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# AUROBINDO—THE PROPHET OF PATRIOTISM

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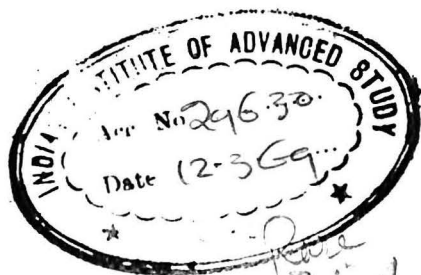
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To  
*Martyrs for the Country*

FROM

**KHUDIRAM**

TO

**MATANGINI HAZRA**

*“ From these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.”*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



## INTRODUCTION

In this brochure an attempt has been made to place before the Indian public a summary of Aurobindo's gospel of patriotism. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* and the *Karmayogin*—many of which have not yet been reprinted—must be regarded as Aurobindo's rendering of the problem of patriotism, a scripture for Indians in the present condition, a revelation of the secret of life and death in a nation which is told to each of us as we contemplate the greatness of our past, the needs of the present and the magnificent possibilities of our future. The Prophet of Patriotism, confronted with the stern and relentless order of the time, the seeming waste and cruelty of that order, traced the progress of the nation through the valley overshadowed by the darkness of an inoffensive philanthropic patriotism which would not punish those who baffle the will of the nation which is "a crime of *lese-nation* which is far more heinous than the legal offence of *lese-majeste* on and up to the serene heights of self-development and defensive resistance where rests the golden star—Independence.

Conditions have changed considerably since 1906; but the opportunity that has come to a few after the division of United India should not be considered to be the goal of our political ambition. If much has been achieved through more than fifty years of struggle in which immense sacrifices have been suffered, much still remains to be achieved. And records and other sources of information may reveal in their true colours of infamy many who have been posing in the

lime-light as whole-souled patriots. British Imperialism—thanks to the effects of two global wars and the wonderful achievement of Subhas Chandra Bose and his fellow-workers—has worn away as far as India is concerned; but, may like a monster turn and give hot gasps when we think it has expired. The economic conditions of British rule in India have not yet been wiped out of existence; the system of education planted by the British continues to flourish; the British system of administration is still considered to be best for the country.

That is why the political gospel of Aurobindo must be read and understood by the masses who are the real people of India whose symbol Blunt said, is the elephant—docile, sensible, temperate and easily attached, but which will not bear for ever ill-treatment and when angered in earnest whose bulk alone would make him dangerous and put it beyond the strength of the strongest to guide him or control.

Aurobindo has left politics in search of Life-Divine. He has felt the spiritual need of the West and is confident of the mission of India. His *Sadhana* reminds one of what Pratap Chandra Mazumdar wrote in 1902:

“I stood on the Himalayas one evening to watch the glory of the autumn sun-set behind the great snow-peaks of the West; after a gleam or two a sudden mist arose. It swallowed the snows, covered the crests, hid all the great mountatins, obscured every view, and encompassed even myself. In great disappointment I turn round, when lo! the whole splendour of the West reappeared in the cloud-lands of the East. The transferred light and glories were unspeakable. I stood transfixed, and reflected that such must happen some

day in the spiritual heavens—when the mists have swallowed the West, the Eternal Light shall be restored to the Eastern sky. From the East to the West, and then from the West to the East again, will the sun move round to complete its mystic cycle”.

That day has perhaps, come. In 1897 Swami Vivekananda said:

“We, Hindus have now been placed under God’s providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence”.

Aurobindo now says:

“It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and saving light.”

Aurobindo has, by his writings, helped to herald this new awakening in the West steeped in materialism.

He has entered a new chamber in his career. But his political gospel he has given to his countrymen. And to that gospel we must turn if we are to attain real independence for India. In the hope that India—the India of the vision of Bankim Chandra, of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and of Aurobindo—will work and strive for that Independence I have tried in the following pages, to interpret Aurobindo’s political policy which ought to guide the nation.

HEMENDRA PRASAD GHOSE

# AUROBINDO —THE PROPHET OF PATRIOTISM

## I

Every large shrine in Orissa which inspires awe and reverence in the pilgrim consists of four chambers opening one into the other—the *Bhog Mandir* or the Hall of Offerings where the bulkier oblations are made, the *Nat Mandir* or the Pillared Hall where musicians exhibit specimens of their art, the *Jagamohan* or the Hall of Audience in which the pilgrims assemble to gaze upon the God and the *Bara Deul* or the Sanctuary itself where the God sits. So we can separate the work of Aurobindo into four divisions, one opening into the other—literary, political, cultural and spiritual. Beginning with literature—original and otherwise, it proceeds to politics which proceeds on to culture and culminates in Life Divine which rests on the *Ratna Bedi* or sacred platform of the teachings of the *Bhagabat Gita*—the “living message” of the teacher who is not only “the God in man who unveils himself in the world of knowledge, but the God in man who moves our whole world of action, by and for whom all our humanity exists and struggles and labours, towards whom all human life travels and progresses”.

Aurobindo's purely literary career—the career of the man deep down in whom lay an academic element ineradicable and strong, connecting him with a past that was a period of preparation had practically come to an end when I came in contact with him in the second division of his wonderful career. It was politics which brought us together and cemented with suffering and sacrifice a bond which

cannot snap. India was seething with divine discontent, her people were feeling that their atrophied veins were being quickened with the life blood of a new realisation—we call it patriotism for want of a better or more expressive name. India had been in danger of losing her soul and becoming a mean and miserable replica of England. Bengal which had been the pioneer of this perversion was the first to decry the danger and decry the tendency to accept the perilous position of a slave. The tocsin of alarm had been sounded by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Swami Vivekananda both of whom wanted to raise patriotism to religion. Aurobindo came after them—and improved upon the inheritance he had received from them. His tributes to them were worthy of those to whom they were paid and worthy of the man who paid them. Of the Swami he wrote in 1915:

“Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men . . . . We perceive his influence still working giagantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive upheaving that has entered the soul of India, and we say—‘Behold, Vivekananda still lives, in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children.’”

Of Bankim Chandra he wrote in 1907:

“Of the new spirit which is leading the nation to resurgence and independence, he is the inspired and political *guru*.”

He, according to Aurobindo, gave us the *mantra* *Bande Mataram* and in a single day the whole people became “converted to the religion of patriotism.” “The Mother,” he wrote, “had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no further slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered.”

These are passages taken from his article—Rishi Bankim Chandra written for the *Bande Mataram*, preparatory to

our pilgrimage to Bankim Chandra's paternal home at Kantalpara. But long before that, in 1894, he had written a series of articles on Bankim Chandra in the *Induprakash* in the seventh and last of which he had said—"What Bengal thinks to-morrow India will be thinking to-morrow week." We read the following in the peroration:

"Whatever else may perish or endure Bankim's fame cannot die. . . . . O sage politicians and subtle economists, whose heads run on Simultaneous Examinations and whose vision is bounded by Legislative Councils, what a lesson is here for you! Not in this way shall we exalt ourselves in the scale of nations, not in this way, o sages of the bench and sophists of the bar, but by the things of which your legal wisdom takes little cognizance, by noble thoughts, by high deeds, by immortal writings. Bankim and Madhusudhan have given the world three noble things. They have given it Bengali literature . . . they have given it the Bengali language. . . . . the Bengali nation . . . . . This is assuredly a proud record. Of them it may be said in the largest sense that they, being dead, yet live. And when posterity comes to crown with her praises the Makers of India, she shall place her most splendid laurel not on the sweating temples of a place-hunting politician, nor on the narrow forehead of a noisy social reformer, but on the serene brow of that gracious Bengali who never clamoured for place or power but did his work in silence for love of his work, even as nature does, and just because he had no aim but to give out the best that was in him, was able to create a language, a literature and a nation."

The Master, I understand, is chary to allow the republication of the seven articles on Bankim Chandra—palpitating with observation—but written during the early and noisy manhood of his talent—in the form in which they were published in 1894. But with due deference to his judgment I must say that I feel constrained to differ from him in this case. On the other hand by withholding permission to reproduce them he is doing injustice to

posterity. For to these seven articles and to those containing his criticism of the method of work adopted by the Congress at the time we must turn to trace the source and first manifestation of his political creed which, later, he amplified in the *Bande Mataram*—which was at once his political pulpit and platform, pulpit from which he preached his political gospel to his admirers and followers—platform from which he explained its implications and goal to the public which he had to convince and convert.

These seven articles on Bankim Chandra are redolent of that literary aroma which pervades the work of men of genius when their natural gifts—great in themselves—had been sharpened by steady practice still they rejoiced in their power. They reveal a wealth of information which only intimate knowledge of the West can produce. But what we are concerned with now is the first manifestation of that political creed which militated against the accepted creed of submission and asked the people to abandon the plain and pleasant path of prayer and petition and take the path of suffering and sacrifice—of discomfort and danger—to leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine.

The Indian National Congress was established in 1885—the aftermath of the Ilbert Bill agitation. Its founder A. O. Hume wrote:

“ Sons of Ind, why sit ye idle,  
Wait ye for some Deva's aid?  
Buckle to, be up and doing;  
Nations by themselves are made.”

and—

“ Ask no help from Heaven or Hell;  
In yourselves alone seek aid  
He that wills, and dares, has all;  
Nations by themselves are made.”

But a Britisher—and a former member of the British bureaucracy he wanted the continuance of British rule in India. His own conception of the role of the Congress was:

“ A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised.”

With the unerring instinct of a true statesman and patriot Aurobindo opposed this clever device to perpetuate British rule in India. He held with John Stuart Mill:

“ The Government of a people by itself has a meaning and reality ; but such a thing as Government of one people by another does not and cannot exist.”

And this for the simple reason that “one people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle-farm, to be worked for the profit of its own inhabitants,” but never for the benefit of the governed.

What Mill had said as a generalisation was said of British rule in India by Bryan during the Swadeshi days:

“ Let no one cite India as an argument in defence of colonialism. On the Ganges and the Indus the Briton, in spite of his many noble qualities and his large contributions to the world's advancement, has demonstrated, as many have before, man's inability to exercise with wisdom and justice irresponsible power over helpless people. He has conferred some benefits upon India, but he has extorted a tremendous price for them.

“ While he has boasted of bringing peace to the living he has led millions to the peace of the grave ; while he has dwelt upon order established between warring troops, he has impoverished the country by legalized pillage. Pillage is a strong word, but no refinement of language can purge the present system of its iniquity.”



Aurobindo was convinced that no tinkering can make the rule of the foreigner the goal of India's ambition; the congenital and incurable evils of British rule in India were sure to eat fatally into the legitimate eagerness of the people to secure their birthright—*independence*. "Political freedom," he said afterwards, "is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility." This is what Mazzini said—"Do not be led away by the idea of improving material conditions, without first solving the National question". Aurobindo wanted to solve the National question. He knew that the form of agitation given currency to by the Congress "only became effective in England when the people had already gained powerful voice in the Government" and that voice could be secured by them by resort to the method of open struggle and revolt no less than three several times. That is why he became a carping critic of the Congress. In his article on Bankim Chandra he had said:

- (1) It is the "Anglicised Indian" who "perorated on the Congress (platform), who frolics in the abysmal fatuity of interpellations in the Legislative Council".
- (2) "The Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption; annually its proportions sink into greater insignificance; its leaders . . . have climbed into the rarefied atmosphere of the Legislative Council and lost all hold on the imagination of the youngmen."
- (3) "Already we see the embryo of a new generation soon to be with us . . . . a generation national to a fault . . . . Already its vanguard is upon us."

His articles on the Congress in the *Induprakas*—'New lamps for Old'—enthralled the admiration of Mahadeo Govind Ranade, the astute Marhathi who was the power behind the throne of the Congress, who considered them

with anxiety akin to alarm as likely to strike a deadly blow to the organisation, such was the cogency of their reasoning and their manner of expression. He persuaded the editor to refrain from publishing more articles of the type.

But Aurobindo was determined to secure independence for his country. He felt that he had a mission which he could not neglect. He began to organise groups—call them secret societies if you like—to enlist workers and enthuse them for the work. He kept in touch with the current of events in Maharastra and Bengal and directed the work from Baroda where he was in the service of the State.

Aurobindo's biographer has said:

“ Sri Aurobindo withdrew into his shell, and decided to exploit a more favourable opportunity for both outlining his views and translating them into terms of practical politics.”

This opportunity arrived in 1905—in Bengal—occasioned by the agitation over the proposed partition of the Province. It was really a manifestation of the restless spirit of freedom seeking an outlet—an attempt to hit back and vindicate the manhood of the nation.

In his last article on Bankim Chandra Aurobindo had referred to the achievements of the Bengalees in various fields—even in painting. “In politics,” he said, the Bengalee “has always led and still leads.” The reason is not far to seek. In 1905 when in Bengal the bureaucrats were using repression to crush the anti-partition movement, Lala Lajpat Rai said from the Congress platform:

“ You have been hearing of the misfortune of our brethren of Bengal—I am rather inclined to congratulate them on the splendid opportunity which an all-wise Providence, in his dispensation, has afforded to them for heralding the dawn of a new political era for this country. I think the honour was reserved for Bengal, as Bengal was the first to benefit by the fruits of English education.”

Induced by Dwarka Nath Tagore the British politician George Thompson came to Calcutta in 1842 and was instrumental in the establishment of the British Indian Association. Among those who drew their political inspiration from him were Ram Gopal Ghose, Dakshinaranjan Mookerjee, Rev. K. M. Banerjee and many a *clarum et venrabile nomen*. Ten years before the arrival of Thompson, a Briton—Rickards had remarked that when the foundation of English education had been laid “among an astute and intelligent people” its “diffusion was inevitable” He said—“Through the medium of schools, literary meetings and printed books, all the learning and science of Europe will be greedily imbibed and securely domiciled by the Hindoos of India.” The first Indian member of the English Bar and the first member of the Indian Civil Service were Bengalees and later the first Wrangler and the first Indian to offer himself for election to the British Parliament, as also the first Chief Justice of an Indian High Court. The foundation stone of the Hindu College building was laid on the 25th day of February, 1824.

Surendra Nath Banerjee was the first Indian political missionary to undertake extensive tours to rouse sleeping camps to constitutional battles. H. J. S. Cotton said in his *New India*:

“The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country. The Bengali Baboos now rule opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong. . . . . The idea of any Bengali influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery or a MacLeod; yet it is the case that during the past year the tour of a Bengali lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assumed the character of a triumphal progress; and at the present moment the name of Surendra Nath Banerjee excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Mooltan as in Dacca.”

It was to Bengal that the leaders of political thought in India had to turn to select the first President of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

It may not be generally known that as far back as 1874 Kristo Das Pal moderate in politics and so to say the conscience-keeper of the loyalists, had said:

Home Rule for India ought to be our cry, and it ought to be based upon the same constitutional bases that is recognised in the colonies."

To Bengal, the home of his forefathers and that of his maternal grandfather Rajnarain Bose, the philosopher of militant patriotism, which he had inherited to improve upon and translate into action—Aurobindo returned when the time was ripe. He had been watching the current of thought in Bengal from Baroda and waiting for the proper moment. That moment came when the anti-partition agitation gathered strength; the nation was in courage flaming, in resolve at white heat, and above all, in revolt against false and sentimental advisers and leaders.

His feet were not set in unfamiliar political shoals. He had faith in the people. And we can safely say that Khudiram—the boy who plucked bright honour from the jaws of death by throwing the first bomb to vindicate the honour of the country, Profulla who had the cool courage to turn his revolver upon himself to avoid being arrested by a bull-dog of the bureaucracy, Kanai who killed a traitor and betrayer in jail and Jatin who died of wounds received in trench-fighting in Orissa were not freaks of nature—but the products of which the race is regularly capable.

Aurobindo came to Calcutta to organise the National Council of Education and national education in Bengal.

The Council had been considered necessary to boycott Government-controlled education. Aurobindo said:

“ We are dissatisfied with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country—its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its anti-national character, its subordination to the Government and the use made of that subordination for the discouragement of patriotism and the inculcation of loyalty (to the British Government).”

Round him rallied men of talent and patriotism among whom especial mention should be made of Satish Chandra Mookerjee of the Dawn Society. The Council of Education soon became a centre of culture and students were attracted by Aurobindo's deep erudition, his method of teaching and his personality —personality, “that mysterious complex of qualities whose citadel is never stormed by industry alone, and without whose gates brilliancy has so often clamoured in vain.”

The influence of the schoolmaster has often been overlooked or underrated. But Lord Broughham aptly said: “The schoolmaster is abroad, I trust to him, armed with his primer, against the soldier in full military array.” Aurobindo was a teacher of that type. But the toil of the schoolmaster is slow and more urgent work was awaiting Aurobindo—the work of the journalist who would explain to the people the implications of the “new politics”.

## II

Aurobindo was fully equipped for the work and the Gita was an unflinching source of inspiration to him. The Gita had been a source of inspiration to many before him. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, the Brahmo leader who was a delegate to the Congress of Religions like Vivekananda had said:

“ No more the Divine Charioteer will rush into the fratricidal field of Kurukshetra; but the teachings of the Bhagbat Gita will ever swell the music of our onward march.”

It had been a source of inspiration to Kashinath Trimback Telang of Bombay, of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Bengal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra. The commentaries of the last two have especial significance in our struggle for emancipation. And Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* must be said to be his *magnum opus* after his *Life Divine*. His political articles bear testimony to his having assimilated the teachings of the Gita which contains the quintessence of the philosophy which raised India to the pinnacle of glory. He looked at politics from the Gita point of view. "Politics," he held, "is the ideal of the Kshatriya, and the morality of the Kshatriya ought to govern our political actions." "To maintain justice and prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed, is the function for which the Kshatriya was created." And Sri Krishna who rebuked Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra said—"God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger."

The New Party wanted an all-India organ to fight prevailing political ignorance and establish its own opinion. In the Maharashtra Bal Gangadhar Tilak's *Kesari* in Marathi and the *Mahratta* in English were doing the work. But in Bengal the only organ which had been preaching the new politics was the *Sandhya*, a pice evening paper established and conducted by the Christian *sannyasi* Upadhyaya Bramha-bandhab—who—when accused of sedition in a British court of law made the following statement:

"I do not want to take any part in this trial because, I believe that in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in no way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development."

From the very beginning *Sandhya* had been voicing the

views of the New Party whose trumpet had set forth no uncertain sound. But an all-India daily organ in English was necessary. A handful of the followers of the new school—full of enthusiasm but of ridiculously limited resources in money—started the *Bande Mataram* with a capital of less than five hundred rupees—to be precise, Rs. 450 only, confident that the Party will not fail to take up the work of conducting it. Bipin Chandra Pal who hated calculations in great undertakings not only encouraged them but placed himself at their head as the editor of the paper. When the proposal was made that the Party should take upon itself the work of conducting the paper there were many objections, hesitations, difficulties postulated. But Aurobindo sided with those who had started the paper without consulting the rest of the members of the Party and swept all before him by a fervour that made all objections seem mean and vain.

The *Bande Mataram* was reorganised. Its first issue had been published on the 6th August, 1906, and the first issue, after the reorganisation, made its appearance on 1st November, 1906 from its new office, 2/1, Creek Row. As the authoritative account of 'Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram' has put it—"On its staff were not only Bipin Pal and Sri Aurobindo but some other very able writers, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Bejoy Chatterjee."

The *Bande Mataram* opened a new chapter in the history of Indian journalism and in the history of Indian political agitation. It told a mighty people reawakening after a great downfall that they had mis-spent half a century of unavailing effort in pursuing a policy of prayers and petitions by men who had used political agitation as a stepping-stone to official favour often culminating in Government service or a title which—though a badge of slavery—carried

influence with the untitled. It revealed the significant fact that under the influence of the "loyal" leaders politics had become the pleasant pastime of the prosperous elders or the easiest means to secure the attention of the British bureaucracy of which, Sir John Gorst had once said with consummate cynicism, it "had always hated and discouraged independent and original talent, and had always loved and promoted docile and unpretending mediocrity"—a policy they had inherited from Tarquinius Superbus and adapted to modern conditions by not cutting off the heads of the tall poppies, but taking other and more merciful means of removing dangerous political pre-eminence to a harmless condition or position. In its articles a recurrent thread of almost contemptuous depreciation of the bureaucracy pervaded the whole texture. It revealed in its true colours "the despotic foreign bureaucracy" we were living under—"no ordinary rough-riding despotism, but quiet, pervasive and subtle,—one that has fastened its grip on every detail of our national life and will not easily be persuaded to let go, even in the least degree, its octopus-like hold."

The effect of this teaching was soon felt. Gone were the soothing dope, the prattle of constitutional agitation, the cloying treacle of co-operation with a foreign bureaucracy with which the British and Moderates among Indians had deluged the nation for more than half a century; and "swift the reversion of things elemental . . . . beyond speech . . . . beyond imagination." The reason was that the words fell upon ears eagerly alert for no other sound than tidings of triumphant victory of nationalism over supineness and servility.

About a year after its first appearance Aurobindo wrote thus of the *Bande Mataram* :

"It came into being in answer to an imperative public need and not to satisfy any private ambition of personal



whim ; it was born in a great and critical hour for the whole nation and has a message to deliver, which nothing on earth can prevent it from delivering. . . . It claims that it has given expression to the will of the people and sketched their ideals and aspirations with the greatest amount of fidelity."

It was because of this that Aurobindo resented any insinuation of insincerity against the paper; and when the then Home Member of the Government of India had the audacity to say, in course of a speech, that papers which criticised and attacked Government were conducted for pecuniary gain by men of mediocre ability and education Aurobindo hit back by asking him to see for himself what sacrifices were cheerfully suffered for them by men "a corner of whose brain contains a richer store than your whole Scotch skull."

Aurobindo's facility of phrasing was inimitable. And his small but telling paragraph on the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai created an effect which few could anticipate. The political atmosphere of Calcutta had become ominous. The bureaucracy had been contemplating and making preparations to chastise political workers in the Punjab with scorpions to strike terror into the heart of the politicians in the Punjab which supplied so many soldiers to the British Army—soldiers who readily

" Died for a Queen they had never seen,  
For an Empress who reigned afar ;  
Died for the glory of what had been,  
And the honour of India's Star."

though—Chirol had to admit—

" Even the increase in the pay of the native soldier which Lord Kitchener obtained for him, does not prevent him and his friends from drawing their own comparison between the squalor of the quarters in which he is still housed and the relatively luxurious barracks built for Tommy Atkins under Lord Kitchener's administration at the expense of the Indian tax-payer."

And late at night on the 9th May, 1907 when Aurobindo was fast asleep in the house of his friend Subodh Chandra Mallick the news of the arrest and deportation was received in *Bande Mataram* office. The man in charge went to the house, entered his room and woke him up. He was angry with the man, but as soon as the telegram was handed over to him he asked for paper and pencil and from his bed wrote out the following paragraph:

Lala Lajpat Ray Deported—

The sympathetic administration of Mr. Morley has for the present attained its record—but for the present only. Lala Lajpat Rai has been deported out of British India. The fact is its own comment. The telegram goes on to say that indignation meetings have been forbidden for four days. Indignation meetings? The hour for speeches and fine writing is past. The bureaucracy has thrown down the gauntlet. We take it up. Men of the Punjab! Race of the Lion! show these men who would stamp you into the dust that for one Lajpat they have taken away a hundred Lajpats will rise in this place. Let them hear a hundred times louder your war cry—' Jai Hindusthan '.

Could anything be more expressive of the feeling of the nation at the use of lawless laws—the “rusty sword” as Lord Morley called it, to thwart the activities of the elected of the nation—more dignified in advancing the policy which Aurobindo wanted the people to pursue with a view to attain freedom? And I have narrated the circumstance under which it was written and how.

In conducting the case against him on behalf of the Government Mr. Norton when asked how he could say that an article he was referring to had been written by Aurobindo, said—“Because even I had to consult the dictionary.”

He was a formidable opponent in a controversy. One by one he took the screws out of the engine which the other party in the controversy had invented to run their engine—

stripped their arguments of the paints and colours and left them punily naked, while his own words and arguments came hurtling out molten and aflame. To have crossed swords with him was a career. The controversy with Mr. Nagendra Nath Ghose of the *Indian Nation* is still remembered by many. Mr. Ghose was a foeman worthy of his steel. He had acquired a reputation for fine writing and clear thinking. He could express his thoughts in clear, perspicuous and forcible English and he could pour forth a long succession of round and stately periods. But the controversy proved that his stock of political information was beggarly compared with the massy, the splendid, the various treasures laid up in Aurobindo's mind. During the controversy public curiosity was wound up to the highest pitch. And when it came to an end Aurobindo could say to his opponent as Charles Reade did to one of his critics—"Sir, you have ventured to contradict me on a question with regard to which I am profoundly learned where you are ignorant as dirt." Mr. N. N. Ghose had the reputation of a scholar. But if he could say, "it is true that I milked three hundred cows into my bucket, but the butter I churned was my own"—it was open to Aurobindo to retort—"but the butter had turned sour."

Aurobindo hated the political prestidigitateurs. It was in course of this controversy that Aurobindo replied to Mr. N. N. Ghose's contention that the mixture of races was an insuperable obstacle in the way of national unity:

"One might just as well say that different chemical elements cannot combine into a single substance as the different races cannot combine into a single nation."

It is worth remembering to-day that Aurobindo stood for "India, free, one and indivisible." "Vedantism", he said, "accepts no distinction of true or false religion, but considers only what will lead more or less surely, more or less quickly

to *Moksha*, spiritual emancipation and the realisation of the Divinity within." So, said Aurobindo:

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

The mentality which nurses this belief must be attained by the realisation that we are all sons of the Mother, the Mother for whom we would be ready to sacrifice our all—like the *santans* (sons) in Bankim Chandra's 'Ananda Math'.

That is why Aurobindo remarked that Bankim Chandra's supreme service to his nation was that he gave us the vision of our Mother:

"The bare intellectual idea of the Motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring motive. There are few Indians at present . . . who do not recognise that the country has claims on them or that freedom in the abstract is a desirable thing. But most of us, when it is a question between the claims of the country and other claims, do not in practice prefer the service of the country . . . It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born.

Bankim Chandra had that vision and that is why he said in reverence:

"Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love divine, the awe  
In our hearts that conquers death.

Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,  
Every image made divine  
In our temples is but thine."

Aurobindo called Bankim Chandra a *Rishi*. He said of the *Rishi*—"He bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine"—and preached the gospel of fearless strength and force. "The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of the mendicant."

"Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,  
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million  
hands?"

The new politics Aurobindo preached was a serious doctrine. "To hit back, to assail and crush the assailant, to vindicate one's manhood becomes an imperious necessity to outraged humanity." "We do not want to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer and not how to strike."

Swami Vivekananda had preached this doctrine with the ardour of a great teacher:

"The religious books of the Hindus say that *Moksha* is higher than *Dharma*—but *Dharma* must be practised before *Moksha* . . . . Non-violence is good, enmity with none is a great ideal; but remember you are not an anchorite but a man of the world. If one gives you a slap on your face, you will sin if you do not give him ten slaps in return. Manu the great law-giver has said that it is not a sin to kill a Brahmin who comes to kill you. This truth must not be forgotten nor forsaken. The world is enjoyed by the brave hero. . . . If you tamely submit to insult and injury you deserve hell here and hereafter. . . . For the man of the world it is a sin and a crime to suffer injustice."

This doctrine found full expression in the words of Sri Krishna in the field of Kurukshetra—when he rebuked Arjuna for deviating from the *Dharma* or Duty of a Kshatriya and said:

“—Arise, thou, Son of Kunti! brace  
Thine arm for conflict, nerve thy heart to meet—  
As things alike to thee—pleasure or pain—”

“We do not want,” said Aurobindo, “to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer, and not how to strike.” Meek submission to illegal outrage must be abhorred and avoided. We must not be “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.” A crown cracked in a street affray with the police must not be regarded as the head of a martyr.

Our attitude towards concessions coming from the oppressor should be that of Laocoon: “We fear the Greeks even when they bring us gifts.”

Aurobindo was convinced that the one thing necessary to secure first was political freedom.

Foreign domination had caused the ruin of Indian industries. The foreigner had no scruples about the methods he adopted to secure his end. The methods he adopted were not always palpable. But as Ranade remarked:

“The political domination of one country by another attracts far more attention than the more formidable, though unfelt domination which the capital, enterprise and skill of one country exercise over the trade and manufactures of another. This latter domination has an insidious influence which paralyzes the springs of all the activities which together make up the life of a nation.”

The hand-loom industry of India stood next in importance only to the universal but insecure industry of agriculture depending mostly on the caprice of the clouds and, therefore, degenerating into a gamble in rain. Its ruin was accomplished not only by the use of the arm of political injustice to strangle it but also by insidious methods. In 1866 the India Office published ‘The Textile Manufactures and Costumes of the People of India’ which was an explanatory

volume to the collection of 700 specimens of textile manufactures arranged in 18 volumes—the 18 volumes containing 700 “working samples or specimens.” In the Introduction the author of the work—J. Forbes Watson wrote—“Each sample has been prepared in such a way as to indicate the character of the whole piece from which, it was cut, and thus enable the manufacturer to reproduce the article if he wishes to do so.” These volumes were supplied to the textile manufacturers in Great Britain, and the author remarked:

“About two hundred millions of souls form the population of what we commonly speak of as India; and, scant though the garments of the vast majority may be, an order to clothe them all would try the resources of the greatest manufacturing nation on earth. It is clear, therefore, that India is in a position to become a magnificent customer.”

Romesh Chandra Dutt traced with consummate ability the decline of India's industries under the British. And Aurobindo wrote of Romesh Chandra,—“Without the Economic History and its damning story of England's commercial and fiscal dealings with India we doubt whether the public mind would have been ready for the Boycott.”

“Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation. To attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility.”

Everything else can wait, but political freedom cannot. That is why in his essays on Bankim Chandra he deprecated the “place-hunting politician” and the “noisy social reformer.” In his *Ideal of the Karmayogin*—he said:

“We do not believe that by changing the machinery so as to make our society the ape of Europe we shall effect social renovation. Widow-remarriage, inter-marriages, inter-dining and the other nostrums of the social reformer are the mechanical changes which, whatever their merits or demerits,

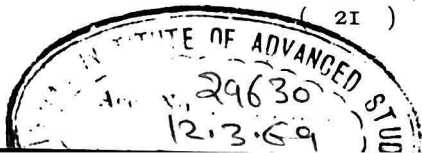
cannot by themselves save the soul of the nation alive or stay the course of degradation and decline. It is the spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become socially and politically great and free."

He was ready to overlook many shortcomings in one who was ready to suffer sacrifices for freedom:

"A man capable of self-sacrifice, whatever his other sins, has left the animal behind him; he has the stuff in him of a future and higher humanity."

Aurobindo stood against—"the fatal dependence, passivity and the helplessness in which a century of all-persasive British control has confirmed us." He said—"We have fumbled through the nineteenth century, prattling of enlightenment and national regeneration; and the result has been not national progress, but a national confusion and weakness." From that slough of weakness, helplessness, and despondency he wanted to extricate the people. He wanted to harness the rising hopes and imagination of a mighty people reawakening after a great downfall to the cause of freedom—to see the people develop extreme self-denial as a part of the national character—"iron endurance, tenacity, doggedness, far above anything that is needed for the more usual military revolt or sanguinary revolution." Self-development was the one thing necessary. The New Party of which Aurobindo was a philosopher and worker stood for it. That Party abhorred the unscrupulous policy of the English formed of a mixture of violence and oily deceit. The Englishman can hardly regard as national and practical that form of patriotism which causes a disorganized poverty-stricken country to prefer to govern itself, however badly, rather than form an integral part of a powerful empire. But Aurobindo and others of the New School—men like Tilak and Khparde in Maharashtra, Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, Chidambaram Pillai in Madras, felt that the self-respect of the nation required that British domina-

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tion in India should end, British administration and British exploitation should lie in the dust a mangled mass of misery. If Napoleon Bonaparte was the child and champion of the atrocities of Jacobinism the British bureaucracy in India was the product and symbol of autocracy and power—often manifesting itself in violence and deliberate insult to the dignity of the people of the country. We will give only two instances—

(1) The young Europeans at Lahore used to hang about the door of the church which John Lawrence frequented, "because they knew that on some pretext or other, the Chief Commissioner would be sure to hammer his syce (or groom) before driving home, and they wanted to see the fun."

(2) Vassili Verestchagin the great Russian painter described as "terrible"—"the English haughtiness, the disdainful way in which they treat their fellow-creatures (*i.e.* Indians) as if they were dirt beneath their feet."

Racial discrimination was a constant insult to Indians.

The change that was needed was radical. "Organised resistance to an existing form of government may be undertaken either for the vindication of national liberty, or in order to substitute one form of government for another, or to remove particular objectionable features in the existing system without any entire or radical alteration of the whole, or simply for the redress of particular grievances." The political agitation in the nineteenth century was confined to the smaller and narrower objects. That was not what the New Party wanted. They had faith in the nation and the people. They desired not a maimed development but the full, vigorous and noble realisation of national existence. That is exactly why they had a very poor opinion of the Indian members of the Indian Civil Service—"The Indian Civilian is a serf masquerading as a heaven-

born and can only deserve favour and promotion by his zeal in fastening the yoke heavier upon his fellow-countrymen. As a rule the foreign government can rely on the 'native' civilian to be more zealously oppressive than even the average Anglo-Indian official." The New Party declined to accept Congress nostrums—palliatives which could not even be counted upon to palliate; for no nation can be kept vital by moral opiates.

Abraham Lincoln has said:

"The country with its institutions belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

But that applies to a country where the inhabitants have the inherent right to think that it belongs to them. The *Santans* of 'Anandamath' were taught to believe that they had neither father, nor home, neither brother nor property. They had only the Mother—the country which is greater than heaven itself. India was considered to belong to the British and its people mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. And inoffensive philanthropic patriotism could not put an end to this state of things which was crushing the nation out of existence as a nation and putting every obstacle on the way of freedom.

Aurobindo examined organised national resistance to existing conditions and examined the three courses open to it—

(1) Organised passive resistance as initiated by Parnell in Ireland. Its history is now well known. Addressing a meeting at Ennis Parnell asked—"What are you to do to a tenant who bids for a farm from which his neighbour has been evicted?" "Shoot him", said a voice from the crowd. "I think", said Parnell, "I heard somebody say 'Shoot

him', but I wish to point out to you a very much better way. When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted you must show him on the roadside when you meet him, you must show him in the streets of the town, you must show him at the shop-counter in the fair, and in the market-place and even in the house of worship, by leaving him severely alone, by putting him into a moral Coventry, by isolating him from his kind as if he was a leper of old." Before a month was out this advice was acted upon in the case of Capt. Boycott in Mayo, the Agent of the Earl of Erne. That is the origin of the word Boycott.

(2) An untiring campaign of assassination and a confused welter of riots, strikes and agrarian risings all over the country.

(3) Armed revolt—"the readiest and the swiftest, the most thorough in its results"—demanding "the least powers of endurance and suffering and the smallest and briefest sacrifices."

Aurobindo carefully considered the desirability of using these methods in India, because, "the choice of a subject nation of the means it will use for vindicating its liberty is best determined by the circumstance of its servitude."—and arrived at the conclusion that under existing circumstances passive resistance was the most natural and suitable weapon.

At the same time he stated that:

(1) "Under certain circumstances a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle and the morality of war is different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when

he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra."

(2) In some cases "the answer of violence to violence is justified and inevitable."

Having decided that boycott was the most suitable weapon, he proceeded to discuss its methods with a view to render administration impossible by successfully organised refusal of assistance.

(1) "We are dissatisfied with the fiscal and economical condition of British rule in India, with the foreign exploitation of the country, the continual bleeding of its resources, the chronic famine and rapid impoverishment which result, the refusal of the Government to protect the people and their industries. Accordingly we refuse to help the process of exploitation and impoverishment in our capacity as consumers, we refuse henceforth to purchase foreign and especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others. By an organised relentless boycott of British goods, we propose to render the further exploitation of the country impossible."

Two things in this statement deserve especial attention. Aurobindo would refuse "to purchase foreign goods"—to help Indian industries and render further exploitation impossible. This had no political significance. But he would refuse to purchase "especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others." This had especial political significance. The object was to make British administration impossible. As a matter of fact Aurobindo—like Subhas Chandra Bose after him—was of opinion that it was not prudent to rule out the idea of securing outside help in India's struggle for freedom as the enemy *i.e.* the British were powerful. With that conviction he opposed Upadhyay Brahmabandhab's use of the words—"Feringhee" and "Topiwallah" to describe the target of scorn. Every

European, he held, was not our enemy and may be our ally—if and when necessary; so Europeans—besides the British should not be antagonised. The people, at the same time, should be taught to distinguish between the British and other European nations. The purchase of British goods by Indians should not be condoned. Our attitude towards those who purchased British goods, therefore, would be that advocated by Parnell towards the Irish tenant who would bid for a farm from which his neighbour had been evicted.

(2) "We are dissatisfied with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its anti-national character, its subordination to the Government and the use made of that subordination for the discouragement of patriotism and the inculcation of loyalty. Accordingly we refuse to send our boys to Government Schools or to schools aided or controlled by the Government; if this educational boycott is general and well-organised, the educational administration of the country will be rendered impossible and the control of its youthful minds pass out of the hands of the foreigner."

The system of education established in the country by the foreigner was for his own benefit. Disraeli objected on principle to the interference of the State in matters of education. It was, he said, a return to "the system of barbarous age, the system of paternal government; wherever was found what was called a paternal government was found a State education. It had been discovered that the best way to secure implicit obedience was to commence tyranny in the nursery." This tyranny was deliberately commenced and continued by the British in India. The end of national education is not to create one vast clerky class, but to fit all classes for their natural work. And the system which Aurobindo condemned was not national. Even Hunter—the historian of British India—admitted that here "State educa-

tion is producing a revolt against three principles which represent the deepest wants of human nature—the principle of discipline, the principle of religion, the principle of contentment.” The result was to create a vast clerkly class, forced up under a foreign system, without discipline, without contentment, and without a God. In that system learning was not connected with the living forces of society and did not make even industrial India—sharer in the classic traditions of a lettered world. The teaching in the schools simply conveyed information but did not supply the impetus and the means of self-improvement. It neglected education in the power of observing, in accuracy, in the difficulty of observing the truth, in proceeding from the knowledge of what is proved to be to the thinking of what is probable. It only poisoned the springs of life.

Aurobindo, therefore, advocated the boycott of that system of education. His influence acted as a magic wand to change the attitude of our people. His friend and fellow-worker in the new school of politics Subodh Chandra was the first donor for creating a National Council of Education. He contributed a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 and he was followed among others by Brojendra Kisore Roy Chaudhury, and Maharaja Surya Kanta Archarya Chowdhury. Others came forward readily.

(3) “We are dissatisfied with the administration of justice, the ruinous costliness of the civil side, the brutal rigour of its criminal penalties and procedure, its partiality, its frequent subordination to political objects. We refuse accordingly to have any resort to the alien courts of justice.”

It is needless to say a single word to elaborate the arguments advanced. And it is an admitted fact that the Congress owed its origin to the Ilbert Bill agitation which began

in Lord Ripon's Government attempting to remove a judicial wrong from which Indians had been suffering.

(4) "We disapprove of the executive administration, its arbitrariness, its meddling and inquisitorial character, its thoroughness of repression, its misuse of the police for the repression instead of the protection of the people."

It reminds one of the remarks of Gardiner on the conditions created in Ireland by the British which ultimately brought about the success of the Irish independence movement—"With the Castle at their back they have held Ireland like a conquered province—they have held it as the British hold India. They have planted their nominees in every fat job; they have controlled the administration; the police have been an instrument in their hands; justice has been the tool of their purposes; the law has been of their fashioning and the judges of their making."

Aurobindo wanted to make British administration in India impossible. He was sanguine about the possibilities of the Boycott and wanted the nation to accept it. And it was practically over the resolutions connected with Boycott that the Surat imbroglio took place. He was sure that if Boycott was practised in earnest the British bureaucracy "must either conciliate or crush." Lest the country would be forced into open rebellion the English adopted a policy of repression-cum-conciliation. On the one hand they tried, by executive action, to bring opposition under the terms of the law and the lash of its penalties,—by executive order "that brief abracadabra of despotism" to turn an action which five minutes ago had been legitimate and inoffensive into a crime or misdemeanour punishable in property and person; and on the other they attempted to "rally the Moderates" and weaken the national movement. "Every great *yajna*," said Aurobindo, "has its Rakshasas who strive

to baffle the sacrifice." And the British set about securing them.

In 1905 the Bengal delegates to the Congress had, by holding out the threat of opposing the resolution welcoming the Prince and the Princess of Wales, succeeded in having the following resolution accepted by the Moderates in the Congress (Benares):

" That this Congress records its earnest and emphatic protest against the repressive measures which have been adopted by the authorities in Bengal after the people there had been compelled to resort to the boycott of foreign goods as a last protest and perhaps the only constitutional and effective means left to them of drawing the attention of the British public to the action of the Government of India in persisting in their determination to partition Bengal in utter disregard of the universal prayers and protests of the people."

This could not satisfy the adult ambition of the people and at the next session of the Congress (at Calcutta) the New Party had the following resolution passed:

- (1) " That having regard to the fact that the people of this country have little or no voice in the administration, and that their representations to Government do not receive due consideration this Congress is of opinion that the Boycott Movement inaugurated in Bengal, by way of protest against the partition of that Province was, and is, legitimate."
- (2) " That this Congress accords its most cordial support to the Swadeshi Movement, and calls upon the people of the country to labour for its success, by making earnest and sustained efforts to promote the growth of indigenous industries and to stimulate the production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities even at some sacrifice."
- (3) " That in the opinion of this Congress the time has arrived for the people all over the country earnestly to take up the question of National Education, for both boys and girls, and organise a system of education—



Literary, Scientific and Technical—suited to the requirements of the country, on National lines and under National Control."

Moderate leaders like Sir P. M. Mehta and G. K. Gokhale from Bombay, and others had come to Calcutta to oppose these resolutions, but failed to attain their object and went away disappointed and disgraced.

These resolutions could not be tolerated by the Government and their pampered pets the Moderates and they entered into an unholy alliance to make them "harmless." The venue of the next session was changed from Nagpore which was not considered "safe" because of the influence of the Mahrattas headed by G. S. Khaparde, to Surat where Sir P. M. Mehta arranged to break the back of the New Party by using physical force if necessary. There it was arranged that the sting will be removed from the three progressive resolutions by dropping from the Swadeshi resolution the significant words "even at some sacrifice," from the resolution on National Education the words "on National lines and under National control", and from the Boycott resolution the words "Boycott Movement" explained by Bipin Chandra and replacing them by "the foreign goods."

Aurobindo went to Surat to lead the New Party with his friend and fellow-worker Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

The Congress foundered on this rock of inequity.

It was for Aurobindo a meteoric moment. He was recognised as the leader of the party which stood for liberty and in that undefined and rarefied atmosphere in which alone those breathe from whom, in times of trial and danger, radiate courage, confidence and hope, the stature of Aurobindo loomed as conspicuous as that of the other generals who had taken the people to the goal of freedom in other countries.

In Bengal he had already been recognised as one of the leaders of the New School of politics as will be evident from the fact that in making an attempt at a compromise between the two parties at Midnapore in 1907 Surendra Nath wrote to Aurobindo:

“ MY DEAR AUROBINDO BABU,

I am here. Will you kindly if convenient come over with Sham Sunder Babu and Lalit Babu. Kristo Babu is also coming here.

Yours sincerely,

SURENDRA NATH BANERJEA.”

The Bengal Government had unsuccessfully prosecuted Aurobindo for some publications in the *Bande Mataram* and brought him from the inconspicuousness he preferred to the open arena of popularity.

Aurobindo shunned publicity and the platform. But after the Surat affair he could not escape the public gaze and had to address public meetings in various places.

His aim was the liberation of the country and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the work. Garfield has said: “Occasion may be the bugle call that summons an army to battle, but the blast of a bugle can never make soldiers nor win battles.” He, therefore, realised the necessity of training soldiers who would fight and fight not as mercenaries but as the *Santans* who declined to have any other thought than their duty to the country and to put all else behind them as less dear and less precious and only to be resumed when their work for her was accomplished.

The soldier should have faith in the strength of his manhood and should be well-disciplined. He should be proof against allurements which eat fatally into enthusiastic passion and serried unity and also should be ready to punish treason and treachery and have mass contact!

The object of the last two items in the programme Aurobindo explained thus:

- (1) "The example of unpunished treason will tend to be repeated and destroy by a kind of dry rot the enthusiastic unity" which is necessary for the success of the movement."
- (2) "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 earnestly and will not tolerate individual treachery, he will usually, after the first enthusiasm, indulge his weakness or selfishness to the detriment of the community."

In Ireland the punishing of betrayers and traitors had been a feature of the policy of some organisations. When after the Phoenix Park murders Carey, prominent of the Invincibles, turned informer and was pardoned by the British Government and kept in safety the Invincibles became determined to punish him. T. P. O'Conner in his 'Memories' has said how he was killed when the Government had arranged to send him to Natal:

"Off the English Coast Carey was smuggled on board (the *Kierfauns Castle*, bound for the Cape), having shaved off his brown beard, disguised his appearance, and adopted the name of Power . . . . An Irish bricklayer named Patrick O'Donnell had stalked him from London, and when Carey and his family went on board the *Melrose* at Cape Town to continue the journey to Natal, O'Donnell was also one of the passengers. When the vessel was twelve miles off Cape Vaccas, O'Donnell drew a revolver and shot Carey. O'Donnell discharged three further shots into Carey as he ran."

The soldiers Aurobindo wanted for the national army were to be taught to consider that "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 of our motherland." The new politics did not include meek submission to illegal outrage. "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 . . . . The new politics is a serious doctrine and not . . . . a thing of shows and political theatricals; it demands real suffering from its adherents, imprisonment, worldly ruin, death itself, before it can allow him to assure the rank of a martyr for his country."

Aurobindo rejected the policy of prayer and petitioning as impossible—"the dream of a timid experience, the teaching of false friends". Anything less than a strong and glorious freedom, he said, "would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future." And, as we have said before, he boldly said that our attitude to bureaucratic concessions should be that of Laocoon.

He wanted to challenge executive coercion to prevent our resistance being snuffed out by very cheap official extinguishers and to socially boycott those Indians who "seek to baffle the will of the nation"—men who deserve the severest penalty with which the nation can visit traitors.

We have referred to the murder of Carey of the Irish "Invincible". In India a Sub-Inspector of Police who was about to arrest Profulla who had gone to Muzafferpur to throw the bomb when Profulla shot himself dead; this man was shot dead in Calcutta on the 9th November, 1908 proving the existence of groups of men who believed that—

"Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *Yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and the happiness of our nearest and dearest."

"If hatred is demoralizing, it is also stimulating"—

Aurobindo said. And to those who shrank from Aggressiveness as if it were a sin he said :

“ The love which drives our 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 and 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 mortality.”

Hinduism, he observed, “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 *Varnasankara*, a confusion of duties, and destroy society and race”.

If politics is the ideal of the Kshatriya without Kshatriya strength at its back all political struggle is unavailing. “Justice and righteousness are the atmosphere of political morality, but the justice and righteousness of a fighter, not of the priest.”

Such was Aurobindo's work as a journalist whose success would be limited. “To seize victoriously on the available materials, catch in them what will be interesting and effective and put it brightly and clearly, this is the *dharma* of the journalist.” But he was more than a journalist. And in a Bombay speech he spoke like a prophet :

“ You call yourselves Nationalists. What is Nationalism? Nationalism is not a mere political programme. Nationalism is a religion that has come from God ; Nation-

alism is a creed in which you shall have to live . . . . .  
Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it. Nationalism is immortal ; Nationalism cannot die . . . . .  
God cannot be killed, God cannot be sent to jail."

When Aurobindo was preaching this Nationalism, on the 30th April, 1908 a bomb was thrown at Muzzafferpore. Things moved swiftly. On the 2nd May Aurobindo was arrested and made an accused in connection with the Murari-pukur Garden Bomb discovery.

The case dragged on for months. Aurobindo was very ably defended by his friend Chittaranjan Das who uttered these prophetic words in his address to the Court :

" My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, the agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands."

But fortunately for us all Aurobindo's message has been echoing and re-echoing in all parts of the civilized world even when we have him in our midst.

### III

Aurobindo was acquitted. But he came out of the jail a changed man to a changed land. God had manifested Himself to him in the prison and taught him His lesson. He found that the New Party in Bengal had almost disintegrated. He said at Utterpara :

" Now that I have come out, I find all changed. . . . .  
When I went to jail, the whole country was alive with the cry of *Bande Mataram*, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation. When I came out of the jail I listened for that cry but there was instead a silence. A hush had fallen on the country and men seemed bewildered ; for instead of God's

bright heaven full of the vision of the future that had been before us, there seemed to be overhead a leaden sky from which human thunders and lightnings rained."

Pathetic words and poignant!

The British bureaucracy had succeeded in securing the service of Indians—to "loosen stone from stone" all his fair work—even National Education had been injured, Boycott abandoned! The betrayers flourished unpunished. But Aurobindo's purpose held—his faith was not shaken.

" Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.

\* \* \* \*

" For while the tired waves vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making  
Comes silent, flowing in the main."

Aurobindo started publishing two weekly papers—the *Karmayogin* in English, and the *Dharma* in Bengalee with a view to re-organise the Party on efficient lines and educate public opinion. He said:

" Let us then take up the work God has given us, like courageous, steadfast, and patriotic men, willing to sacrifice greatly and venture greatly, because the mission also is great."

The articles in the *Bande Mataram* bore to the articles in the Moderate Press the relation which the lava flood of a living volcano bears to the grumblings of an extinct crater. The articles in the *Karmayogin* were more argumentative and more idealistic. Aurobindo had pride in our past. He searched the fountain from which flowed the current of Indian culture and said:

" What was the secret of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force which we see pulsating in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in the ancient philo-

sophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievements, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumph of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure? What supported the heroism, and self-abandonment of the Kshatriya, the Sikh and the Rajput, the unconquerable national vitality and endurance? What was it that stood behind the civilization second to none in the massiveness of its outlines or the perfection of its details? Without a great and unique discipline, involving a perfect education of soul and mind, a result so immense and persistent would have been impossible."

The public works and engineering achievements of Indians in the past have often been overlooked or deliberately ignored by the British. But some of them have not been chary to express their admiration for the achievements. Sir William Wilcocks, the greatest deltaic expert of his time held that in Bengal "all the canals which went southwards, whether they have become rivers like the Bhagirathi and the Gorai, or remained canals like the offtakes from the Bhairab, the Jalingi and the Mathabhanga, were originally canals lined out and dug parallel to each other." He said that as he examined the canal system in Bengal—he saw

"in vision Bhagirath leading Ganga in canals across the plains. I saw the spoil banks of the canals left with openings to allow the rich red water of the river mingle with and fertilize the rainwater of the monsoon as they flowed together through the rice fields. I saw the villagers hurrying to the spoil banks and building their houses above the level of the inundation. I saw that the canals were broad and deep, carrying the muddy waters of the crest of the river floods and not the heavy silted water of the greater depths. Truly there had been giants on the earth. They lived in spacious days and designed like Titans."

Sir George Birdwood attributed the development of the traditional arts of India to her unique social structure which gave every individual his recognised place in society and



helped to raise the whole country because of the advance of the working-classes rising at once in social, civil and political position "through the elevating influence of their daily work and the growing respect for their talent and skill and culture."

This social structure has successfully withstood the corrosive wear and tear of time, the tempests of conquest and the tidal waves of nations that had swept across India. Indian Nationalism has never eschewed necessary changes nor failed to assimilate what is good from foreigners.

In his ideal of the *Karmayogin* Aurobindo said :

"It (Nationalism) must be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been Indian. That has not been the spirit of Hinduism in the past, there is no reason why it should be so in the future. In all life there are three elements, the fixed and permanent spirit, the developing yet constant soul and the brittle changeable body. The spirit we cannot change, we can only obscure or lose ; the soul must not be rashly meddled with, must neither be tortured into a shape alien to it, nor obstructed in its free expansion ; and the body must be used as a means, not over-cherished as a thing valuable for its own sake. We will sacrifice no ancient form to an unreasoning love of change, we will keep none which the national spirit desires to replace by one that is a still better and truer expression of the undying soul of the nation."

This reminds one of the words of Swami Vivekananda :

"With all my love for India, and with all my patriotism and veneration for the ancients, I cannot but think that we have to learn many things from the world. We must be always ready to sit at the feet of all to learn great lessons . . . . At the same time we must not forget that we have also to teach a great lesson to the world. We cannot do without the world outside India ; it was our foolishness that we thought we could, and we have paid the penalty by about a thousand years of slavery. That we did not go out to compare things with other nations, did not mark the

workings that have been all around us, has been the one great cause of this degradation of the Indian mind. All such foolish ideas that Indians must not go out of India are childish ; they must be knocked on the head ; the more you go out and travel among the nations of the world, the better for you and for your country. If you had done that for hundreds of years past, you would not be here to-day at the feet of every country that wants to rule India. The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe, . . . . I had to go because that is the first sign of the revival of the national life—expansion . . . . Those of you who think that the Hindus have been always confined within the four walls of their country through all ages are entirely mistaken ; they have not studied the whole books ; they have not studied the history of the race aright . . . I am an imaginative man, and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race. There have been great conquering races in the world. We also have been great conquerors. The story of our conquest has been described by the great Emperor of India, Asoka as the conquest of religion and spirituality. Once more the world must be conquered by India. . . . Let foreigners come and flood the land with their armies, never mind. Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality!"

Thus Aurobindo was inculcating nationalism and religion and helping the nation to proceed along the path of progress.

But the British bureaucracy would not allow him to continue his work. Aurobindo went to (French) Chandernagore and then to Pondicherry—keeping his political work unfinished. But he had left the ideal for his countrymen to follow ; and we tried to get what consolation we could from the words of Lowell :

“ To carve thy fullest thought, what though  
Time was not granted? Age in history  
Like the Dawn's face which baffled Angelo,  
Left shapeless grander for its mystery.

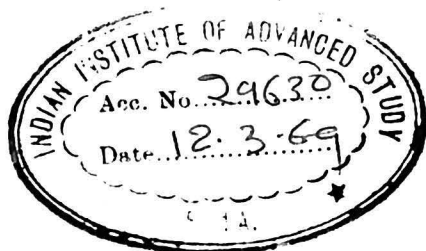
... great Design shall stand and day  
Flood its blind front from Orients far away."

His articles—the "New Spirit," "Wheat and Chaff" and "New Conditions" will provide light in darkness and lead the nation to full independence.

Let us cultivate that love which alone, according to Aurobindo, has place in politics

" the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the Divine *ananda* 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 wind that blows 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 of 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 realization of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and the service of the Mother "

### BANDE MATARAM



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