leisurely self-preparation are not for this era or for this country. An immense and incalculable revolution is at hand and its instruments must be themselves immense in their aspiration, uncalculating in their self-immolation. A sacrifice of which the mightiest *yajña* of old can only be a feeble type and far-off shadow, has to be instituted and the victims of that sacrifice are ourselves, our lives, our property, our hopes, our ambitions, all that is personal and not of God, all that is devoted to our own service and taken from the service of the country. The greatest must fall as victims before the God of the sacrifice is satisfied. Whoever is afraid for himself, afraid for his property, afraid for his kith and kin, afraid for his vanity, self-interest, glory, ease or liberty, had better stand aside from the sacrifice, for at any time the call may come to him to lay down all these upon the altar. If he then refuses, his fate will be worse than that of the fugitive who prefers safety

to the struggle, for he will be a recusant doomed to suffer without reward and fall without glory....

Only posterity looking back with awe on the sequel, will date the commencement of the real world-shaking earthquake from that slight ruffling of the untroubled surface of the soil. The forces that sent that slight quiver of the earth to the surface are hidden as yet from the eye of contemporary politics or only dimly guessed by a few, but within a brief period they will have declared themselves to the amazement of those who thought that they were only playing a clever tactical game with the lifeless figures of a puppet show. The grim forces that have been moving under the surface will now find the field open to them by the shattering of the keystone of the old political edifice. The fair hopes of an orderly and peaceful evolution of self-government, which the first energies of the new movement had fostered, are gone for ever. Revolution, bare and grim, is preparing her battle-field, mowing down the centres of order which were evolving a new cosmos and building up the materials of a gigantic downfall and a mighty new-creation. We could have wished it otherwise, but God's will be done.

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The spirit was what mattered, if the spirit were there, the movement would find out its own channels; for after all it was the power of God manifested in the movement which would command its own means and create its own channels. They must have the firm faith that India must rise and be great and that everything that happened, every difficulty, every reverse must help and further their end. The trend was upward and the time of decline was over. The

morning was at hand and once the light had shown itself, it could never be night again. The dawn would soon be complete and the sun rise over the horizon. The sun of India's destiny would rise and fill all India with its light and overflow India and overflow Asia and overflow the world. Every hour, every moment could only bring them nearer to the brightness of the day that God had decreed.

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The end of our long waiting for the advent of strength into the hearts and minds of the people may yet be distant, but one sign of an approaching change is growing more and more manifest, the intense yearning for a field, an outlet, a path open to the pent-up activities of an awakened nation. Arising from long sleep and torpor, the nation threw itself with energy into a field of activity which seemed immeasurably vast and full of a glorious promise. One would have said that no one could stop that mighty outpouring of enthusiasm, unselfishness and heaven-aspiring force. But there was a flaw, a source of weakness. Our past defects, hesitations, timidities, weaknesses, vices, arrogance, light-headedness, selfishness, scepticism, inconsistency, our readiness to succumb to difficulties, to despair at the first check, – all these things were in us, trampled down by the inrush of higher feelings and a greater and nobler energy, but not thrown out, not utterly replaced. The nation had entered headlong into a wonderful Sadhana, but without knowledge, without the deliberate *saṃkalpa*, the requisite *dīkṣā*. It was the only way it could be begun. But the Sadhak has to have *cittaśuddhi* before he can attain realisation; he must cleanse his bosom of much perilous stuff. That cleansing is done partly by replacing the lower feelings by the higher, cow-

ardice by courage, hatred by love, weakness by strength, partly by working out the evil in imagination or action and rejecting it as it comes up into the mind or the life. It was the first process that took place in the beginning of the movement, it is the second that is now in progress. In the first years of the movement a nation of cowards became heroes, sceptics became blind believers, the light-minded full of serious purpose, men eaten up by selfishness martyrs and ascetics, waverers full of tenacity, the low, loose and immoral inspired by a high and generous idealism and purity. But the work was not complete. In the groundwork of the new nation the old evil stuff lingered, and therefore God trampled our work to pieces in order to have it out, so that it might be seen, recognised and rejected. It was that work the repressions and reforms have come to do, and it is almost done. Had we gone on in our first victorious rush, unhampered and undefeated, we would have entered the kingdom of Swaraj with an imperfect national character, full of temporarily repressed vices which would have come to the surface as soon as the great stimulus of a successful struggle had been removed, and the last state of the nation might have been worse than its first; at any rate there would have been infinite troubles, reverses and disasters for the liberated nation, such as are in store for a nation like Persia where the struggle for freedom has not been sufficiently intense, arduous and complicated in its features to purify the people and build its character. It is well to have done with our troubles, reverses and defeats before the end is gained, so that we may enter our kingdom pure and strong. We ought now to be able to recognise what it was that has made us fail in the hour of trial; for there can be no doubt that we have partially failed. To recognise the defects is

to reject them, and with the will to rise, will come the means which will help to raise us. The spirit of the nation is rising again. Only it must be clearly recognised that old outlets are not the right ones. Solid and thorough work, self-discipline by means of noble and orderly action, this is the path by which we shall arrive at a higher national character and evolution.

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No national awakening is really vital and enduring which confines itself to a single field. It is when the soul awakens that a nation is really alive, and the life will then manifest itself in all the manifold forms of activity in which man seeks to express the strength and the delight of the expansive spirit within. It is for *ānanda* that the world exists; for joy that the Self puts Himself into the great and serious game of life; and the joy which He sees is the joy of various self-expression. For this reason it is that no two men are alike, no two nations are alike. Each has its own separate nature over and above the common nature of humanity and it is not only the common human impulses and activities but the satisfaction and development of its own separate character and capacities that a nation demands. Denied that satisfaction and development, it perishes. By two tests, therefore, the vitality of a national movement can be judged. If it is imitative, imported, artificial, then, whatever temporary success it may have, the nation is moving towards self-sterilisation and death; even so the nations of ancient Europe perished when they gave up their own individuality as the price of Roman civilisation, Roman peace, Roman prosperity. If, on the other hand, the peculiar individuality of a race stamps itself on the movement in its every part and seizes on every

new development as a means of self-expression, then the nation wakes, lives and grows and whatever the revolutions and changes of political, social or intellectual forms and institutions, it is assured of its survival and aggrandisement.

I am convinced and have long been convinced that a spiritual awakening, a reawakening to the true self of the nation is the most important condition of our national greatness.... India, if she chooses, can guide the world.

Sri Aurobindo

New Politics: Passive Resistance

The new politics, therefore, while it favours passive resistance, does not include meek submission to illegal outrage under that term; it has no intention of overstressing the passivity at the expense of the resistance. Nor is it inclined to be hysterical over a few dozen of broken heads or exalt so simple a matter as a bloody coxcomb into the crown of martyrdom. This sort of hysterical exaggeration was too common in the early days of the movement when everyone who got his crown cracked in a street affray with the police was encouraged to lift up his broken head before the world and cry out, "This is the head of a martyr." The new politics is a serious doctrine and not, like the old, a thing of shows and political theatricals; it demands real sufferings from its adherents, — imprisonment, worldly ruin, death itself, before it can allow him to assume the rank of a martyr for his country. 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. We do not want to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer and not how to strike.

Moreover, the new politics must recognise the fact that beyond a certain point passive resistance puts a strain on human endurance which our natures cannot endure. This may come in particular instances where an outrage is too great or the stress of tyranny too unendurable for anyone to stand purely on the defensive; to hit back, to assail and crush the assailant, to vindicate one's manhood becomes

an imperious necessity to outraged humanity. Or it may come in the mass when the strain of oppression a whole nation has to meet in its unarmed struggle for liberty, overpasses its powers of endurance. It then becomes the sole choice either to break under the strain and go under or to throw it off with violence. The Spartan soldiers at Plataea endured for some time the missiles of the enemy and saw their comrades falling at their side without any reply because their general had not yet declared it to be the auspicious time for attack; but if the demand on their passive endurance had been too long continued, they must either have broken in disastrous defeat or flung themselves on the enemy in disregard of their leader's orders. The school of politics which we advocate is not based upon abstractions, formulas and dogmas, but on practical necessities and the teaching of political experience, common sense and the world's history. We have not the slightest wish to put forward passive resistance as an inelastic dogma. We preach defensive resistance mainly passive in its methods at present, but active whenever active resistance is needed; but defensive resistance within the limits imposed by human nature and by the demands of self-respect and the militant spirit of true manhood. If at any time the laws obtaining in India or the executive action of the bureaucracy were to become so oppressive as to render a struggle for liberty on the lines we have indicated, impossible; if after a fair trial given to this method, the object with which we undertook it, proved to be as far off as ever; or if passive resistance should turn out either not feasible or necessarily ineffectual under the conditions of this country, we should be the first to recognise that everything must be reconsidered and that the time for new men and new methods had ar-

rived. We recognize no political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation.

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The three canons of the doctrine of passive resistance are in reality three necessities which must, whether we like it or not, be accepted in theory and executed in practice, if passive resistance is to have any chance of success. Passive resisters, both as individuals and in the mass, must always be prepared to break an unjust coercive law and take the legal consequence; for if they shrink from this obligation, the bureaucracy can at once make passive resistance impossible simply by adding a few more enactments to their book of statutes. A resistance which can so easily be snuffed out of being is not worth making. For the same reason they must be prepared to disobey an unjust and coercive executive order whether general or particular; for nothing would be simpler than to put down by a few months' coercion a resistance too weak to face the consequences of refusing submission to Government by ukase. They must be prepared to boycott persons guilty of deliberate disobedience to the national will in vital matters because, if they do not, the example of unpunished treason will tend to be repeated and destroy by a kind of dry rot the enthusiastic unity and universality which we have seen to be necessary to the success of passive resistance of the kind we have inaugurated in India. Men in the mass are strong and capable of wonder-working enthusiasms and irresistible movements; but the individual average man is apt to

be weak or selfish and, unless he sees that the mass are in deadly earnest and will not tolerate individual treachery, he will usually, after the first enthusiasm, indulge his weakness or selfishness to the detriment of the community....

Passive resistance, when it is confined – as at present – to lawful abstention from actions which it lies within our choice as subjects to do or not to do, is of the nature of the strategical movements and large manoeuvrings previous to the meeting of armies in the field; but the enforcement of our three canons brings us to the actual shock of battle. Nevertheless our resistance still retains an essential character of passivity. If the right of public meeting is suspended by Magisterial ukase, we confine ourselves to the practical assertion of the right in defiance of the ukase and, so long as the executive also confines itself to the dispersal of the meeting by the arrest of its conveners and other peaceful and legal measures, we offer no active resistance. We submit to the arrest, though not necessarily to the dispersal, and quietly take the legal consequences. Similarly, if the law forbids us to speak or write the truth as we conceive it our duty to speak it, we persist in doing our duty and submit quietly to whatever punishment the law of sedition or any other law coercive ingenuity may devise, can find to inflict on us. In a peaceful way we act against the law or the executive, but we passively accept the legal consequences.

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. To submit to illegal or violent methods of coercion, to accept outrage and hooliganism as part of the legal procedure of the country is to be guilty of cowardice, and, by dwarfing national manhood, to sin against the divinity within ourselves and the divinity in our motherland. The moment coercion of this kind is attempted, passive resistance ceases and active resistance becomes a duty. If the instruments of the executive choose to disperse our meeting by breaking the heads of those present, the right of self-defence entitles us not merely to defend our heads but to retaliate on those of the head-breakers. For the myrmidons of the law have ceased then to be guardians of the peace and become breakers of the peace, rioters and not instruments of authority, and their uniform is no longer a bar to the right of self-defence. Nor does it make any difference if the instruments of coercion happen to be the recognised and usual instruments or are unofficial hooligans in alliance or sympathy with the forces of coercion. In both cases active resistance becomes a duty and passive resistance is, for that occasion, suspended. But though no longer passive, it is still a defensive resistance. Nor does resistance pass into the aggressive stage so long as it resists coercive violence in its own kind and confines itself to repelling attack. Even if it takes the offensive, it does not by that mere fact become aggressive resistance, unless the amount of aggression exceeds what is necessary to make defence effective.

Morality in Politics

Ages ago there was a priest of Baal who thought himself commissioned by the god to kill all who did not bow the knee to him. All men, terrified by the power and ferocity of the priest, bowed down before the idol and pretended to be his servants; and the few who refused had to take refuge in hills and deserts. At last, a deliverer came and slew the priest and the world had rest. The slayer was blamed by those who placed religion in quietude and put passivity forward as the ideal ethics, but the world looked on him as an incarnation of God.

A certain class of mind shrinks from aggressiveness as if it were a sin. Their temperament forbids them to feel the delight of battle and they look on what they cannot understand as something monstrous and sinful. 'Heal hate by love', 'drive out injustice by justice', 'slay sin by righteousness' is their cry. Love is a sacred name, but it is easier to speak of love than to love. The love which drives out hate is a divine quality of which only one man in a thousand is capable. A saint full of love for all mankind possesses it, a philanthropist consumed with a desire to heal the miseries of the race possesses it, but the mass of mankind does not and cannot rise to the height. Politics is concerned with masses of mankind and not with individuals. To ask masses of mankind to act as saints, to rise to the height of divine love and practise it in relation to their adversaries or oppressors is to ignore human nature. It is to set a premium on injustice and violence by paralysing the hand of the deliverer when raised to strike. The Gita is the best answer to those

who shrink from battle as a sin, and aggression as a lowering of morality. A poet of sweetness and love, who has done much to awaken Bengal, has written deprecating the boycott as an act of hate. The saintliness of spirit which he would see brought into politics is the reflex of his own personality colouring the political ideals of a sattwic race. But in reality the boycott is not an act of hate. It is an act of self-defence, of aggression for the sake of self-preservation. To call it an act of hate is to say that a man who is being slowly murdered, is not justified in striking at his murderer. To tell that man that he must desist from using the first effective weapon that comes to his hand, because the blow would be an act of hate, is precisely on a par with this deprecation of boycott. Doubtless the self-defender is not precisely actuated by a feeling of holy sweetness towards his assailant; but to expect so much from human nature is impracticable. Certain religions demand it, but they have never been practised to the letter by their followers.

Hinduism recognises human nature and makes no such impossible demand. It sets one ideal for the saint, another for the man of action, a third for the trader, a fourth for the serf. To prescribe the same ideal for all is to bring about *varṇasaṅkara*, the confusion of duties, and destroy society and race. If we are content to be serfs, then indeed, boycott is a sin for us, not because it is a violation of love, but because it is a violation of the Sudra's duty of obedience and contentment. Politics is the ideal of the Kshatriya, and the morality of the Kshatriya ought to govern our political actions. To impose in politics the Brahmanical duty of saintly sufferance is to preach *varṇasaṅkara*.

Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ānanda* of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realisation of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother.

Other love than this is foreign to the motives of political action. Between nation and nation there is justice, partiality, chivalry, duty, but not love. All love is either individual or for the self in the race or for the self in mankind. It may exist between individuals of different races, but the love of one race for another is a thing foreign to Nature. When therefore the boycott, as declared by the Indian race against the British, is stigmatised for want of love, the charge is bad psychology as well as bad morality. It is interest warring against interest, and hatred is directed not really against the race, but against the adverse interest. If the British exploitation were to cease tomorrow, the hatred against the British race would disappear in a mo-

ment. A partial *adhyāropa* makes the ignorant for the moment see in the exploiters and not in the exploitation the receptacle of the hostile feeling. But like all *māyā*, it is an unreal feeling and sentiment and is not shared by those who think. Not hatred against foreigners, but antipathy to the evils of foreign exploitation is the true root of boycott.

If hatred is demoralising, it is also stimulating. The web of life has been made a mingled strain of good and evil and God works His ends through the evil as well as through the good. Let us discharge our minds of hate, but let us not deprecate a great and necessary movement because, in the inevitable course of human nature, it has engendered feelings of hostility and hatred. If hatred came, it was necessary that it should come as a stimulus, as a means of awakening.

When *tamas*, inertia, torpor have benumbed a nation, the strongest forms of *rajas* are necessary to break the spell; there is no form of *rajas* so strong as hatred. Through *rajas* we rise to *sattva* and for the Indian temperament the transition does not take long. Already the element of hatred is giving place to the clear conception of love for the Mother as the spring of our political actions.

Another question is the use of violence in the furtherance of boycott. This is, in our view, purely a matter of policy and expediency. An act of violence brings us into conflict and may be inexpedient for a race circumstanced like ours. But the moral question does not arise. The argument that to use violence is to interfere with personal liberty involves a singular misunderstanding of the very

nature of politics. The whole of politics is an interference with personal liberty. Law is such an interference; protection is such an interference; the rule which makes the will of the majority prevail is such an interference. The right to prevent such use of personal liberty as will injure the interests of the race, is the fundamental law of society. From this point of view the nation is only using its primary rights when it restrains the individual from buying or selling foreign goods.

It may be argued that peaceful compulsion is one thing, and violent compulsion, another. Social boycott may be justifiable, but not the burning or drowning of British goods. The latter method, we reply, is illegal and therefore may be inexpedient, but it is not morally unjustifiable. The morality of the Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war, and boycott is a war. Nobody blames the Americans for throwing British tea into Boston harbour, nor can anybody blame a similar action in India on moral grounds. It is reprehensible from the point of view of law, of social peace and order, not of political morality. It has been eschewed by us because it is unwise and because it carried the battle on to a ground where we are comparatively weak, from a ground where we are strong....

Justice and righteousness are the atmosphere of political morality, but the justice and righteousness of a fighter, not of the priest. Aggression is unjust only when unprovoked; violence, unrighteous when used wantonly or for unrighteous ends. It is a barren philosophy which applies a mechanical rule to all actions, or takes a word and tries to fit all human life into it.

The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfilment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint. Ramdas is not complete without Shivaji. To maintain justice and prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed, is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. "Therefore," says Sri Krishna in the *Mahabharata*, "God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger."

Man is of a less terrestrial mould than some would have him to be. He has an element of the divine which the politician ignores. The practical politician looks to the position at the moment and imagines that he has taken everything into consideration. He has, indeed, studied the surface and the immediate surroundings, but he has missed what lies beyond material vision. He has left out of account the divine, the incalculable in man, that element which upsets the calculations of the schemer and disconcerts the wisdom of the diplomat.

Her [India] politics are the slave's politics whose method is prayer and petition and whose resentment or disapproval can find expression only in weeping and sobbing. And rebuff merely urges the Indian politician to greater efforts of supplication and to higher feats of wailing. And by such persistent mendicancy alone he aspires to win the country's liberty...

Sri Aurobindo

The Politics of Boycott

Boycott is an ideal, like freedom; it means independence in industry and commerce, as freedom means independence in administration, legislation and finance. But it is not always possible to accomplish the whole of the ideal by the first effort towards it. So long as we cherish the ideal whole and unbroken, we are at liberty to consult the demands of practicability and realise it, not at one rush, but by successive approximations, each being the vantage-ground for a fresh rush forward. This does not imply slow progress, the leisurely and gentleman-like spreading out of the struggle for freedom through five or six centuries in order to avoid the perils of the struggle; it is rather the necessary condition of rapid progress. The force of the hunger for the whole ideal, of impatience with half realisations must remain behind, but the means of each advance must be secured by that which went before....

Boycott is essentially a form of voluntary protection and it cannot do more than protection does towards the creation of industries. Protection serves two ends; it prevents the infant industry from being strangled in its weak unestablished state by full-grown and powerful competitors, it gives a stimulus to it by assuring it a market. It cannot supply the place of enterprise, business capacity, naturally favourable conditions. It can however mitigate the incidence of natural conditions, not entirely but comparatively unfavourable, by throwing a countervailing disadvantage into the scale of the more favourably circumstanced competing country. This is the limit of the utility of protection; it is also the limit of the utility of boycott. What

boycott could do for the cloth industry, it has done, but for the producer to lean entirely on boycott and expect it to take the place of business enterprise, energy, capacity, the improvement of his goods, is to lay a burden on the national spirit which it is neither possible nor desirable that it should bear. The nation agrees to purchase an inferior indigenous article in place of a superior foreign article, not with the intention that the producer should be excused the necessity of improvement and should be able to force the inferior article on us to all eternity, but solely to give him time to improve his methods, his processes, his machinery, his dexterity in spite of the competition of his superior rival. It saves him from extinction, it gives him a period of grace; he must use it to reach and outdistance the excellence of his rival's methods and production, and if he neglects this duty he does it at his peril and it is not open to him to cry out against the want of patriotism in the people because they withdraw a support which he has abused. The nation, again, agrees to deny itself necessities or restrict the quantity of its purchase, not with the intention of permanently lowering its standard of comfort and living a barer and more meagre life, but in order to give time for capital and enterprise to increase the supply, so that eventually the wants of the nation may be supplied from within. If it is found that there is not an expansion of industry commensurate with the self-denial in the nation and that only a few businessmen are exploiting the national sentiment for their own personal profit, it is idle to expect the boycott to survive. We have noticed signs of a most unhealthy spirit of mutual trade jealousy among Swadeshi mill-owners, who seem to be under the impression that they are natural rivals for the patronage of the consumer. No single Indian producer

can monopolise the supply necessary for national consumption, nor can even the whole body of Indian producers combined, at present, meet the demand. One Indian mill-owner gets nothing by the decline of another; on the contrary, his prosperity is bound up in the prosperity of all other Indian mills; for the maintenance of the boycott, which saved the mill industry at a crisis of its destinies, depends on the increased supply of Swadeshi cloth. Instead of attempting to rise by pressing each other down, it would be far better for the Indian producers to follow the example of English manufacturers and combine for the welfare of the national industry.

The first condition of a successful boycott, therefore, is the organisation of national industry with a view, first, to the improvement and extension of that which exists, secondly, to the opening up of new lines of enterprise. This is largely a work for the producer himself, but there is one duty which the leaders of the national movement can perform and that is to organise information. The nature of the industries that can be profitably opened in India, the unfavourable circumstances, the favourable, the means of obviating or mitigating the former, utilising and improving the latter, the conditions of success, the cost of outlay and management, this is the information that capital and enterprise need; the Swadeshi articles that can be procured, the place of their manufacture, their price, quality and supply, this is the information needed by the consumer. To organise all this information would be to give a great stimulus to the advance of Swadeshi.

The second condition of a successful boycott is the organisation of supply. It is not possible for everyone to hunt

Swadeshi articles to their source and purchase them. There must be a supplying agency which brings the goods to a near and convenient market and, as far as possible, to the doors of the people. The difficulty of supply is grievously felt in many parts of Bengal; but there is no one whose duty it is to consider the difficulty and meet it. Swadeshi is in danger of being stifled under the mass of spurious goods, foreign masking as indigenous, which the dishonest methods of European Commerce pour into the country. There is no one to consider the problem of baffling this flank attack and devise methods of assuring the consumer that he gets the article which he wants. The organisation of a genuine and sufficient supply is the second condition of a practicable boycott....

The first principle we would suggest is to make a clear division between articles of necessity, interpreting the word in a broad sense, and articles of luxury and to have an absolute interdict of the latter unless they are of indigenous manufacture. The first reason for the interdict is that many articles of luxury are produced in India, but find it difficult to maintain themselves because they depend on the patronage of the rich, who are wedded to European vulgarity and want of taste in the appointments of their life. The poorer classes cannot indulge in luxuries; the middle class, in the present condition of the country, should not. An organised preference of Swadeshi arts and crafts by the rich would revive and stimulate a great source of national wealth and reopen a field of national capacity. Articles of necessity can be divided into those indispensable for life and a decent existence and those necessary for our work and business. In the former we can always prefer an inferior but usable indigenous ar-

ticle, in the latter no such self-denying ordinance can be imposed. I cannot be called upon to use an article or implement which cripples my business or puts me at a serious disadvantage with my competitor, merely because it is produced in the country, just as in my own home I cannot be called upon to use a pen which will not write, a lamp which will not give light, a cup which cracks and breaks after a few days' use. But if the home article is usable or if the business implement is only slightly inferior to its foreign rival, then it would be unpatriotic and a violation of the boycott oath to prefer the foreign to the indigenous production. On these lines we believe a rational and workable meaning could be put on the proviso "as far as possible" which would not put too great a strain on human nature and could yet form the basis of an effective and practical protection of Indian industry. A similar concession would have to be made in the case of Swadeshi articles which are too dear for the purse of the poorer classes, but there is no reason why the richer members of the community should not extend their protection to those industries which are compelled for the present to exceed greatly the foreign cost of production and yet have a future before them.

It will be evident therefore that, however far we may carry the boycott individually, there are limits which the mass of men cannot exceed. A considerable number of foreign articles must be purchased even for home consumption, still more for work and business. The question is, cannot this inevitable resort to the foreigner be so regulated as to assist materially the progress of the boycott and prepare the future industrial independence of the nation?

The Ideals of Self-Rule

In our national preparation against arbitrary rule we must not be wanting in a correct appreciation of our own strength and of the points of weakness of our opponents. The problem of the Bureaucracy, to state it finally, is to push its policy of repression against the Indian Nationalists as far as it can without alienating the moral sympathy of those on whose collaboration their tenure of power rests.

Our duty is thus obviously to train up the moral consciousness of our people to that level of development at which it will refuse as a whole to tolerate for any space of time at all the rule of the few over the many. And in doing this work we must press up all the avenues that lead to the common goal. The missionary work of preaching the ideal of self-rule in every part of the country, as the essential precondition of our National realisation, is of course of superlative importance, and the bold and unflinching facing of persecution in the faithful discharge of this sacred task is of equal service. But apart from this work we must also endeavour to foster the growth of those conditions that favour the easy and rapid germination of the love of liberty. Even a cursory glance at Indian life would convince everybody that it is only in the independent professions in our country that the ideal of Indian liberty struck its first root and is now most widely prevalent. The vast majority of our educated countrymen are absorbed in Governmental or quasi-Governmental services where the growth of the liberty ideal is naturally inhibited and where at best it acquires but a stunted

development, being condemned from birth to deafness and dumbness. It would be difficult to think of anything more ruinously unfortunate for a country than that the greater majority of its educated men should be debarred throughout the most fruitful period of their life from participation in patriotic work, should be robbed of their only chance of livelihood if they ever happened to give explicit utterance to their love for the land that gave them birth. One can easily realise how unspeakably demoralising the influences of such a service must be, and yet the overwhelming proportion of our educated countrymen are constantly subject to them. The only way to remove this gross anomaly is to create rival sources of employment which will provide Indians an independent living. The existing professions are too few for this purpose, and are, further, filled already to choking. The only adequate means to this end is therefore the industrial development of the country which will open to our present and coming generations a much more attractive and promising avenue of employment than the services, the strictly subordinate services, let us not forget, of the alien Bureaucracy. The uprise of a numerous industrial class will thus spell a great and invaluable accession of strength to the political interest of the country. It is this that lends to the question of India's industrial development its main fascination and interest, and serves to remind us forcibly of the vital interaction that exists between the different branches of human activity. The stir and activity in the various industries of the country that have already been caused by the Swadeshi boycott movement is full of happy augury. We must strain every nerve to fill the whole country with trained industrial ability, we must send our young men in hundreds and thousands all over the world to learn the

scientific methods of production so that India may in a very few years be covered with a network of industrial centres that will supply work to hundreds of thousands of our educated men, and rescue them from the inanition of a living death in Government service. The work already begun in this direction by the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Training of Indians cannot be too much praised and deserves the most liberal encouragement. How very many more Basantas we may very reasonably expect to see rising up in an industrial India, ready to court suffering in the name of the Motherland.

And besides, the successful working of the handful of trades union in Bengal mostly composed as yet of illiterate men, certainly give us a most promising insight into the latent possibilities that lie in the direction of a general policy of passive resistance that may be adopted by the country. If the people of India are one day to signify their intolerance of arbitrary rule, it will very probably be, as Seely and Meredith Townsend foretell, by a general declaration of passive resistance. And before we can expect our countrymen in the services seriously to entertain the thought of refusing to serve the Bureaucracy, we must see that the country has other means of obtaining their subsistence to offer them.

Unity, Diversity and Uniformity in Politics

But we should never forget that policy is subordinate to principle. As a democratic party, it is our duty to bow to the will of the majority in all matters which do not break the mould of Nationalism to serve the interests of a moment. Unity is at present a means and not an end in itself. As we have often pointed out, unanimity is not unity but merely an affectation of unity. There is an idea in many minds that our salvation lies in the removal of all differences, religious, social and political, but we may wait for many millenniums before such an Utopia can be reached in this world. Differences of religion, social status and political opinion there must be. Unanimity is a condition only possible to a nation whose heart is numbed and whose intellect has ceased to be active; for diversity is the very condition of activity, its cause and again its result. No one can deny that the differences of opinion which have arisen among us are largely responsible for the extraordinary political activity which has kept India astir for the last two years and set the whole world looking towards the banks of the Ganges in eager expectation of a new birth among the nations. On the other hand, the activity itself has emphasised and increased the differences of opinion both between the parties and in the parties themselves. The only thing we have to see to is that this diversity is not allowed to break up the nation into warring factions...

Unity, as we have said, is a means and not an end. To agree is easy if we are willing to sacrifice our principles, but such agreement is not unity; it is sacrificing the soul of

the nation so that an artificial appearance of unanimity may be preserved. No unity can be desirable which is inconsistent with growth or with the march of the people towards the realisation of their great destiny. Growth is the object, unity only one of the means, and if the means can only be had on condition of sacrificing the object, the means and not the object must be sacrificed. If the Convention refuses to associate with the Nationalists except on condition of the latter sacrificing their principles and stultifying their intellectual convictions, the demand for unity can no longer be pressed on the Nationalist Party, which will then be free to take its own course without reference to anything but its own principles and the exigencies of its propaganda. We have done our best to carry out the demand of the people for unity; the refusal comes from the other side and there the responsibility will rest. If the country desires unity, it is for the country to enforce it by refusing to countenance a body claiming to be the Congress and yet taking its stand on the negation of unity. The Nationalists cannot sit as beggars at the doors of the Convention waiting till the doors be opened to them. They are the builders of Indian Nationality, the inheritors of the future, and their work calls them. If the Convention wants at any time in the near future to retrace its steps and become one with the Nationalists, it knows the conditions, but time will increase the difficulty of reunion and the conditions will change as the sacrifices made by the Nationalists for the sake of their cause become greater and their work advances. It is time for us to turn from the attempt to patch up matters with men who are pledged to disruption and concern ourselves with our own proper work.

That work is too heavy for us already, and it will become

still more difficult under the new circumstances with an enemy in the house as well as an enemy outside. If we are to face the task with any hope of success, it must be with a much stricter organisation, a general closing up of our ranks and the creation of instruments for united work and mutual co-operation. We have hitherto been able to work in a scattered and desultory fashion, because we were able to use the Congress organisations brought into existence by the demand for practical work and to take part in and give our stamp to existing bodies. The Convention's new District Associations will consist only of men pledged to the creed. Wherever an Association refuses to be bound by the creed, it will be excluded from the Conventionalist Congress and regarded as a Nationalist body. Under these circumstances the country's demand for unity will become impossible of fulfilment and rival organisations will spring into existence in every province and every district, one pledged to association with the bureaucracy, the other to boycott and self-help. If these bodies admit both parties, they will stand apart from any existing organisation. Such a state of things can only be temporary, but it is for a time inevitable if the Convention constitution is carried out. The Nationalists are bound to protect themselves from the attempt to exclude them from political life by organising themselves in such a way that they may become a force in the country which neither bureaucrats nor Loyalists can either ignore or think it an easy task to crush. Organisation, therefore, will be the first difficulty to overcome. When once we have succeeded in organising our present scattered forces, the spirit of progress, once awake, will work for us and through us giving us greater and greater following and strength till the work of building up the nation be-

comes so evidently ours that the whole country will range itself under our standard. Then and only then will that unity become possible which can create a nation.

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.

Sri Aurobindo

Social Reform and Politics

There are two methods of progress, two impelling motives from which great changes and far-reaching reforms can be effected. One is the struggle of selfish interests between man and man, class and class, working out progress by ignoble strife, the forced compromise and convenient barter of the lower kind of politics. The other is the impulse and clash of mighty ideas, noble aspirations, great national or humanitarian aims, the things which inspire mankind in its upward march and create empires and nations. Both are freely used by the Master of the world in His careful providence and various economy. Often they are intermingled. But it cannot be doubted which is most healthful to the individual, the nation and the race. The social result worked out by a bitter and selfish struggle between upper class and lower class, Labour and Capital, is one thing; the harmony created by a mighty enthusiasm, such as led the aristocracy of Japan to lay down their exclusive privileges and, without reserve, call upon the masses to come up and share their high culture, their seats of might and their ennobling traditions, is quite another. Hindu society in the mofussil is now bitterly divided, and tends more and more to be convulsed, by the new aspirations of the lower castes and the inability of the higher to decide how they will meet the demand. It is a bad sign that the action of both sides tends more and more to be selfish and narrow, political in the worst sense of the word. To barter help in Swadeshi or faithfulness to Hinduism for social privileges, or to bribe the masses to Swadeshism by petty and calculated concessions will tend neither to the genuineness of the

Swadeshi sentiment, nor the strength of the national movement, nor the dignity and purity of our religion. It is an evil and foreign principle which has entered into our system, one of the many evil results of our disastrous contact with European civilisation at a time of national weakness and disintegration and our attempt to assimilate it without first vindicating our inner liberty and establishing ourselves as free agents. A great social revolution in this ancient society ought only to come as the fruit of a mighty national, humanitarian and religious impulse. The fault of the present state of things rests largely with the waning insight and statesmanship of the Brahmins. Formerly, they would not have been wanting either in concerted action, largeness of view or skilfulness of device. It was not their wont to stand still in an inert and impossible conservatism but to recognise circumstances and meet them without sacrificing the essence of their religion or the basic principles of Hindu society.

There are periods in the history of the world when the unseen power that guides its destinies seems to be filled with a consuming passion for change and a strong impatience of the old.... These are periods of rapid destruction and energetic creation, filled with the sound of cannon and the trampling of armies, the crash of great downfalls, and the turmoil of swift and violent revolutions; the world is thrown into the smelting pot and comes out in a new shape and with new features.

Sri Aurobindo

State: A Custodian of People's Welfare?

The State is supposed to be a custodian, a representative body and an effective instrument of ensuring people's welfare. Defence against aliens and peace amidst civil turmoil often have been the two original tasks of a State. But these are the traits of a "Police State". Now, with the advent of democratic pattern of State organisation, development of the subject-people and the group organisation through social, economic and political measures has been cast as an added responsibility of the State which has now assumed constitutionally the role of a "Welfare State". To ensure 'Welfare' to the people has now become a primary concern of the State-idea. The question is whether the modern States are really responsive towards ensuring people's welfare? It will be relevant in the modern context to reproduce Sri Aurobindo's words on the efficacy of the modern States, as these are, to serve as an effective machinery of human development.

This erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being.

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What, after all, is this State idea, this idea of the organised community to which the individual has to be immolated?

Theoretically, it is the subordination of the individual to the good of all that is demanded; practically, it is his subordination to a collective egoism, political, military, economic, which seeks to satisfy certain collective aims and ambitions shaped and imposed on the great mass of the individuals by a smaller or larger number of ruling persons who are supposed in some way to represent the community. It is immaterial whether these belong to a governing class or emerge as in modern States from the mass partly by force of character, but much more by force of circumstances; nor does it make any essential difference that their aims and ideals are imposed nowadays more by the hypnotism of verbal persuasion than by overt and actual force. In either case there is no guarantee that this ruling class or ruling body represents the best mind of the nation or its noblest aims or its highest instincts.

...even if the governing instrument were better constituted and of a higher mental and moral character, ...still the State would not be what the State idea pretends that it is. Theoretically, it is the collective wisdom and force of the community made available and organised for the general good. Practically, what controls the engine and drives the train is so much of the intellect and power available in the community as the particular machinery of State organisation will allow to come to the surface; but it is also caught in the machinery and hampered by it and hampered as well by the large amount of folly and selfish weakness that comes up in the emergence.... But things would be much worse if there were not a field left for a less trammelled individual effort doing what the State cannot do, deploying and using the sincerity, energy, idealism of the best individuals to attempt that which the State

has not the wisdom or courage to attempt, getting that done which a collective conservatism and imbecility would either leave undone or actively suppress and oppose. It is this energy of the individual which is the really effective agent of collective progress. The State sometimes comes in to aid it and then, if its aid does not mean undue control, it serves a positively useful end.

- The organised State is neither the best mind of the nation nor is it even the sum of the communal energies. It leaves out of its organised action and suppresses or unduly depresses the working force and thinking mind of important minorities, often of those which represent that which is best in the present and that which is developing for the future. It is a collective egoism much inferior to the best of which the community is capable.... The individual has usually something at least like a soul, and, at any rate, he makes up for the deficiencies of the soul by a system of morality and an ethical sense,... or, failing that, a fear of the communal law which he has ordinarily either to obey or at least to circumvent; and even the difficulty of circumventing is a check on all except the most violent or the most skilful. But the State is an entity which, with the greatest amount of power, is the least hampered by internal scruples or external checks. It has no soul or only a rudimentary one. It is a military, political and economic force; but it is only in a slight and undeveloped degree, if at all, an intellectual and ethical being. And unfortunately the chief use it makes of its undeveloped intellect is to blunt by fictions, catchwords and recently by State philosophies, its ill-developed ethical conscience....

In modern times there has been much improvement in

spite of deterioration in certain directions. The State now feels the necessity of justifying its existence by organising the general economic and animal well-being of the community and even of all individuals. It is beginning to see the necessity of assuring the intellectual and, indirectly, the moral development of the whole community. This attempt of the State to grow into an intellectual and moral being is one of the most interesting phenomena of modern civilisation....

The call of the State to the individual to immolate himself on its altar and to give up his free activities into an organised collective activity is therefore something quite different from the demand of our highest ideals. It amounts to the giving up of the present form of individual egoism into another, a collective form, larger but not superior, rather in many ways inferior to the best individual egoism. The altruistic ideal, the discipline of self-sacrifice, the need of a growing solidarity with our fellows and a growing collective soul in humanity are not in dispute. But the loss of self in the state is not the thing that these high ideals mean, nor is it the way to their fulfilment. Man must learn not to suppress and mutilate, but to fulfil himself in the fulfilment of mankind, even as he must learn not to mutilate or destroy, but to complete his ego by expanding it out of its limitations and losing it in something greater which it now tries to represent. But the deglutition of the free individual by a huge State machine is quite another consummation. The State is a convenience, and a rather clumsy convenience, for our common development; it ought never to be made an end in itself.

... Man lives by the community; he needs it to develop

himself individually as well as collectively. But is it true that a State-governed action is the most capable of developing the individual perfectly as well as of serving the common ends of the community? It is not true. What is true is that it is capable of providing the co-operative action of the individuals in the community with all necessary conveniences and of removing from it disabilities and obstacles which would otherwise interfere with its working. Here the real utility of the State ceases....

For the State is not an organism; it is a machinery, and it works like a machine, without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture, but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create.... The State tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it and natural variation is impossible to its essentially mechanical nature; but uniformity is death, not life. A national culture, a national religion, a national education may still be useful things provided they do not interfere with the growth of human solidarity on the one side and individual freedom of thought and conscience and development on the other; for they give form to the communal soul and help it to add its quota to the sum of human advancement; but a State education, a State religion, a State culture are unnatural violences. And the same rule holds good in different ways and to a different extent in other directions of our communal life and its activities.

The business of the State is to provide all possible facilities for co-operative action, to remove obstacles, to prevent all really harmful waste and friction and, removing avoidable injustice, to secure for every individual a just and equal chance of self-development and satisfaction to

the extent of his powers and in the line of his nature. So far the aim in modern socialism is right and good. But all unnecessary interference with the freedom of man's growth is or can be harmful. Even co-operative action is injurious if, instead of seeking the good of all compatibly with the necessities of individual growth, – and without individual growth there can be no real and permanent good of all, – it immolates the individual to a communal egoism and prevents so much free room and initiative as is necessary for the flowering of a more perfectly developed humanity.... Always it is the individual who progresses and compels the rest to progress; the instinct of the collectivity is to stand still in its established order....

It is therefore quite improbable that in the present conditions of the race a healthy unity of mankind can be brought about by State machinery, whether it be by a grouping of powerful and organised States enjoying carefully regulated and legalised relations with each other or by the substitution of a single World State... Perhaps this experience also is necessary for mankind; yet it ought to be possible for us now to avoid it by subordinating mechanical means to our true development through a moralised and even a spiritualised humanity united in its inner soul and not only in its outward life and body.

Small is Endurable

The old organisation of the Indian village was self-sufficient, self-centred, autonomous and exclusive. These little units of life existed to themselves, each a miniature world of its own petty interests and activities; like a system of planets united to each other indeed by an unconscious force but each absorbed in its own life and careless of the other. It was a life beautifully simple, healthy, rounded and perfect, a delight to the poet and the lover of humanity. If perfect simplicity of life, freedom from economic evils, from moral degradation, from the strife, faction and fury of town populations, from revolution and turmoil, from vice and crime on a large scale are the objects of social organisation, then the village communities of India were ideal forms of social organisation. Many look back to them with regret and even British administrators who were instrumental in destroying them have wished that they could be revived. So valuable indeed were the elements of social welfare which they secured to the nation, that they have persisted through all changes and revolutions as they were thousands of years ago when the Aryans first occupied the land. Nor can it be denied that they have kept the nation alive. Whatever social evils or political diseases might corrupt the body politic, these little cells of national life supplied a constant source of soundness and purity which helped to prevent final disintegration. But if we owe national permanence to these village organisations, it cannot be denied that they have stood in the way of national unity.

Wherever a nation has been formed, in the modern sense,

it has been at the expense of smaller units. The whole history of national growth is the record of a long struggle to establish a central unity by subduing the tendency of smaller units to live to themselves....

Ancient India could not build itself into a single united nation, not because of caste or social differences as the European writers assert, – caste and class have existed in nations which achieved a faultless national unity, – but because the old polity of the Hindus allowed the village to live to itself, the clan to live to itself, the province or smaller race-unit to live to itself. The village, sufficient to itself, took no interest in the great wars and revolutions which affected only the ruling clans of the kingdom including it in its territorial jurisdiction. The Kshatriya clans fought and married and made peace among themselves, and were the only political units out of which a nation might have been built. But the clan too was so attached to its separate existence that it was not till the clans were destroyed on the battlefield of Kurukshetra that larger national units could be built out of their ruins. Small kingdoms took their place based on provincial or racial divisions and until the inrush of foreign peoples an attempt was in progress to build them into one nation by the superimposition of a single imperial authority. Many causes prevented the success of the attempt, and the provincial unit has always remained the highest expression of the nation-building tendencies in India. One cause perhaps more than any other contributed to the failure of the centripetal tendency to attain self-fulfilment, and that was the persistence of the village community which prevented the people, the real nation, from taking any part in the great struggles out of which a nation should have emerged. In

other countries the people had to take part in the triumphs, disasters and failures of their rulers either as citizens or at least as soldiers, but in India they were left to their little isolated republics with no farther interest than the payment of a settled tax in return for protection by the supreme power. This was the true cause of the failure of India to achieve a distinct organised and self-conscious Nationality....

The British, historians have told us, conquered India in a fit of absence of mind. In a fit of absence of mind also they destroyed the separate life of our village communities, and, by thus removing the greatest obstacle in the way of national development, prepared the irresistible movement towards national unity which now fills them with dismay. The provinces have been brought together, the village has been destroyed. It only remains for the people to fulfil their destiny. We are now turning our eyes again to the village under the stress of an instinct of self-preservation and part of our programme is to recreate village organisation....

The organisation of our villages is an indispensable work to which we must immediately set our hands, but we must be careful so to organise them as to make them feel that they are imperfect parts of a single national unity, and dependent at every turn on the co-operation first of the district, secondly of the province, and finally of the nation. The day of the independent village or group of villages has gone and must not be revived; the nation demands its hour of fulfilment and seeks to gather the village life of its rural population into a mighty, single and compact democratic nationality. We must make the nation what the vil-

lage community was of old, self-sufficient, self-centred, autonomous and exclusive – the ideal of national Swaraj.

The object of national existence, of the formation of men into groups and their tacit agreement to allow themselves to be ruled by an organised instrument of administration which is called the Government, is nothing else than human development in the individual and in the group.

Sri Aurobindo

The Nucleus of Socialistic Democracy

Our position is perfectly clear and straightforward. Caste was originally an arrangement for the distribution of functions in society, just as much as class in Europe, but the principle on which the distribution was based in India was peculiar to this country. The civilisation of Europe has always been preponderatingly material and the division of classes was material in its principles and material in its objects, but our civilisation has always been preponderatingly spiritual and moral, and caste division in India had a spiritual object and a spiritual and moral basis. The division of classes in Europe had its root in a distribution of powers and rights and developed and still develops through a struggle of conflicting interests; its aim was merely the organisation of society for its own sake and mainly indeed for its economic convenience. The division of castes in India was conceived as a distribution of duties. A man's caste depended on his *dharma*, his spiritual, moral and practical duties, and his *dharma* depended on his *svabhāva*, his temperament and inborn nature. A Brahmin was a Brahmin not by mere birth, but because he discharged the duty of preserving the spiritual and intellectual elevation of the race, and he had to cultivate the spiritual temperament and acquire the spiritual training which could alone qualify him for the task. The Kshatriya was a Kshatriya not merely because he was the son of warriors and princes, but because he discharged the duty of protecting the country and preserving the high courage and manhood of the nation, and he had to cultivate the princely temperament and acquire the strong and lofty Samurai training which alone fitted him for his duties. So

it was with the Vaishya whose function was to amass wealth for the race and the Sudra who discharged the humbler duties of service without which the other castes could not perform their share of labour for the common good. This was what we meant when we said that caste was a socialistic institution. No doubt there was a gradation of social respect which placed the function of the Brahmin at the summit and the function of the Sudra at the base, but this inequality was accidental, external, *vyavahārika*. Essentially there was, between the devout Brahmin and the devout Sudra, no inequality in the single *virāt puruṣa* of which each was a necessary part. Chokha Mela, the Maratha Pariah, became the Guru of Brahmins proud of their caste purity; the Chandala taught Shankaracharya: for the Brahman was revealed in the body of the Pariah and in the Chandala there was the utter presence of Shiva the Almighty. Heredity entered into caste divisions, and in the light of the conclusions of modern knowledge who shall say erroneously? But it entered into it as a subordinate element. For Hindu civilisation being spiritual based its institutions on spiritual and moral foundations and subordinated the material elements and material considerations. Caste therefore was not only an institution which ought to be immune from the cheap second-hand denunciations so long in fashion, but a supreme necessity without which Hindu civilisation could not have developed its distinctive character or worked out its unique mission.

But to recognise this is not to debar ourselves from pointing out its later perversions and desiring its transformation. It is the nature of human institutions to degenerate, to lose their vitality, and decay, and the first sign of decay

is the loss of flexibility and oblivion of the essential spirit in which they were conceived. The spirit is permanent, the body changes; and a body which refuses to change must die. The spirit expresses itself in many ways while itself remaining essentially the same, but the body must change to suit its changing environments if it wishes to live. There is no doubt that the institution of caste degenerated. It ceased to be determined by spiritual qualifications which, once essential, have now come to be subordinate and even immaterial and is determined by the purely material tests of occupation and birth. By this change it has set itself against the fundamental tendency of Hinduism which is to insist on the spiritual and subordinate the material and thus lost most of its meaning. The spirit of caste arrogance, exclusiveness and superiority came to dominate it instead of the spirit of duty, and the change weakened the nation and helped to reduce us to our present condition. It is these perversions which we wish to see set right. The institution must transform itself so as to fulfil its essential and permanent object under the changed conditions of modern times. If it refuses to change, it will become a mere social survival and crumble to pieces. If it transforms itself, it will yet play a great part in the fulfilment of civilisation.

...Socialism is not an European idea, it is essentially Asiatic and especially Indian. What is called Socialism in Europe is the old Asiatic attempt to effect a permanent solution of the economic problem of society which will give man leisure and peace to develop undisturbed his higher self. Without Socialism democracy would remain a tendency that never reached its fulfillment, a rule of the masses by a small aristocratic or monied class with the

consent and votes of the masses, or a tyranny of the artisan classes over the rest. Socialistic democracy is the only true democracy, for without it we cannot get the equalised and harmonised distribution of functions, each part of the community existing for the good of all and not struggling for its own separate interests, which will give humanity as a whole the necessary conditions in which it can turn its best energies to its higher development. To realise those conditions is also the aim of Hindu civilisation and the original intention of caste. The fulfilment of Hinduism is the fulfilment of the highest tendencies of human civilisation and it must include in its sweep the most vital impulses of modern life. It will include democracy and Socialism also, purifying them, raising them above the excessive stress on the economic adjustments which are the means, and teaching them to fix their eyes more constantly and clearly on the moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection of mankind which is the end.

The one safety for man lies in learning to live from within outward, not depending on institutions and machinery to perfect him, but out of his growing inner perfection availing to shape a more perfect form and frame of life...

Sri Aurobindo

National Festivals

A national festival is the symbol of the national vitality. All outward action depends eventually on the accepted ideas and imaginations of the doer. As these are, so is his aspiration; and although it is not true that as is his aspiration, so is his action, yet it is true that as is his aspiration, so will his action more and more tend to be. If it is the idea that finally expresses itself in all material forms, actions, institutions and consummations, it is the imagination that draws the idea out, suggests the shape and gives the creative impulse. Hence the importance of celebrations like the 7th of August, especially in the first movements of a great national resurgence. A time may come when the living meaning may pass out of a solemnity or anniversary and leave it a dead form which only the persistence of habit preserves, but that cannot happen until the underlying idea is realised and the imaginative impulse towards creation has victoriously justified itself and exhausted its sources of satisfaction.... This appeal to the imagination and nourishing of the emotions is especially necessary when the outward circumstances are widely different from the cherished hopes and imaginations and the speedy advent of the longed-for future seems to the reason distant or improbable. That is why importance is attached in all countries to ceremonies and festivals. There are many of us who are inclined to speak with contempt of speeches and shows, and there was a time when we too in our impatience of the mere babblers were inclined to echo the cry for silent work. A juster knowledge of human psychology has led us to modify our view on that head. Man is not by nature a silent animal nor in the mass

is he capable of work without frequent interchange of speech. Talk is necessary to him, emotion is necessary to him, imagination is necessary to him; without these he cannot be induced to action. This constitutes the supreme importance of the right of free speech and free meeting; this also constitutes the justification of symbolical holidays and festivals. Speech and writing are necessary to the acceptance and spread of the idea without which there can be no incentive to action. Ceremonies help the imagination and encourage it to see in the concrete that which cannot be immediately realised. It was out of the gurge and welter of an infinite oratory, thousand-throated journalism, endless ceremonies, processions, national festivals that the appallingly strenuous action of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic age in France arose to reconstitute society and transform Europe. Let us not therefore despise these mighty instruments. God has created them and the natural human love for them for very great and abiding purposes. Even in these few years the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals, instituted by the farseeing human sympathy and democratic instinct of Mr. Tilak, have done much to reawaken and solidify the national feeling of Maharashtra, and we can all feel what a stimulus to the growth and permanence of the movement we have found in the celebrations of the 7th August and the 16th October. They are to us what sacred days are to the ordinary religions. The individual religious man can do without them, collective religion cannot. These are the sacred days in the religion of Nationalism, the worship of God the Mother.

The Diversity of Languages

Diversity of language serves two important ends of the human spirit, a use of unification and a use of variation. A language helps to bring those who speak it into a certain large unity of growing thought, formed temperament, ripening spirit. It is an intellectual, aesthetic and expressive bond which tempers division where division exists and strengthens unity where unity has been achieved. Especially it gives self-consciousness to national or racial unity and creates the bond of a common self-expression and a common record of achievement. On the other hand, it is a means of national differentiation and perhaps the most powerful of all, not a barren principle of division merely, but a fruitful and helpful differentiation. For each language is the sign and power of the soul of the people which naturally speaks it. Each develops therefore its own peculiar spirit, thought-temperament, way of dealing with life and knowledge and experience. If it receives and welcomes the thought, the life experience, the spiritual impact of other nations, still it transforms them into something new of its own and by that power of transmutation it enriches the life of humanity with its fruitful borrowings and does not merely repeat what had been gained elsewhere. Therefore it is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language, cannot live its whole life or its real life. And this advantage to the national life is at the same time an advantage to the general life of the human race....

Modern India is another striking example. Nothing has

stood more in the way of the rapid progress in India, nothing has more successfully prevented her self-finding and development under modern conditions than the long overshadowing of the Indian tongues as cultural instruments by the English language. It is significant that the one sub-nation in India which from the first refused to undergo this yoke, devoted itself to the development of its language, made that for long its principal pre-occupation, gave to it its most original minds and most living energies, getting through everything else perfunctorily, neglecting commerce, doing politics as an intellectual and oratorical pastime, – that it is Bengal which first recovered its soul, re-spiritualised itself, forced the whole world to hear of its great spiritual personalities, gave it the first modern Indian poet and Indian scientist of world-wide fame and achievement, restored the moribund art of India to life and power, first made her count again in the culture of the world, first, as a reward in the outer life, arrived at a vital political consciousness and a living political movement not imitative and derivative in its spirit and its central ideal. For so much does language count in the life of a nation; for so much does it count to the advantage of humanity at large that its group-souls should preserve and develop and use with a vigorous group-individuality their natural instrument of expression....

Language is the sign of the cultural life of a people, the index of its soul in thought and mind that stands behind and enriches its soul in action. Therefore it is here that the phenomena and utilities of diversity may be most readily seized, more than in mere outward things; but these truths are important because they apply equally to the thing which it expresses and symbolises and serves as an in-

strument. Diversity of language is worth keeping because diversity of cultures and differentiation of soul-groups are worth keeping and because without that diversity life cannot have full play; for in its absence there is a danger, almost an inevitability of decline and stagnation. The disappearance of national variation into a single uniform human unity, of which the systematic thinker dreams as an ideal and which we have seen to be a substantial possibility and even a likelihood, if a certain tendency becomes dominant, might lead to political peace, economic well-being, perfect administration, the solution of a hundred material problems, as did on a lesser scale the Roman unity in old times; but to what eventual good if it leads also to an uncreative sterilisation of the mind and the stagnation of the soul of the race? In laying this stress on culture, on the things of the mind and the spirit there need be no intention of undervaluing the outward material side of life; it is not at all my purpose to belittle that to which Nature always attaches so insistent an importance. On the contrary, the inner and the outer depend upon each other. For we see that in the life of a nation a great period of national culture and vigorous mental and soul life is always part of a general stirring and movement which has its counterpart in the outward political, economic and practical life of the nation. The cultural brings about or increases the material progress but also it needs it that it may itself flourish with an entirely full and healthy vigour. The peace, well-being and settled order of the human world is a thing eminently to be desired as a basis for a great world-culture in which all humanity must be united; but neither of these unities, the outward or inward, ought to be devoid of an element even more important than peace, order and well-being, freedom and vigour of

life, which can only be assured by variation and by the freedom of the group and of the individual. Not then a uniform unity, not a logically simple, a scientifically rigid, a beautifully neat and mechanical sameness but a living oneness full of healthy freedom and variation is the ideal which we should keep in view and strive to get realised in man's future.

...the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future, and how we are to learn and use English or any other foreign tongue so as to know helpfully the life, ideas and culture of other countries and establish our right relations with the world around us.

Sri Aurobindo

Spirituality and Nationalism

Mankind have a natural inclination to hero-worship and the great men who have done wonders for human civilisation will always be the inspiration of future ages. We are Hindus and naturally spiritual in our temperament, because the work which we have to do for humanity is a work which no other nation can accomplish, the spiritualisation of the race; so the men whom we worship are those who have helped the spiritual progress of mankind. Without being sceptical no spiritual progress is possible, for blind adoration is only the first stage in the spiritual development of the soul. We are wont to be spiritually sceptical, to hesitate to acknowledge to ourselves anything we have not actually experienced by the process of silent communion with God, so that the great sages of antiquity were as sceptical as any modern rationalist. They did away with all preconceived notions drawn from the religion of the Vedas, plunged into the void of absolute scepticism and tried to find there the Truth. They doubted everything, the evidence of the senses, the reality of the world, the reality of their own existence, and even the reality of God. This scepticism reached its culmination in the teachings of Buddha who would admit nothing, presuppose nothing, declare nothing dogmatically, and insisted only on self-discipline, self-communion, self-realisation as the only way to escape from the entanglement of the intellect and the senses. When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God....

The long ages of discipline which India underwent are now drawing to an end. A great light is dawning in the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the *avatārs* cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without him it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East. Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in releasing the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape from the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, dissatisfaction from which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find one by material means must inevitably fail. The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete. They did not hasten to proselytise, were in no way eager to proclaim themselves, but merely added their quota of experience and returned to the source from which they had come. The

immense reservoir of spiritual energy stored up by the self-repression was the condition of this birth of *avatārs*, of men so full of God that they could not be satisfied with silent bliss, but poured it out on the world, not with the idea of proselytising but because they wished to communicate their own ecstasy of realisation to others who were fit to receive it either by previous *tapasyā* or by the purity of their desires. Of all these souls Sri Ramakrishna was the last and greatest, for while others felt God in a single or limited aspect, he felt Him in His illimitable unity as the sum of an illimitable variety. In him the spiritual experiences of the millions of saints who had gone before were renewed and united. Sri Ramakrishna gave to India the final message of Hinduism to the world. A new era dates from his birth, an era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with God and spirituality become the dominant note of human life. What Christianity failed to do, what Mahomedanism strove to accomplish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half-accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men, Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to attempt for all the world. This is the reason of India's resurgence, this is why God has breathed life into her once more, why great souls are at work to bring about her salvation, why a sudden change is coming over the hearts of her sons. The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.

The East and the West

The elixir of national life has been discovered by India alone. This immortality, this great secret of life, she has treasured up for thousands of years, until the world was fit to receive it. The time has now come for her to impart it to the other nations who are now on the verge of decadence and death. The peoples of Europe have carried material life to its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been perfected, but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to cure. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear logical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity. Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her. Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. She is commissioned to rise from time to time from her ages of self-communion, self-sufficiency, self-absorption and rule the world for a season so that the world may come and sit at her feet to learn the secrets she alone has to give. When the restless spirit of Europe has added a new phase of discovery to the evolution of the science of material life, has regulated politics, rebased society, remodelled law, rediscovered science, the spirit of Asia, calm, contemplative, self-possessed, takes possession of Europe's discovery and corrects its exaggerations, its aberrations by the intuition, the spiritual light she alone can turn upon the world. When

Greek and Roman had exhausted themselves, the Arab went out from his desert to take up their unfinished task, revivify the civilisation of the old world and impart the profounder impulses of Asia to the pursuit of knowledge. Asia has always initiated, Europe completed. The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia in synthesis. When Europe has perfected the details of life or thought, she is unable to harmonise them into a perfect symphony and she falls into intellectual heresies, practical extravagances which contradict the facts of life, the limits of human nature and the ultimate truths of existence. It is therefore the office of Asia to take up the work of human evolution when Europe comes to a standstill and loses itself in a clash of vain speculations, barren experiments and helpless struggles to escape from the consequences of her own mistakes. Such a time has now come in the world's history.

In former ages India was a sort of hermitage of thought and peace apart from the world. Separated from the rest of humanity by her peculiar geographical conformation, she worked out her own problems and thought out the secrets of existence as in a quiet Ashram from which the noise of the world was shut out. Her thoughts flashed out over Asia and created civilisations, her sons were the bearers of light to the peoples; philosophies based themselves on stray fragments of her infinite wisdom; sciences arose from the waste of her intellectual production. When the barrier was broken and nations began to surge through the Himalayan gates, the peace of India departed. She passed through centuries of struggle, of ferment in which the civilisations born of her random thoughts returned to her developed and insistent, seeking

to impose themselves on the mighty mother of them all. To her they were the reminiscences of her old intellectual experiments laid aside and forgotten. She took them up, re-thought them in a new light and once more made them part of herself. So she dealt with the Greek, so with the Scythian, so with Islam, so now she will deal with the great brood of her returning children, with Christianity, with Buddhism, with European science and materialism, with the fresh speculations born of the world's renewed contact with the source of thought in this ancient cradle of religion, science and philosophy. The vast amount of new matter which she has to absorb, is unprecedented in her history, but to her it is child's play. Her all-embracing intellect, her penetrating intuition, her invincible originality are equal to greater tasks. The period of passivity when she listened to the voices of the outside world is over. No longer will she be content merely to receive and reproduce, even to receive and improve. The genius of Japan lies in imitation and improvement, that of India in origination. The contributions of outside peoples she can only accept as rough material for her immense creative faculty. It was the mission of England to bring this rough material to India, but in the arrogance of her material success she presumed to take upon herself the role of a teacher and treated the Indian people partly as an infant to be instructed, partly as a serf to be schooled to labour for its lords. The farce is played out. England's mission in India is over and it is time for her to recognise the limit of the lease given to her. When it was God's will that she should possess India, the world was amazed at the miraculous ease of the conquest and gave all the credit to the unparalleled genius and virtues of the English people, a fiction which England was not slow to encourage and

on which she has traded for over a century. The real truth is suggested in the famous saying that England conquered India in a fit of absence of mind which is only another way of saying that she did not conquer it at all. It was placed in her hands without her realising what was being done or how it was being done. The necessary conditions were created for her, her path made easy, the instruments given into her hands. The men who worked for her were of comparatively small intellectual stature and with few exceptions did not make and could not have made any mark in European history where no special Providence was at work to supplement the deficiencies of the instruments. The subjugation of India is explicable neither in the ability of the men whose names figure as the protagonists nor in the superior genius of the conquering nation nor in the weakness of the conquered people. It is one of the standing miracles of history. In other words, it was one of those cases in which a particular mission was assigned to a people not otherwise superior to the rest of the world and a special *e* or decreed good fortune set to watch over the fulfilment of the mission. Her mission once over, the angel of the Lord who stood by England in her task and removed opponents and difficulties with the waving of his hand, will no longer shield her. She will stay so long as the destinies of India need her and not a day longer, for it is not by her own strength that she came or is still here, and it is not by her own strength that she can remain. The resurgence of India is begun, it will accomplish itself with her help, if she will, without it if she does not, against it if she opposes.

House Searches

One wonders what would happen in any European country if the police as a recompense for their utter inefficiency and detective incapacity were armed with the power and allowed to use it freely of raiding the houses of respectable citizens, ransack the property of absent occupants and leaving it unsafe and unprotected, carrying off the business books of Presses, newspapers and other commercial concerns, the private letters of individuals, books publicly sold and procurable in every bookshop, violating the sanctity of correspondence between wife and husband, searching the persons of ladies of the house even though it be by female hands and the trampling on the sanctity of the home, the dignity of the person and the self-respect which every race worthy of existence holds to be dearer than life itself. And all this in spite of the fact, exemplified a hundred times over, that these inquisitions are wholly infructuous and can serve no purpose but harassment and exasperation. Usually the searches are undertaken, if we do not err, on the vague information of disreputable hirelings used as spies and informers, the statements of lying approvers eager to save their own skins by jeopardising innocent men and confessions to the police of arrested prisoners made either for the same purpose or dictated by a morbid vanity and light-headed braggadocio which invents facts and details in order to give dignity to petty crime and magnitude to small and foolish undertakings. The ludicrously irrelevant and useless nature of the articles which are the sole reward of this odious activity are its sufficient condemnation. Even if the widespread

conspiracy dreamed of by authorities were a fact is it conceivable that respectable men, knowing the police to be on the alert, would risk liberty and property by storing bombs, looted ornaments or treasonous correspondence in their houses? We are aware that the right of house-search is a necessary weapon in the hands of authority for the suppression of crime, but it was never meant that this should be misused in order to supply the place of detective ability in the Police. House searches are unwarrantable unless the information on which they proceed is precise, reliable and highly probable. Judging from results not one of these epithets can be applied to the numerous searches which are now becoming a standing feature of life in Bengal. And if the search of the persons of ladies is to become another common feature of these domiciliary visits, we fear that the patience of a people jealously sensitive on these matters will not long endure the strain. Surely, the higher authorities ought to have sufficient good sense to draw inevitable conclusion from experience, perceive the limitations of this weapon and, if not for the possible evil consequence of creating still greater disaffection, yet for its barren inutility, renounce its excessive use.

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No citizen can object to the legitimate and necessary use of house-search as an aid to the detection of crime; it is only to its misuse that objection can be made. We say that it is misuse to harass a man and his family merely because the police have a suspicion against him which they cannot establish or find any ground of evidence for – on the remote chance of finding incriminating correspondence or arms in his possession. It is a

misuse to take this step on the information of characterless paid informers whose advantage it is to invent false clues so as to justify their existence and earn their living. It is a misuse to farther harass the householder by carrying off from his house half his library and his whole family correspondence and every other article to which the police take a fancy and which are often returned to him after infinite trouble and in a hopelessly damaged condition. A house-search is never undertaken in civilised countries except on information of the truth of which there is moral certainty or such a strong probability as to justify this extreme step. To find out the truth of an information without immediately turning a household upside down on the chance of its veracity is not an impossible feat for detective ability in countries where all statements are not taken for gospel truth merely because they issue from the sacred lips of a policeman, and where police perjury or forgery is sure of swift punishment. Where a detective force is put on its mettle by being expected to prove every statement and take the consequences of illegal methods, they do manage to detect crime very effectively, while the chances of the innocent suffering are greatly minimized. In other countries there are or have been Anarchist outrages, Terrorist propaganda, secret societies, but nowhere, except in Russia, are such methods used as are considered quite ordinary in India, nor, if used, would they be tolerated by the European citizen. If the police would confine themselves to legitimate detective activity, they would receive the full support of the public and the occasional trouble of a house-search, caused by the existence of a suspected relative or dependent, would be patiently borne, — though it is absurd of the *Statesman* to expect

a householder to be cheerful under such untoward circumstances. This is the rationale of our views in the matter, and we do not think there is anything in them either unreasonable, obstructive or inconsistent with civic duty.

Strength attracts strength; firm and clear-minded courage commands success and respect; strong and straight dealing can dispense with the methods of dissimulation and intrigue. All these are signs of character and it is only character that can give freedom and greatness to nations.

Sri Aurobindo

Asceticism and Enjoyment

Small things are often indicative of great and far-reaching tendencies. While glancing at the *Modern Review*, – always the best worth perusal of our Indian monthlies, – our attention was arrested by a slight illustrated article on Railways in India and America. The writer contrasts the squalor, indigence and discomfort of railway travelling in this Paradise of the efficient Anglo-Indian with the lavish comfort and opulence of railway furnishings and appointments in the United States. The contrast is indicative of the immense gulf between the teeming wealth of America and the miserable indigence of India, once the richest country in the world. America is the land above all lands where enjoyment, Bhoga, is frankly recognised and accepted. India, many would say, is the land above all lands where Bhoga is sternly refused. That is the common view; we are not inclined to think it the correct view. The asceticism of India is a phase, a characteristic of a civilisation dominated by an unfavourable environment and driven in upon itself. The classical period when India was full of life, activity, development, abounding vigour, defending herself successfully against the impact of the outer barbarian, was a period of frank and lavish enjoyment far more intellectual, artistic, perfect than anything Europe has ever been capable of, even at its best. In yet older literature we find the true spirit of India, a splendid capacity for Bhoga and Tyaga in their highest terms, the utter enjoyment of the householder, the utter renunciation of the Sannyasin. To take the utmost joy of life, to be capable of the utmost renunciation of life, at one and the same time, in the same mind and body, to be master of

both capacities and bound by neither, – this was the secret of India, the mighty discipline of which Janaka was the traditional exemplar. “Renounce all that thou mayest enjoy all,” – this is India’s characteristic message, – not Buddha’s absolute renunciation, not the European’s enslavement to his bodily, vital and intellectual desires and appetites. Tyaga within, Bhoga without, – Ananda, the divine delight of the purified soul, embracing both.

Indian asceticism is not a mournful gospel of sorrow or a painful mortification of the flesh in morbid penance, but a noble effort towards a higher joy and an absolute possession of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo

Bureaucracy: An Official Freak

We suppose in a bureaucracy it is inevitable that officials should be masters and be able to inflict inconvenience and loss on the citizen without any means of redress. Last Monday the publication of a new weekly named *Dharma*, edited by Aurobindo Ghose, was due and had been widely announced. The issue was ready and the printer duly attended the Police Court to declare his responsibility for printing and publishing the periodical. Except under very unusual circumstances this is a mere formality and one would have thought no difficulty could intervene, but nothing could persuade the Court Official to refrain from delaying the acceptance till the next day. It was pointed out that this would entail unnecessary inconvenience and perhaps considerable financial loss, but that naturally did not concern him as he was the master of the public and not their servant. The next day a variation of the same vexatious procedure was repeated. It was whispered, we do not know with what truth, that the first delay was for the Criminal Investigation Department to have time to find out whether the printer had been convicted in any sedition case. If so it was a futile delay. There is no concealment of the responsibility with regard to this paper. The name of the editor and proprietor was openly given and the printer was there to accept his responsibility. This does not look like intended sedition. If there were any doubt, the required information could easily have been gained from the Manager of the paper who was present and would no doubt have been glad to save delay and loss by stating the printer's antecedents. It was not likely that he would conceal a conviction as that

would be a thing impossible to suppress. But then, if officialdom were to acquire a common sense, the laws of Nature would be sadly contravened and it is better to inflict loss on individuals than to upset a law of Nature.

A spiritual age of mankind ... will not try to make man perfect by machinery or keep him straight by tying up all his limbs. It will not present to the member of the society his higher self in the person of the policeman, the official and the corporal, nor, let us say, in the form of a socialistic bureaucracy or a Labour Soviet. Its aim will be to diminish as soon and as far as possible the element of external compulsion in human life by awakening the inner divine compulsion of the Spirit within...

Sri Aurobindo

The Statesman

The country is in need of a statesman, yes; but what kind of statesman? He must be a man thoroughly steeped in the gospel of Nationalism, with a clear and fearless recognition of the goal to which we are moving, with a dauntless courage to aim consciously, steadily, indomitably towards it, with a consummate skill to mask his movements and aims when necessary and to move boldly and openly when necessary and, last but not least, with an overmastering magnetic power and tact to lead and use and combine men of all kinds and opinions. Such a leader might organise the nation to some purpose, but those who shrink from following where their hearts and intellects lead them or who... party feelings or personal dislike or jealousy try to exclude powerful forces from the common national work cannot claim the name of statesman.

The Nationalist: Who?

Extremism in the sense of unreasoning violence of spirit and the preference of desperate methods, because they are desperate, is not the heart of Nationalism. The Nationalist does not advocate lawlessness for its own sake; on the contrary, he has deeper respect for the essence of the law than anyone else, because the building up of a nation is his objective and he knows well that without a profound reverence for law a national life cannot persist and attain a sound and healthy development. But he qualifies his respect for legality by the proviso that the law he is called upon to obey is the law of the nation, an outgrowth of the organic existence and part of its Government. A law imposed from outside can command only the obedience of those whose chief demand from life is the safety to their persons and property, or the timid obedience of those who understand the danger of breaking the law. The claim made by it is an utilitarian, not a moral claim. Farther, the Nationalist never loses sight of the truth that law was made for man and not man for law. Its chief function and reason for existence is to safeguard and foster the growth and happy flowering into strength and health of National life. And a law which does not subserve this end or which opposes and contradicts the same, however rigidly it may enforce peace, or order and security, forfeits its claim to respect and obedience. Nationalism refuses to accept law as a fetish or peace and security as an aim in themselves; the only idol of its worship is Nationality and the only aim it in itself recognises is the freedom, power, and well-being of the Nation. It will not prefer violent or strenuous methods simply because

they are violent or strenuous, but neither will it cling to mild and peaceful methods simply because they are mild and peaceful. It asks of a method whether it is effective for its purpose, whether it is worthy of a great people struggling to be, whether it is educative of national strength and activity; and these things ascertained, it asks nothing farther. The Nationalist does not love anarchy and suffering for their own sake, but if anarchy and suffering are the necessary passage to the great consummation he seeks, he is ready to bear them himself, to expose others to them till the end is reached. They will embrace suffering of their children, and embrace suffering as a lover and clasp the hand of anarchy like that of a trusted friend. It is not the temper of the Nationalist to take the inevitable grudgingly or to serve or struggle with a half heart. If that is Extremism and fanaticism, he is an Extremist and a fanatic; but not for their own sake, not out of a disordered love for anarchy and turmoil, not in madness and desperation but out of a reasoned conviction and courageous acceptance of the natural love by which a man who aspires to reach a difficult height must climb up the steep rocks and risk life and limb in arduous places, that have decreed that men who desire to live as free men in a free country must not refuse to be ready to pay toll for freedom with their own blood, the blood of their children, and still more, the nation which seeks to grow out of subjection into liberty must consent first to manure the soil with the tears of its women and the bodies of its sons. The Nationalist knows what he asks from fate and he knows the price that fate asks from him in return. Knowing it he is ready to drag the nation with him into the valley of the shadow of death, dark with night and mist and storm, sown thick and crude with perils of strange

monsters and perils of morass and fire and flood, holding all danger and misery as nothing because beyond the valleys are the mountains of Beulah, when the nation shall enjoy eternal life. He is ready to lead the chosen people into the desert of long wanderings though he knows that often in the bitterness of its sufferings it will murmur and rebel against his leadership and raise its hand to stone him to death as the author of its misery, for he knows that beyond is the promised land flowing with milk and honey which, the divine voice has told him, those who are faithful will reach and possess. If he embraces anarchy, it is as the way to good government. If he does not shrink from disorder and violent struggle it is because without that disorder there can be no security and without that struggle no peace, except the security of decay and the peace of death. If he has sometimes to disregard the law of man, it is to obey the dictates of his conscience and the law of God.

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...the first duty of every Nationalist is to take care that the great principles of Nationalism are not infringed by any concession to the party of fear and self-interest which would imperil the future of the movement and the destiny of the nation.

Swaraj

Our ideal of Swaraj involves no hatred of any other nation nor of the administration which is now established by law in this country. We find a bureaucratic administration, we wish to make it democratic; we find an alien government, we wish to make it indigenous; we find a foreign control, we wish to render it Indian. They lie who say that this aspiration necessitates hatred and violence. Our ideal of patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood and it looks beyond the unity of the nation and envisages the ultimate unity of mankind. But it is unity of brothers, equals and free men that we seek, not the unity of master and serf, of devourer and devoured. We demand the realisation of our corporate existence as a distinct race and nation because that is the only way in which the ultimate brotherhood of humanity can be achieved, not by blotting out individual peoples and effacing outward distinctions, but by removing the internal obstacles to unity, the causes of hatred, malice and misunderstanding. A struggle for our rights does not involve hatred of those who mistakenly deny them. It only involves a determination to suffer and strive, to speak the truth boldly and without respect of persons, to use every lawful means of pressure and every source of moral strength in order to establish ourselves and disestablish that which denies the law of progress.

Our methods are those of self-help and passive resistance. To unite and organise ourselves in order to show our efficiency by the way in which we can develop our industries, settle our individual disputes, keep order and

peace on public occasions, attend to questions of sanitation, help the sick and suffering, relieve the famine-stricken, work out our intellectual, technical and physical education, evolve a Government of our own for our own internal affairs so far as that could be done without disobeying the law or questioning the legal authority of the bureaucratic administration, this was the policy publicly and frankly adopted by the Nationalist party.

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What is Swaraj but the organisation of the independent life of the country into centres of strength which grow out of its conditions and answer to its needs, so as to make a single and organic whole? When a nation is in a natural condition, growing from within and existing from within and in its own strength, then it develops its own centres and correlates them according to its own needs. But as soon as for any reason this natural condition is interrupted and a foreign organism establishes itself in and dominates in the country, then that foreign body draws to itself all the sources of nourishment and the natural centres, deprived of their sustenance, fail and disappear. It is for this reason that foreign rule can never be for the good of a nation, never work for its true progress and life, but must always work towards its disintegration and death. This is no new discovery, no recently invented theory of ours, but an ascertained truth of political science as taught in Europe by Europeans to Europeans. It is there laid down that foreign rule is inorganic and therefore tends to disintegrate the subject body politic by destroying its proper organs and centres of life. If a subject nation is ever to recover and survive, it can only be by reversing the process and establishing its own organic centres of life and strength. We in

India had our own instruments of life and growth; we had the self-dependent village; we had the Zemindar as the link between the village units and the central governing body and the central governing body itself was one in which the heart of the nation beat. All these have been either destroyed or crippled by the intrusion of a foreign organism. If we are to survive as a nation we must restore the centres of strength which are natural and necessary to our growth, and the first of these, the basis of all the rest, the old foundation of Indian life and secret of Indian vitality was the self-dependent and self-sufficient village organism. If we are to organise Swaraj we must base it on the village. But we must at the same time take care to avoid the mistake which did much in the past to retard our national growth. The village must not in our new national life be isolated as well as self-sufficient, but must feel itself bound up with the life of its neighbouring units, living with them in a common group for common purposes. Each group again must feel itself a part of the life of the district, living in the district unity, so each district must not be engrossed in its own separate existence but feel itself a subordinate part of the single life of the province, and the province in its turn of the single life of the country. Such is the plan of reconstruction we have taken in hand, but to make it a healthy growth and not an artificial construction we must begin at the bottom and work up to the apex. The village is the cell of the national body and the cell-life must be healthy and developed for the national body to be healthy and developed. Swaraj begins from the village.

...Swaraj is the organisation of national self-help, national self-dependence. As soon as the foreign organism begins

to dominate the body politic, it compels the whole body to look to it as the centre of its activities and neglect its own organs of action till these become atrophied. We in India allowed this tendency of alien domination to affect us so powerfully that we have absolutely lost the habit and for sometime had lost the desire of independent activity and became so dependent and inert that there can be found no example of such helplessness and subservience in history. The whole of our national life was swallowed up by this dependence. Swaraj will only be possible if this habit of subservience is removed and replaced by a habit of self-help. We must take back our life into our own hands and the change must be immediate, complete and drastic. It is no use employing half-measures, for the disease is radical and the cure must be radical also. Our aim must be to revolutionise our habits and leave absolutely no corner of our life and activities in which the habit of dependence is allowed to linger or find refuge for its insidious and destructive working; education, commerce, industry, the administration of justice among ourselves, protection, sanitation, public works, one by one we must take them all back into our hands. Here again the village Samiti is an indispensable instrument, for as this resolution declares, the village Samiti is not to be a mere council for deliberation, but a strong organ of executive work. It is to set up village schools in which our children will grow up as good citizens and patriots to live for their country and not for themselves or for the privilege of dependent life in a dependent nation. It is to take up the work of arbitration by which we shall recover control of the administration of justice, of self-protection, of village sanitation, of small local public works, so that the life of the village may again be self-reliant and self-sufficient, free from the habit of

dependence rooted in the soil. Self-help and self-dependence, the first conditions of Swaraj, depend for their organisation on the village Samiti.

Another essential condition of Swaraj is that we should awaken the political sense of the masses. There may have been a time in history when it was enough that a few classes, the ruling classes, the learned classes, at most the trading classes should be awake. But the organisation of the modern nation depends on the awakening of the political sense in the mass. This is the age of the people, the millions, the democracy. If any nation wishes to survive in the modern struggle, if it wishes to recover or maintain Swaraj, it must awaken the people and bring them into the conscious life of the nation, so that every man may feel that in the nation he lives, with the prosperity of the nation he prospers, in the freedom of the nation he is free. This work again depends on the village Samiti. Unless we organise the united life of the village we cannot bridge over the gulf between the educated and the masses. It is here that their lives meet and that they can feel unity. The work of the village Samiti will be to make the masses feel Swaraj in the village, Swaraj in the group of villages, Swaraj in the district, Swaraj in the nation. They cannot immediately rise to the conception of Swaraj in the nation, they must be trained to it through the perception of Swaraj in the village. The political education of the masses is impossible unless you organise the village Samiti.

Swaraj, finally, is impossible without unity. But the unity we need for Swaraj is not a unity of opinion, a unity of speech, a unity of intellectual conviction. Unity is of the

heart and springs from love. The foreign organism which has been living on us, lives by the absence of this love, by division, and it perpetuates the condition of its existence by making us look to it as the centre of our lives and away from our Mother and her children. It has set Hindu and Mahomedan at variance by means of this outward outlook; for by regarding it as the fountain of life, however, we are led to look away from our brothers and yearn for what the alien strength can give us. The Hindu first fell a prey to this lure and it was the Mahomedan who was then feared and held down. Now that the Hindu is estranged, the same lure is held out to the Mahomedan and the brother communities kept estranged because they look to the foreigner for the source of prosperity and honours and not to their own Mother. Again, in the old days we did not hear of this distress of the scarcity of water from which the country is suffering now so acutely. It did not exist and could not exist because there was love and the habit of mutual assistance which springs from love. The Zemindar felt that he was one with his tenants and could not justify his existence if they were suffering, so his first thought was to meet their wants and remove their disabilities. But now that we look to a foreign source for every thing, this love for our countrymen, this habit of mutual assistance, this sense of mutual duty has disappeared. Each man is for himself and if anything is to be done for our brothers, there is the government to do it and it is no concern of ours. This drying up of the springs of mutual affection is the cause which needs most to be removed and the village Samiti is again the first condition of a better state of things. It will destroy the aloofness, the separateness of our lives and bring us back the sense of community, the habit of mutual assistance and mutual be-

neficence. It will take up the want of water and remove it. It will introduce arbitration courts and, by healing our family feuds and individual discords, restore the lost sense of brotherhood. It will seek out the sick and give them medical relief. It will meet the want of organisation for famine relief. It will give justice, it will give protection and when all are thus working for the good of all, the old unity of our lives will be restored, the basis of Swaraj will have been laid in the tie which binds together the hearts of our people.

Swaraj emphasises the idea of self-sufficiency and insists on it. It mitigates against the idea of there being any limit to our expansion. We must be full, we must be perfect, we are the divinity in embryo and when fully developed we shall be coextensive with God Himself. This is what Swaraj unmistakably means.

Sri Aurobindo

Internationalism

The idea of internationalism was born of the thought of the eighteenth century and it took some kind of voice in the first idealistic stages of the French Revolution. But at that time, it was rather a vague intellectual sentiment than a clear idea seeing its way to practice; it found no strong force in life to help it to take visible body. What came out of the French Revolution and the struggle that grew around it, was a complete and self-conscious nationalism and not internationalism. During the nineteenth century we see the larger idea growing again in the minds of thinkers, sometimes in a modified form, sometimes in its own pure idealism, till allying itself with the growing forces of socialism and anarchism it took a clear body and a recognisable vital force. In its absolute form, it became the internationalism of the intellectuals, intolerant of nationalism as a narrow spirit of the past, contemptuous of patriotism as an irrational prejudice, a maleficent corporate egoism characteristic of narrow intellects and creative of arrogance, prejudice, hatred, oppression, division and strife between nation and nation, a gross survival of the past which the growth of reason was destined to destroy. It is founded on a view of things which looks at man in his manhood only and casts away all those physical and social accidents of birth, rank, class, colour, creed, nationality, which have been erected into so many walls and screens behind which man has hidden himself from his fellow-man; he has turned them into sympathy-proof shelters and trenches from which he wages against him a war of defence and aggression, war of nations, war of continents, war of classes, war of colour with colour, creed

with creed, culture with culture. All this barbarism the idea of the intellectual internationalist seeks to abolish by putting man face to face with man on the basis of their common human sympathy, aims, highest interests of the future. It is entirely futurist in its view; it turns away from the confused and darkened good of the past to the purer good of the future when man, at last beginning to become a truly intelligent and ethical being, will shake away from him all these sources of prejudice and passion and evil. Humanity will become one in idea and feeling, and life be consciously what it now is in spite of itself, one in its status on earth and its destiny....

But what is the cause of this almost total bankruptcy of the international ideal under the strong test of life? Partly it may be because the triumph of socialism is not necessarily bound up with the progress of internationalism. Socialism is really an attempt to complete the growth of the national community by making the individual do what he has never yet done, live for the community more than for himself. It is an outgrowth of the national, not of the international idea. No doubt, when the society of the nation has been perfected, the society of nations can and even must be formed; but this is a later possible or eventual result of socialism, not its primary vital necessity. In the crises of life it is the primary vital necessity which tells, while the other and remoter element betrays itself to be a mere idea not yet ready for accomplishment; it can only become powerful when it also becomes either a vital or a psychological necessity. The real truth, the real cause of the failure is that internationalism is as yet, except with some exceptional men, merely an idea; it is not yet a thing near to our vital feelings or otherwise a part of our psy-

chology. The normal socialist or syndicalist cannot escape from the general human feeling and in the test he too turns out, even though he were a professed *sans-patrie* in ordinary times, in his inner heart and being a nationalist.

...But until the idea of humanity has grown not only upon the intelligence but in the sentiments, feelings, natural sympathies and mental habits of man, the progress made is likely to be more in external adjustments than in the vital matters, more in a use of the ideal for mixed and egoistic purposes than at once or soon in a large and sincere realisation of the ideal. Until man in his heart is ready, a profound change of the world conditions cannot come; or it can only be brought about by force, physical force or else force of circumstances, and that leaves all the real work to be done. A frame may have then been made, but the soul will have still to grow into that mechanical body.

The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation.

Sri Aurobindo

The Task Ahead

The beginnings of a great revolution which is destined to change the whole political, social, and economic life of a great country, are always full of ebb and flow, perplexing by the multitude of details and their continual interaction.

Society is full of anomalies which clash and jostle together in an inextricable chaos of progress and reaction; economic India is in the throes of a violent transition from the old mediaeval basis of life to the modern; politics is at a parting of the ways. All these various and independent activities of the Indian body politic unite into a huge and confused movement of which the main impulse is political and the others are largely inspired, if not motivated, by the passions which are at the root of the political upheaval. Great issues of economics wear the guise of a political conflict; immense political aspirations become mixed up with a purely industrial struggle between indigenous labour and foreign capital.

So far as society as a whole was affected, it was by the new environments of the nineteenth century bringing an irresistible pressure to bear on its outworks, and sometimes by the force of economical necessity born of the modern conditions of India under British rule. The change was from outside and therefore injurious rather than beneficial, for an organism is doomed which, incapable of changing from within, answers only to the pressure of environment. But this immobile state of Hindu society has now begun to pass away and we see the beginning of a

profound and incalculable life in the heart of the great organism. Yesterday we hardly needed to reckon with the lower strata of society in our political life; today they are beginning to live, to move, to have a dim inarticulate hope and to grope for air and room. That is a sign of coming social revolution in which neither the conservative forces of society nor the liberal sympathies of the educated few will have much voice. The forces that are being unprisoned will upheave the whole of our society with a volcanic force and the shape it will take after the eruption is over does not depend on the wishes or the wisdom of men. These social stirrings also are mingling with the political unrest to increase the confusion. The question of the Namasudras in Bengal has become a political as well as a social problem and in other parts of the country also the line between politics and social questions is threatened with obliteration.

The future is not in our hands. When so huge a problem stares us in the face, we become conscious of the limits of human discernment and wisdom. We at once feel that the motions of humanity are determined by forces and not by individuals and that the intellect and experience of statesmen are merely instruments in the hands of the Power which manifests itself in those great incalculable forces. In ordinary times, we are apt to forget this and to account for all that happens as the result of this statesman's foresight or that genius' dynamic personality. But in times like the present we find it less easy to shut our eyes to the truth. We do not affect to believe, therefore, that we can discover any solution of these great problems or any sure line of policy by which the tangled issues of so immense a movement can be kept free from the possibil-

ity of inextricable anarchy in the near future. Anarchy will come. This peaceful and inert nation is going to be rudely awakened from a century of passivity and flung into a world-shaking turmoil out of which it will come transformed, strengthened and purified. There is a chaos which is the result of inertia and the prelude of death, and this was the state of India during the last century. The British peace of the last fifty years was like the quiet green grass and flowers covering the corruption of a sepulchre. There is another chaos which is the violent reassertion of life and it is this chaos into which India is being hurried today. We cannot repine at the change, but are rather ready to welcome the pangs which help the storm which purifies, the destruction which renovates.

One thing only we are sure of, and one thing we wear as a life-belt which will buoy us up on the waves of the chaos that is coming on the land. This is the fixed and unalterable faith in an over-ruling Purpose which is raising India once more from the dead, the fixed and unalterable intention to fight for the renovation of her ancient life and glory. Swaraj is the life-belt, Swaraj the pilot, Swaraj the star of guidance. If a great social revolution is necessary, it is because the ideal of Swaraj cannot be accomplished by a nation bound to forms which are no longer expressive of the ancient and immutable Self of India. She must change the rags of the past so that her beauty may be readorned. She must alter her bodily appearance so that her soul may be newly expressed. We need not fear that any change will turn her into a second-hand Europe. Her individuality is too mighty for such a degradation, her soul too calm and self-sufficient for such a surrender. If again an economical revolution is inevitable, it is because the

fine but narrow edifice of her old industrial life will not allow of Swaraj in commerce and industry. The industrial energies of a free and perfect national life demand a mightier scope and wider channels. Neither need we fear that the economic revolution will land us in the same diseased and disordered state of society as now offends the nobler feelings of humanity in Europe. India can never so far forget the teaching which is her life and the secret of her immortality as to become a replica of the organised selfishness, cruelty and greed which is dignified in the West by the name of Industry. She will create her own conditions, find out the secret of order which Socialism in vain struggles to find and teach the peoples of the earth once more how to harmonise the world and the spirit.

If we realise this truth, if we perceive in all that is happening a great and momentous transformation necessary not only for us but for the whole world, we shall fling ourselves without fear or misgivings into the times which are upon us. India is the *guru* of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit. But Swaraj is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfil the condition.

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No policy can be successful which does not take into view the end to be attained and the amount and nature of the effort needed to effect it. The leader of industry who enters on a commercial enterprise, first looks at the magnitude of his field and intended output and equips himself with capital and plant accordingly, and even if he cannot

commence at once on the scale of his ideal he holds it in view himself, puts it before the public in issuing his prospectus and estimating the capital necessary, and all the practical steps he takes are conceived in the light of his original aspiration and ordered towards its achievement. So it is with the political ventures of a nation. To place before himself a great object and then to shrink in the name of expediency from the expenditure and sacrifice called for in its pursuit is not prudence but ineptitude. If you will be prudent, be prudent from the beginning. Fix your object low and creep towards it. But if you fix your object in the skies, it will not do to crawl on the ground and because your eyes are sometimes lifted towards the ideal imagine you are progressing while you murmur to those behind, "Yes, yes, our ideal is in the skies because that is the place for ideals, but we are on the ground and the ground is our proper place of motion. Let us creep, let us creep." Such inconsistency will only dishearten the nation, unnerve its strength and confuse its intelligence. You must either bring down your ideal to the ground or find wings or aeroplane to lift you to the skies. There is no middle course.

...But the fundamental idea of the movement as a divine manifestation purposing to raise up the nation not only for its own fulfilment in India but for the work and service of the world and therefore sure of its fulfilment, therefore independent of individuals and superior to vicissitudes and difficulties, is one which they cannot yet grasp. It is a sentiment which has been growing upon us as the movement progressed, but it has not yet been sufficiently put forward by the organs of Nationalism itself, partly because the old idea of separating religion from politics lingered,

partly because the human aspects of the Nationalist faith had to be established before we could rise to the divine. But that divine aspect has to be established if we are to have the faith and greatness of soul which can alone help us in the tremendous developments the signs of the time portend. There is plenty of weakness still lingering in the land and we cannot allow it to take shelter under the cry of expediency and rationality and seek to kill the faith and force that has been born in the hearts of the young.... The gospel of Nationalism has not yet been fully preached; its most inspiring tenets have yet to be established not only by the eloquence of the orator and inspiration of the prophet but by the arguments of the logician, the appeal to experience of the statesman and the harmonising generalisations of the scientist.

To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency.

Sri Aurobindo

Rebuilding India

The life of the nation which once flowed in a broad and single stream has long been severed into a number of separate meagre and shallow channels. The two main floods have followed the paths of religion and politics, but they have flowed separately. Our political activity has crept in a channel cut for it by European or Europeanised minds; it tended always to a superficial wideness, but was deficient in depth and volume. The national genius, originality, individuality poured itself into religion, while our politics were imitative and unreal. Yet without a living political activity national life cannot, under modern circumstances, survive. So also there has been a stream of social life, more and more muddied and disturbed, seeking to get clearness, depth, largeness, freedom, but always failing and increasing in weakness or distraction. There was a stream too of industrial life, faint and thin, the poor survival of the old vigorous Indian artistic and industrial capacity murdered by unjust laws and an unscrupulous trade policy. All these ran in disconnected channels, sluggish, scattered and ineffectual. The tendency is now for these streams to unite again into one mighty invincible and grandiose flood....

There is no national life perfect or sound without the *cāturvarṇya*. The life of the nation must contain within itself the life of the Brahmin, – spirituality, knowledge, learning, high and pure ethical aspiration and endeavour; the life of the Kshatriya, – manhood and strength moral and physical, the love of battle, the thirst for glory, the sense of honour, chivalry, self-devotion, generosity, gran-

deur of soul; the life of the Vaishya, – trade, industry, thrift, prosperity, benevolence, philanthropy; the life of the Shudra, – honesty, simplicity, labour, religious and quiet service to the nation even in the humblest position and the most insignificant kind of work....

All this is, let us say, a parable. It is more than a parable, it is a great truth. But our educated class have become so unfamiliar with the deeper knowledge of their forefathers that it has to be translated into modern European terms before they can understand it. For it is the European ideas alone that are real to them and the great truths of Indian thought seem to them mere metaphors, allegories and mystic parables. So well has British education done its fatal denationalising work in India.

The Brahmin stands for religion, science, scholarship and the higher morality; the Kshatriya for war, politics and administration; the Vaishya for the trades, professions and industries, the Shudra for labour and service. It is only when these four great departments of human activity are all in a robust and flourishing condition that the nation is sound and great. When any of these disappear or suffer, it is bad for the body politic....

This is the fate from which we have narrowly escaped by the resurgence of the soul of India in Nationalism.

But that resurgence is not yet complete. There is the sentiment of Indianism, there is not yet the knowledge. There is a vague idea, there is no definite conception or deep insight. We have yet to know ourselves, what we were, are and may be; what we did in the past and what we are ca-

pable of doing in the future; our history and our mission. This is the first and most important work which the *Karmayogin* sets for itself, to popularise this knowledge. The Vedanta or Sufism, the temple or the mosque, Nanak and Kabir and Ramdas, Chaitanya or Guru Govinda, Brahmin and Kayastha and Namasudra, whatever national asset we have, indigenous or acclimatised, it will seek to make known, to put in its right place and appreciate. And the second thing is how to use these assets so as to swell the sum of national life and produce the future. It is easy to appraise their relations to the past; it is more difficult to give them their place in the future. The third thing is to know the outside world and its relation to us and how to deal with it. That is the problem which we find at present most difficult and insistent, but its solution depends on the solution of the others.

...*brahmateja* is the thing we need most of all and first of all. In one sense, that means the pre-eminence of religion; but after all, what the Europeans mean by religion is not *brahmateja*; which is rather spirituality, the force and energy of thought and action arising from communion with or self-surrender to that within us which rules the world. In that sense we shall use it. This force and energy can be directed to any purpose God desires for us; it is sufficient to knowledge, love or service; it is good for the liberation of an individual soul, the building of a nation or the turning of a tool. It works from within, it works in the power of God, it works with superhuman energy.

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Our aim will therefore be to help in building up India for the sake of humanity – this is the spirit of the Nationalism

which we profess and follow. We say to humanity: "The time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper and wider life towards which humanity moves. The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature...."

...We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future. Our business is to realise ourselves first and to mould everything to the law of India's eternal life and nature....

"... 'This is our *dharma*'. We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians. And the *dharma* once discovered, we shall strive our utmost not only to profess but to live, in our individual actions, in our social life, in our political endeavours."

We say to the individual and especially to the young who are now arising to do India's work, the world's work, God's work: "You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare every-

thing, sacrifice everything. First, therefore, become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of humanity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world."

To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perceptions, Indian energy, Indian greatness, and to solve the problems that perplex the world in an Indian spirit and from the Indian standpoint, this, in our view, is the mission of Nationalism.

Sri Aurobindo

A Journey from Politics to Yoga

Sri Aurobindo had been involved in the Alipore Bomb case and was put in Alipore Jail for trial. But he was acquitted after a year. On acquittal Sri Aurobindo narrates his 'visions' he had before and during his trial. Readers will mark that this one year was a landmark in the life of Sri Aurobindo and that the 'visions' he had during the period of his trial served as 'lamp-posts' to his journey from politics to yoga.

The year of detention was meant only for a year of seclusion and of training. How could anyone hold me in jail longer than was necessary for God's purpose? He had given me a word to speak and a work to do, and until that word was spoken I knew that no human power could hush me, until that work was done no human power could stop God's instrument, however weak that instrument might be or however small....

...I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go into seclusion and to look into myself, so that I might enter into closer communion with Him. I was weak and could not accept the call. My work was very dear to me and in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it would suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it. It seemed to me that He spoke to me again and said, "The bonds you had not the strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that should continue. I have had another thing for you to do and it is for that I have brought you

here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work." Then He placed the Gita in my hands. His strength entered into me and I was able to do the Sadhana of the Gita. I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently....

...I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies. Amongst these thieves and dacoits there were many who put me to shame by their sympathy, their kindness, the humanity triumphant over such adverse circumstances. One I saw among them especially, who seemed to me a saint, a peasant of my nation who did not know how to read and write, an alleged dacoit sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment, one of those whom we look down upon in our Pharisaical pride of class as Chhotalok. Once more He spoke to me and said, "Behold the people among whom I have sent you to do a little of

my work. This is the nature of the nation I am raising up and the reason why I raise them.”

When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the Magistrate I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, “When you were cast into jail, did not your heart fail and did you not cry out to me, where is Thy protection? Look now at the Magistrate, look now at the Prosecuting Counsel.” I looked and it was not the Magistrate whom I saw, it was Vasudeva, it was Narayana who was sitting there on the bench. I looked at the Prosecuting Counsel and it was not the Counsel for the prosecution that I saw; it was Sri Krishna who sat there, it was my Lover and Friend who sat there and smiled. “Now do you fear?” He said, “I am in all men and I overrule their actions and their words. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear. This case which is brought against you, leave it in my hand. It is not for you. It was not for the trial that I brought you here but for something else. The case itself is only a means for my work and nothing more.” Afterwards when the trial opened in the Sessions Court, I began to write many instructions for my Counsel as to what was false in the evidence against me and on what points the witnesses might be cross-examined. Then something happened which I had not expected. The arrangements which had been made for my defence were suddenly changed and another Counsel stood there to defend me. He came unexpectedly, – a friend of mine, but I did not know he was coming. You have all heard the name of the man who put away from him all other thoughts and abandoned all his practice, who sat up half the night day after day for months and broke his health to save me, – Srijut Chittaran-

jan Das. When I saw him, I was satisfied, but I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put away from me and I had the message from within, "This is the man who will save you from the snares put around your feet. Put aside those papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him." From that time I did not of myself speak a word to my Counsel about the case or give a single instruction, and if ever I was asked a question, I always found that my answer did not help the case.... I knew all along what He meant for me, for I heard it again and again, always I listened to the voice within; "I am guiding, therefore fear not. Turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you nor any other. Therefore whatever clouds may come, whatever dangers and sufferings, whatever difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is nothing impossible, nothing difficult. I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay."

Meanwhile He had brought me out of solitude and placed me among those who had been accused along with me.... He said to me, "This is the young generation, the new and mighty nation that is arising at my command. They are greater than yourself. What have you to fear? If you stood aside or slept, the work would still be done. If you were cast aside tomorrow, here are the young men who will take up your work and do it more mightily than you have ever done. You have only got some strength from me to speak a word to this nation which will help to raise it"....

...but only this that day after day, He showed me His wonders and made me realise the utter truth of the Hindu religion. I had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign. About many things in Hinduism I had once been inclined to believe that they were imaginations, that there was much of dream in it, much that was delusion and Maya. But now day after day I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in the body the truths of the Hindu religion. They became living experiences to me, and things were opened to me which no material science could explain. When I first approached Him, it was not entirely in the spirit of the Bhakta, it was not entirely in the spirit of the Jnani....

When I approached God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta. So when I turned to the Yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if my idea was right, I did it in this spirit and with this prayer to Him, "If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life." I strove long for the realisation of Yoga and at last to some extent I had it, but in what I most desired I was not satisfied. Then in the se-

clusion of the jail, of the solitary cell I asked for it again. I said, "Give me Thy Adesh. I do not know what work to do or how to do it. Give me a message." In the communion of Yoga two messages came. The first message said, "I have given you a work and it is to help to uplift this nation. Before long the time will come when you will have to go out of jail; for it is not my will that this time either you should be convicted or that you should pass the time, as others have to do, in suffering for their country. I have called you to work, and that is the Adesh for which you have asked. I give you the Adesh to go forth and do my work." The second message came and it said, "Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and

extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help in my purpose. They also are doing my work, they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment.”

Asia is in everything hugely mapped, immense and grandiose in its motions, and its life-periods are measured accordingly. Europe lives by centuries, Asia by millenniums. Europe is parcelled out in nations, Asia in civilisations.

Sri Aurobindo

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