

Many Western critics during the colonial period discovered the absence of political awareness among Indians and they presumed that accounted for all the failures of India in the domain of economics and politics. These objections of the critics are based on the popular misconceptions regarding Indian history, culture and politics. In the present book our objective is to bring to light major aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought on the matter. The author here would also like to elaborate the views of Sri Aurobindo to combat all such objections. To provide a proper understanding about Sri Aurobindo's idea of politics we need to examine his ideas and their implications meticulously without any preconceived bias. In this book the author tried to discover the hidden spiritual aspects of Sri Aurobindo's two most famous political theories named Swaraj and Boycott. At the time of Indian independence movement (1905-1947), Indians used these two political theories as tools to snatch the freedom of colonial India from the hands of the British government. But Sri Aurobindo, even being a prominent politician of that time, had different opinion about them and that was elaborately shown in the book.

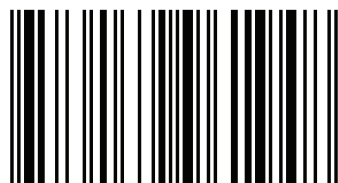


Debashri Banerjee

The Theory of Swaraj and Boycott as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo



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978-613-9-96194-8

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Cover image: www.ingimage.com

Publisher:

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17 Meldrum Street, Beau Bassin 71504, Mauritius

Printed at: see last page

ISBN: 978-613-9-96194-8

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***The theory of Swaraj and Boycott: as
envisioned by Sri Aurobindo***

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Dedicated to my parents

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Preface

When I got admitted in my Post-graduate class at Jadavpur University in 2004 then *Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo was mandatory to read in our course study. While going through that book I felt quite attracted to the beauty of Sri Aurobindo's writings and decided to go on further reading on him. The spiritual bent of his mind even being one of the famous political leaders of Indian National Congress made me amazed. In 1905 Aurobindo Ghose was very popular nationalist leader of Indian national Congress just like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. But he left his promising political career at the peak time of 1910 and went on living in first Chandernagore and then at Pondicherry. He actually took the solitary confinement from his political career even though he was quite aware about the ongoing situation of India till death. He believed that his engagement in Indian

political movement is also due to the divine plan. In his book *Life Divine* the spiritual outlook was revealed. However when I went through his other books like *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle* then there is no room left for me to understand the profound knowledge of Sri Aurobindo on every arena of Indian as well as World politics.

In this dissertation I have gone through the political topics like Swaraj and Boycott as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. When we go through Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought we cannot leave these topics aside. As a political leader and social reformer he in his social-political thought praised all of them and therefore I tried hard to discover whether there is any slight possibility of spirituality hidden there. The result is mesmerizing which has been discussed elaborately in my conclusion. In this endeavor whether I am successful or an utmost failure I do not know. I only

know that in fact I am performing my duty as following the *Gita* –

Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana

*Mā karmaphalāhetubhūrmā te
sangoḥastvakarmāṇi ||2/47||*

Thanks to my family for their earnest support in my endeavor. Thanks to the publisher, Laxmi Publication, for publishing my book. Without their sincere effort it could not see daylight.

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Chapter One: Introduction

One of the frequently heard objections against Indian culture has been relating to its political immaturity. Most of the Western critics discovered the absence of political awareness among Indians and they presumed that this is accounted for all the failures of India in the domain of economics and politics. India can be rich in its socio-religious background, but not in the political background of it. These objections of the critics are based on the popular misconceptions about Indian history, culture and politics. In the present dissertation I would like to elaborate the views of Sri Aurobindo to combat against all such silly objections. While going through this discussion we would also like to make his views relating to the nature and role of the Indian society and politics crystal-clear.

In this proposed dissertation our basic aim is to develop Sri Aurobindo's political thought invariable to

bring Indian independence on 15th August, 1947. He was completely reluctant to call himself either as a Yogi or a philosopher, but to his disciples he appears both. Here could raise a severe question – how as a student of Philosophy I can co-relate between philosophy and social-political thought? As a student of Philosophy I am trying hard to show the inherent relationship of Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought along with his philosophical doctrine. Actually, we cannot be able to differentiate between his social-political thought with the arena of his entire philosophical doctrine. It is really hard to decide whichever of his writings are meant for philosophy and whichever for social-political thought. Even though his entire life-span is thought to be divided into two prominent eras by his critics – the hard-core politician [1905-1910] and a profound yogi [1910-1950], but in my view this division is not appropriate in nature. He was actually a yogi in the disguise of politician in his entire life-time.

As an ardent believer of God [*Brahman*], whatever he had done in his life is considered to be following the Supreme Command. His concentration on serious politics and sudden retirement from it to lead the life of a Yogi, are all thought to be decided by God. As a favorite follower of the Almighty, whatever he had done is all planned by him. If we evaluate his life-story, then we can find out clear evidences of it. The main goal of his political writings was to upgrade the human living so that by realizing ones oneness with the Supreme he can comprehend the Ultimate truth ‘*Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*’ i.e. every worldly creatures are nothing else than God’s manifestation upon the earth. It is the *līlā* or creation of the Supreme so that he can in the process of involution, by the help of *māyā* or nescience, conceal himself and in the other process named evolution he can detach himself from the coverage of *māyā*. And by the Self-realization or *tattva-jñāna* the limited man can become *yogya*

(attainable) of spiritual independence so that he can at last become similar (*svarup*) of the Almighty.

In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, all passive resisters must encourage uplifting themselves from the boundary of their ego and being completely attached to whatever responsibilities nested upon their shoulders by the Almighty, they then can be able to advance their beloved mother-land to the highest limits. Thus for the political independence of India, as viewed by him, the spiritual liberty of all its country-men are absolutely necessary in nature. Here we quote from Sri Aurobindo's own writings – 'Whoever believes in God, rises above his lower self; for God is the true self of the Universe and of everything within the Universe. When we rely upon our lower self, we are left to that lower self, and succeed to fail according to our strength of body or intellect under the law of our past life and actions. There is one law for the lower self and another for the higher. The lower self is in the bondage to its past; the higher is lord of the past, the present and

the future. So the will of the lower self is born of *ahankāra*, but the will of the higher self is beyond *ahankāra* and cannot be limited by it. It is omnipotent'.¹ In this above quotation Sri Aurobindo clearly clarified how a freedom-fighter has to upsurge him from the lower mental region to the higher or supramental region. In this upper region he could be able to unite with the *Brahman* and for the sake of the well-being of the entire human society, can call forth him upon the earthen level. This is actually been described by Sri Aurobindo as the most promising stage of *Life Divine* necessary for the upbringing of the *Collective Salvation* or the spiritual independence of the entire human race. Hence for the attainment of India's Political Independence its Spiritual Independence also seems totally mandatory.

And in this endeavor, Sri Aurobindo's political tools, e.g. *swaraj* and boycott, serve as the instruments in the hands of the Divine. 'What is needed now is a band of

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Need of the Moment", p. 764

spiritual workers whose *tapasya* will be devoted to the liberation of India for the service of humanity.....The force of a great stream of aspiration must be poured over the country, which will sweep away as in a flood the hesitations, the selfishness, the fears, the self-distress, the want of fervor and the want of faith which stand in the way of the spread of the great national awakening of 1905. A mightier fountain of the spirit must be prepared from which this stream of aspiration can be poured to fertilize the heart of the nation. When this is done, the aspiration towards liberty will become universal and India be ready for this great effort². In this way we can discover the spiritualistic overtone hidden behind Sri Aurobindo's merely social-political concepts like *swaraj* and Boycott.

In the second chapter I want to discuss the role played by *swaraj* over masses in pre-independent India. However I am not interested to discuss only the historical aspect of Sri Aurobindo's *Swaraj*, but also

² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'The Need of the Moment', p. 766

the philosophical aspect of it. Hence, his *swaraj* is not only a social-political tool, but also a philosophical tool. It has philosophical side, in fact, a rarely advocated by the critics of Sri Aurobindo. I want to focus on this inner philosophy behind his political theory of Swaraj.

In the next chapter I would focus on the role of boycott as the essential corollary of Indian politics. Boycott is the mere political form of passive resistance and it aims at the refusal of the unjust coercive laws passively instead of indulging into direct active revolt. I would go through the history of boycott movement of India at that time in brief in this regard. Boycott, as a political concept, has five different aspects according to Sri Aurobindo, i.e. administrative or executive boycott, economic boycott, judicial or legislative boycott, educational boycott and social boycott. There is a controversy between Gandhi and Aurobindo in the context of accepting boycott. The term 'boycott' has

inherent spiritual overtone hidden behind it which would be discussed in this chapter.

In the conclusion I would like to focus on the unique contribution of Sri Aurobindo, as a Politician not as a Yogi, in the realm of contemporary and recent social-political structure of India. He was well-known as a mystic and yogi in the latter half of his life-time after his departure to Chandernagore and from there to Pondicherry in 1910, but none tried to understand his yogic contribution over Indian society and politics. Very easily we can distinguish between the earlier part as eminent politician (1910-1950) and the latter part as profound mystic (1910-1950) of his life. It was thought by most of his critics and followers that after 1910 he was completely detached from the Indian politics, but it is not true at all. His writings published after 1910 on *Arya*, *Karmayogin* etc newspapers, were the clear sign of his ever active mind relating to Indian politics. In 1920 he even attended a Meeting of Indian National Congress presided by Jawarlal Nehru. At the

auspicious date of 15th August, 1947 he even delivered an On-Air Lecture to congratulate the common Indians for achieving the so-desired political independence. So it is proved that he was never seriously retired from the domain of Indian politics.

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Chapter Two: Swaraj

In Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought *swaraj* is an important topic to begin with. Apparently the plain and simple word '*swaraj*' has deeper significance and in the context of Indian social-political and cultural history has far-reaching implications. In the context of Sri Aurobindo's social and political thought the word '*swaraj*' has also received various interpretations. Some of the critics often have interpreted Sri Aurobindo as a great yogi, profound mystic as well as an exceptional philosopher. Naturally from their perspective when the idea of *swaraj* has been interpreted; it has been loaded with metaphysical, spiritual as well as mystical overtones. It is thought by some interpreters that *swaraj* signifies the starting-point of an individual's inward journey towards the aspiring union with the Divine. His actual purpose is to make the *Life Divine* so that we can realize the

inherent divinity within us. No doubt Sri Aurobindo's main goal is somewhat spiritual in nature and politics remains definitely as one of its significant corollaries.

Sri Aurobindo's aim is to help in building up India for the sake of humanity – this he viewed as the spirit of Nationalism which would show us the path of universal humanity. The idea of universal humanity as preached by Sri Aurobindo also requires to be clearly deciphered. In the present century to speak about politics and spiritualism in the same breath would undoubtedly sound most ridiculous and absurd. It is hard to believe that politics and spirituality can ever have any sort of inter-relatedness. To the contrary, Sri Aurobindo's social-political philosophy has viewed politics as instrumental to spiritual freedom. He declared that India should gain its spiritual mastery lacked by several materialistic nations like Europe. This 'destined freedom and greatness'³ of India is nothing but spiritual in nature. Indian spirituality is the

³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p.5-6

touch-stone by whose help the materialistic attitude of the Western nations can be transformed into the spiritualistic one. For the achievement of the spiritual freedom, India must at first of all gain its political liberty. Because no nation existing in the realm of political servitude, can be able to attain the spiritual salvation as dreamt by Sri Aurobindo. Hence for Sri Aurobindo's aim of gaining spiritual liberty, politics or political freedom remains as an important corollary. His theory of *swaraj* serves as the gateway to achieve this political liberty.

Now let us begin our discussion with the explanation and analysis of the notion of *swaraj* as found in the ancient literatures to the modern one.

A. Etymological Meaning of Swaraj:

In the etymological sense, 'swa' stands for 'self' and 'raj' stands for 'rule'. Hence *swaraj* literally may be taken to mean self-rule. But this type of oversimplification is really harmful in consequence. We

have to understand first the inherent meaning of ‘*swa*’ or ‘self’. The word ‘*swa*’ or ‘self’ seems to have two senses accordingly as it is taken to stand for individual or group. Hence ‘*swa*’ means –

1. One man
2. One group

Hence ‘self-rule’ or ‘*swaraj*’ seems to stand for two meanings or connotations –

1. The rule by a man i.e. Autocracy
2. The rule by a group i.e. Democracy

Then what is *swaraj*? Is it autocracy or democracy?

Now, for understanding it, let us try to comprehend the meaning of *swaraj*.

B. Swaraj in Kautilya’s Arthashastra:

In Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* we get the descriptions of several states, namely *swarajya* or *svarājya*, *dvairājya*, *vairājya* and *gaṇarājya*. The leader of *svarājya* is called as *svarāt* or the sovereign king. The Nichya and Apachya states of Western India are cited as the proper instances of *Swarajya*. Nichya is the place near Indus

River and Apachya is somewhat above of Nichya. The *svarāts* are considered as sovereign and self-sufficient rulers of these *svarājyas*. *Svarājya* is compared with a kind of Aristocracy as the ruler is nominated from other aristocrat members of the nation.⁴ And *dvairājya*, of the Sixth and Seventh centuries, is the rule of two similarly powerful rulers over one state. Lichchabi and Thakuri are two *dvairājyas* of ancient India. The two separate rulers could even make two different injunctions in the same project regarding the welfare of the nation. In the *Inscription of Kathmandu* we get its true proofs. In Nepal this *Dwairajya* rule lasted for long times than other Indian territories. This state is neither similar with democracy nor with aristocracy. Form the *Mahabharata* we get to know that in the popular province named Avanti, two rulers or *Dvirāts*, namely Binda and Anubinda ruled for sometimes.⁵ Both *swarajya* and *dvairājya* are the proper examples

⁴ Bhaduri, N.P., *Dandaniti*, p. 82

⁵ Ibid, p. 82

of the monarchies. *Vairajya* can be called as a kind of bureaucracy, as sometimes here bureaucrats or *amātyas* ruled on behalf of the monarch over a state. There remains immense possibility of tyrannical rule as the supreme administrative power is nested upon the shoulder of the bureaucrats on the behalf of the monarch. However *vairājya* is said to be the ancestor nation to that of the *gaṇarājya*. *Vairājya* is the states situated at the Northern side of India, e.g. Uttarkuru, Uttarmadra etc. The ruler of such country is known as *virāts*. *Virāt* is well-popular than *svarāts* or *dvirāts* as he is known as the sovereign king. Such king has to follow the opinions of his subordinate people. Hence the common masses living under the territory of *vairajya* and ruled by the *virāt* kings lived very happily. The historian Jayswal called *vairājya* as the first proper instance of the 'Kingless constitution'.⁶ These states are the true examples of republics or republican states. However the *gaṇarājya* is best

⁶ Jayswal, K.P., *Hindu Polity*, Pt. I, p. 50

among all other states. When the common masses, being fade up with the rule of the *virāts* or his faithful deliberate Bureaucrats, withdraw the administrative power in their own hands, then *Ganarajya* is formed. The word *gaṇarājya* is made up of two different parts – ‘*gaṇa*’ i.e. democracy lead by common people and ‘*rājya*’ i.e. state. In this above way etymologically *gaṇarājya* stands for nothing else but ‘democratic state’. *Gaṇarājya* seldom called as *gaṇasaṃgha* which is, according to the historian R.C. Majumdar, a definite organization bound by laws and regulations.⁷ D. R. Bhandarkar said that *gaṇasaṃgha* has to be a combination of individuals formed for a definite object which object can be political in nature.⁸ However Jayswal indicated *gaṇasaṃgha* as another example of the Republican state, but it is more akin to ‘Democracy’ or democratic state than the Republican

⁷ Majumdar, R.C., *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, p. 195-196

⁸ Bahandarkar, D.R., *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, p. 80

one.⁹ *Samgha* is described as ‘martial clans’ by R.P. Kangle as – ‘It may be assumed that the constitution of the Samgha was able to install a feeling of solidarity among the confederating units. The presence of a number of chiefs on the ruling council also prevented any sudden shift of policy, such as is likely to be the case with a single ruler, whose actions may be swayed by his personal whims.’¹⁰ But ordinarily *saṃgha* is known to be a guild; hence *gaṇasaṃgha* stands for ‘democratic guild-system’. In this way it can be concluded that *gaṇarājya* and *gaṇasaṃgha* are not completely synonymous in nature.

In Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* *swaraj* stands for the symbol of autocratic state or ‘*svarājya*’ ruled by one autocratic ruler or monarch; and ‘*gaṇarājya*’ stands for the democratic government governed by an independent group. But in modern times *Swaraj* stands for ‘*gaṇarājya*’ i.e. the democratic government

⁹ Jayswal, K.P., *Hindu Polity*, Part. I, p. 53

¹⁰ Kangle, R.P., *Kautiliya Arthashastra*, Vol. III, p. 122-123

governed by an independent group. Now the word 'swa' could stand for one man and also for one group. Hence *swaraj* can turn out to be the rule of one ruler (autocracy) or one group (democracy). Among these two senses the first sense of the word 'swaraj' is applied by Kautilya where the entire nation is ruled by an autocratic ruler. However we cannot take the word *swaraj* in the same sense as employed by Kautilya. We have to take it in the second sense. In this sense *swaraj* becomes closer to democracy rather than autocracy as interpreted by Kautilya.

C. Sri Aurobindo's view of Swaraj:

Sri Aurobindo had his unique thesis on *swaraj* where we can discover his inherent political sense along with the spiritual sense. His sense of *swaraj* is definitely democracy. In the political sense, it is the essential weapon in the hands of Indians so that the achievement of political freedom becomes possible. In the spiritual sense, it is the way to reconcile the human race with the Divine.

Now let us develop these ideas broadly.

(1) Political sense of Swaraj:

Now, while discussing Sri Aurobindo's political sense of *swaraj*, let us try to focus on how he deduced the meaning of *swaraj* as political independence. For this we have to go through the political backdrop of India in brief.

Moderate leaders of Congress never accepted the broad sense of *swaraj*, i.e. complete independence, rather took it in the limited sense of colonial self-government as mentioned by Dadabhai Naoroji in the Calcutta session of Congress in 1906.¹¹

Now what is meant by the Colonial Self-government? Sri Aurobindo explored that under the head of Colonial Self-government; India, like all other colonies, would get the chance of Imperial Conference of the Colonial Prime Ministers and put all demands before the

¹¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Results of the Congress", p. 202

Secretary of States in a five-minute interview.¹² The Secretary of States is undoubtedly an Englishman who can never truly realize the needs of subordinate colonies. Is this enough for India? No, not at all sufficient for a huge country like India. Actually under the disguise of Self-government within the British Empire, in the view of Sri Aurobindo, our foreign rulers tried to keep India under its control so that in the name of any Governor or Lieutenant General it would rule over India throughout coming few centuries.¹³ Under this Colonial rule, India would pretend to enjoy its power of representation similar with representation in the Local Board, Local Legislative Councils or Municipal Board. Common masses would remain as enslaved as they were under the British Government. Whenever asked about their share in the politics, in the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, the British rulers would give a suitable excuse that they are not in the governmental

¹² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "Yet There is Method in It", p. 205-206

¹³ Ibid, "The President of the Berhampur Conference", p. 228

power, as it was controlled by the Elected Representatives of Major Indian Political Parties.¹⁴ The prominent example would be The United states of America as a colony under England and its struggle movement before the achievement of its freedom from the British Rulers. Americans had to show their anger in the occasions of Boston Tea Party and had to fight for liberty under the guidance of George Washington, who later also became the first President of America, to achieve complete independence.

However the idea of colonial self-government never struck appealing to Sri Aurobindo's thought. In his intelligence this Prayer and Petition thesis was revealed just as an advanced form of begging [which actually means pleading] advocated by the Moderates in front of the British bureaucracy. For that reason he even criticized the Moderate Congress Leaders as the bunch

¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "Yet There is Method in It", p. 205

of beggars.¹⁵ He criticized this theory as it could not be applicable in practice because of the lack of its method. On the contrary, self-government could be attained very easily by the help of *Swaraj* as its method. Because *Swaraj* was the open demand of the Indians of that time for attaining self-government, so he gave so much emphasis on it. While we look at the history of politics, we see that *Swaraj* in the sense of independence was basically indispensable at that time in India, but unfortunately this thesis was accepted by the Congress leaders only after the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi in the political field.

The demand for Self-government, in the view of Sri Aurobindo, is actually essential for making India from political bondage.¹⁶ For making India completely liberated from the dominative British rule, the establishment of self-government seemed completely

¹⁵Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The President of the Berhampur Conference", p. 228

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 228

mandatory to him. India in its process of formation needed some time to become self-sufficient and the practice of self-government would be helpful enough in this endeavor. Here Indians had been given the opportunity to develop its own government where the members of the Governmental body, Secretary of the States etc administrative powers had to be totally nested upon the strong shoulders of the Indians. Common Indian masses had to elect their own Representative Bodies enjoying the overall administrative, judicial, social, political as well as cultural liberty. In a self-governed country like that, not the proposed Colony as suggested by the moderate Congress leaders, foreign rulers should not get enough opportunity to enjoy the administrative, judicial, Social, political workings of the Indian nominated Representatives. Then, they will not at all get the scope to dominate, enslave, torture our Indian counterparts; and India will be liberated from the shackles of the British Bureaucracy from its appropriate sense. Truly

comprehending this situation, as a good political thinker and leader, Sri Aurobindo was in the favor of getting self-governance i.e. complete independence, instead of colonial self-governance, from the hands of British masters.

In this above way, Sri Aurobindo derived the political meaning of *swaraj* as complete independence.

(2) Spiritual sense of Swaraj:

On February, 1908 at Nasik Sri Aurobindo lectured that in our Vedanta philosophy the word *swaraj* means *mukti* or salvation. The soul when it is free from all worldly temptations can have gained *swaraj* or *mukti*. The term *swaraj*, in the sense of *sanatana dharma*, has a spiritual overtone. Sri Aurobindo described it as a “*parash pathar*” or alchemic stone of Indian politics¹⁷ without whose help the revival of ancient Indian glory never become possible. If we analyze the inherent meaning of his concept of *swaraj*, then we will surely

¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, ‘Justice Mitter and Swaraj’, p. 513

discover that *swaraj*, in his opinion, is far from the reach of politics alone. *Swaraj* is a somewhat spiritual concept without being just a political one. From the Vedas he quoted the word *sva-mahimni* i.e. the union of the individual with the Divine. For achieving this kind of *swaraj* we have to prepare ourselves fully to concentrate on the evocation of our Inner Being so that we can call for the Divine and make him bound to come down upon the earth.

What is the spiritual meaning of *swaraj*? From the Vedas, Sri Aurobindo quoted the word *sva-mahimni*¹⁸ i.e. union of individual with the Divine. This concept of *sva-mahimni*, derived from the Vedas, shows that individual being is nothing else divinity hidden within. We have to evoke this divinity for our own betterment. Due to the sheer existence of *avidyā* or ignorance we can mistaken us as different from the Divine. But when this *avidyā* ceases to exist then we will truly realize

¹⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'Justice Mitter and Swaraj', p. 513

that we are nothing else but the representation of the same *Brahman*. This *avidyā* has to cease to exist when *ātma-jñana* or *tattva-jñana* (self-knowledge) comes in the mind of *jīvātman*. Then *jīvātman* becomes the same with *Paramātman*.

For attaining this spiritual goal we need to fulfill the dream of attaining the political liberty of a nation. The arousal of the inner divinity within an individual can make him nearer to *Brahman* by following the path of *mukti*; but it is not at all a sufficient position, even though be considered as the necessary position in individual life. The nation also has to identify the inner divinity of all men residing within. In this way we can truly realize us nothing but the manifestation of *Brahman*. But for this we need to achieve the political liberty of India.¹⁹ Here beautifully Sri Aurobindo correlated the spiritual sense of *swaraj* with its political meaning.

¹⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "Justice Mitter and Swaraj", p. 514

D. Aurobindo on Swaraj & Nation:

Before indulging into Sri Aurobindo's theory of *swaraj* we have to start with the concept of nation as implicitly related with it. Sri Aurobindo's notion concerning nation is somewhat unique as compared to others. According to him, a nation is considered to have an inner unity, termed as centripetal unity, instead of an empire which has a loose political unity i.e. centrifugal unity.²⁰ A nation is utterly different from that of an empire. A nation is practically considered to be indestructible, until it destroys from within. Empire is political machinery, and hence in due course of time it has to be crushed. But because a nation is not a political unit, hence it seems to be immortal in nature. The nation has three different bodies, e.g. gross, subtle and causal. The gross or physical part, comprised of geographical lands, can be destroyed with time but

²⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, 'The Ancient Cycle of Prenational Empire-Building', p. 102-103

nation has to sustain because of its causal or consciousness part.

Whenever we indulge into the discussion about the notion of *swaraj* the concept of nation, in the sense of nation-state, is included within the fold of this discussion. *Swaraj* was just a cry taken first by the Nationalist leaders and then by Indian masses so that by the help of attaining political freedom we can uplift our own country, India. Hence with the question of *swaraj* the question of nation, i.e. the nation-state as considered by Sri Aurobindo, is correlated and its discussion seems mandatory with the first one.

E. Nation with Soul Factor: Aurobindo:

Generally nation is never considered to be nation-state as we discover in Sri Aurobindo's doctrine. Nation, according to him, is a lively object with soul and mind unlike state.²¹ The nation with the immense possibility of having soul within is thus called to be the Nation-

²¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 35

soul by Sri Aurobindo. If we call it simply as nation, then the existence of soul inherent within cannot be described fully. State is limited within its geographical identity, but nation is expanded behind the geographical identity of it.

We can give two different explanations for calling nation as Nation-soul by Sri Aurobindo as following his book *The Human Cycle*.²²

The first explanation is as follows. Nation is made up of matter, but matter itself, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not non-living in nature. Matter has immense hidden potentialities of being awoken by the call of the Absolute Being i.e. God. It is known to be the *Supto Caitnya* or hidden consciousness within. Hence the nation made up of it has to be conscious in nature. Thus the conscious nation is declared by Sri Aurobindo as nation-soul.²³

²² Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 35-43

²³ Ibid, p. 35-43

In its second explanation of Sri Aurobindo we can say that a nation is made up of several individuals having souls and minds as their inner characteristic features. The individual with soul can, in the sociological structure, be united in a group for the sustenance of itself and its race. In this way the individual can be divided into several different groups. However for maintaining their existence, whenever found necessary, these groups should realize to be united within a stronger head. And this stronger head is none other than the nation itself. Thus briefly speaking, individual-soul has to be united as the Group-soul which can later be expanded into the so-called Nation-soul.²⁴

Nation devoid of soul factor, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not at all acceptable. Nation, as a living entity, cannot be made without the existence of soul hidden behind. However it is really very difficult to understand how nation has got the soul within. In general, nation or *rāstra* is never thought to be soulful

²⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 35-43

like Sri Aurobindo. Can an ordinary person devoid the knowledge of philosophy understand the notion of nation-soul? Perhaps there is no such common man, without the knowledge of philosophy, can realize the true meaning of nation-soul. By the way, let us try to ensure how nation-soul can be possible in reality. If we go through the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, then we can discover the hidden touch of metaphysics everywhere. A common man can never thought of a nation with soul. But he, as a renowned metaphysician, never thought of a nation devoid of soul.

F. Inadequacy of State Idea: Aurobindo vs. Marx:

Both Sri Aurobindo and Karl Marx²⁵ found the idea of state as an absurd idea in nature. Karl Marx claimed that state is the weapon of torture of the under-privileged class by the upper class of the society.

²⁵ Karl Marx, German philosopher, was born in 5 May 1818 at Trier, Prussia (now Germany) and died in 14 March 1883 at the age of 64 in London. His famous books are *Das Capital* (1867-1894) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). [Karl Marx, as found in Wikipedia; http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx]

However Sri Aurobindo also did not accept the concept of state, rather the notion of nation.

Now let us discuss their theories elaborately.

- **Inadequacy of State: Marx:**

However, Sri Aurobindo's idea of inadequacy of state is sometimes compared with Marx's idea of Statelessness. Both of them rejected the existence of any ideal state in reality. But the inner concept is truly very much different in nature. Sri Aurobindo was never in favor of Marx's statelessness thesis. He called the state instead as a nation-state. Both of them conceived state as an inorganic weapon of repression, thus they were against this tyrannical side of the state theory. Now in this context let us concentrate on Marx's theory in brief.

Marx as a believer of socialism, wanted to make the society similar for its all classes, whether aristocratic or labor class. In everywhere of the world the influence of the bourgeoisie class was predominant. The labor

class did not get enough opportunity to earn their wages throughout the entire life. Marx always wanted to end up the class division in our society. In his opinion, there are two kinds of states – Capitalist and Welfare State. The reason behind his consent on the abolition of the state idea becomes fully clear from the book *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* written in 1843 is that:

- i) the political state has to be dependent on its external influences given by the administration, instead of the inner potentialities of the individuals residing within;
- ii) He as yet was saying nothing about the abolition of private property and did not express a developed theory of class, and the solution [he offers] to the problem of the state/civil society separation is a purely *political* solution, namely universal suffrage.²⁶

In the book named *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx first described properly the relation between the

²⁶ Marx's theory of the State, as found in Google; http://www.google.co.in/Marx/Marx's_Theory_of_State

Law of Property and the entire State. The picture took its concrete shape in *Das Capital* (1867).

In the case of the nations which grew out of the Middle ages, the law of property has evolved through different stages – (1) feudal landed property, i.e. property captive in the hands of feudal lords; (2) corporative (moveable in nature) property, i.e. property or capital invested to modern capital system of the big industries; and (3) pure private property, where the property is owned by the bourgeois class and State has no control over it. This modern private property corresponds to the modern State, in which the owners of the property have to survive by means of taxation, and thus held responsible for the rise and fall of State funds. Through the emancipation of private property, the state could become a separate entity besides just being a civil society, but unfortunately it tends to become nothing more than a mere form of organization which the bourgeoisie necessarily adopt for having the mutual guarantee of their property and interests. Here the state

lacks its independence as it has to sustain as a tool in the hands of the rich class. According to Marx, the independence of the State is only found in those countries where the concept of property has not yet completely developed to rule over class structures; where the property, done away with in more advanced countries, still have a better part to play; or where no section of the population can achieve dominance over the others in the context of property. The most perfect example of the modern State is North America. The modern state exists only for the sake of the sustenance of private property. With the gradual development of property in the hands of bourgeoisie, by the means of the advancement of commerce and industry, the rich class becomes richer and the poor class grows poorer. However this concept of property centralization in the hands of bourgeoisie was not accepted by Marx.²⁷ He wanted to construct that type of socialism which will

²⁷ Marx's theory of State, as found in Google; http://www.google.co.in/Marx/Marx's_Theory_of_State

concentrate on the development of the Proletariat or labor class, instead of that of the bourgeois class. Since the state seems to be the eternal symbol of torture and tyranny over the labor class, he never admitted the theory of state. This is in brief his theory of statelessness.

However the limitation of Marx's theory is that he never goes beyond the concept of state as the symbol of domination by the bourgeois class, and thus wanted to destroy it wholly. He always dreamt of making a free society with the social rise of the labor class. But he never wanted to use state (Sri Aurobindo used the term nation-state) as a gateway of spiritual development of human race, irrespective of their class identity, just like Sri Aurobindo. And there his thesis is not similar with that of Sri Aurobindo.

- **Inadequacy of State idea: Sri Aurobindo:**

Sri Aurobindo like Marx never accepted the theory of state at all. His social-political doctrine is astonishingly

related to the much lesser known aspect of it i.e. the psychological aspect. Hence his theory of state, even if we accept it, should be quite different in nature than that of the common theory of states. State is always limited within the geographical territory; hence it is not a living entity. It is considered as a non-living or material entity comprised with several geographical planes and lands. In his view, state or *rāstra* is not at all a similar object with nation. Nation or *jāti* is, on the contrary, a living entity comprised with individuals residing in the national territory; while state is organic entity.²⁸ Individuals, as the parts of the nation, have several minds and souls; hence the nation, as a whole, comprised of individuals, has also unique minds and souls for its own. So nation as a union of the individual-minds and individual-souls also has its own nation-mind and nation-soul as its unique characteristics. Thus Sri Aurobindo's nation, as a

²⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 28

psychological entity, is supposed to contain mind and soul like any other living organisms.²⁹ But state, as a non-living organism, cannot be related with individual mind or soul; hence the existence of state-mind or state-soul is just out of question. The state as a non-living entity is deprived of any existence of the soul hidden inside just like the nation.

Sri Aurobindo gave several reasons for declining the existence of modern state-idea. If we go through his book *The Ideal of Human Unity* then we will get adequate reasons for this.³⁰

First, an individual, according to him, cannot surrender his individuality to state or state cannot draw it out of the person.³¹ A state can be moral or existent even if the freedom of its people is under the knobs of the gun; e.g. that what happened in pre-independent India. The

²⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, "The Discovery of the Nation-soul", p. 35

³⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 26-33

³¹ Ibid, p. 27

monarchy, bureaucracy, dictatorship of the ruling administrative power of the state cannot guarantee the freedom or individuality of the citizens. The state has no end in itself without taking due cognizance of the values of individual citizen. This thesis is quite related to Hegel and post-Hegelian theories of the state.³²

Secondly, state has directly nothing to do, in Sri Aurobindo's view, with the human progress.³³ Human individuality is closely connected with group individuality instead of state. Because in the social level, the state formation procedure is as follows – individual → group → state → nation. Individual remains at the core of society and nation at the top of it. Hence the soul of the human being can very easily

³² George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher, is one of the greatest thinkers of modern Western philosophy. His famous books are *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807); *Science of Logic* (1817); *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1835); *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837). [George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Wikipedia; http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Hegel]

³³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 27

be transmitted to the group, the immediate next level to it.

Thirdly, Sri Aurobindo emphasized on a very limited role of state. It has to indulge itself into maintaining the health, sanitation, poverty, economy related problems of the statesmen.³⁴ It has to nest itself into providing happiness and seeking progress for individual life. In this way a state can be used as machinery provided to seek happiness and progress in human life, but never as a means of globalization or internationalism.

Fourthly, a state is dominated by its ruling bureaucratic class which is not made up of the best brains constituting the state. Hence the state, from the time of its formation, is not considered to be flawless.³⁵ The deformities and faults made by the bureaucrats in

³⁴ D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Sri Aurobindo and Karl Marx*, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1988, p.88

³⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 28

administrative works made the state open subject of criticism and even to perish with the due course of time.

Fifthly, according to Sri Aurobindo, in a state the largest good of all inhabitants is not at all ensured even though it was thoroughly promised.³⁶ A nation should ensure the large amount of good of individuals, but not a state. A state, being a tyrannical machine of its administrative powers, indulges only in ensuring the happiness of the ruling Bureaucrats or Aristocrats, but not of the labor class constituting the large portion of a state. In this regard we can discover Sri Aurobindo's similarity with that of Karl Marx.

Sixthly, the state is considered to be crude machinery in the hands of the ruling government. It works just like a machine. A machine works devoid of brain. A state also does not get the usual help from its Best Brains as it concentrates only on the administration of

³⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 27

the ruling parties over it and the men enjoying administrative bliss is not bound to be the best brain or genius masterminds of that state.³⁷

Seventhly, the state, according to Sri Aurobindo, tends to become static and homogeneous in nature.³⁸ But this stagnancy helps to make its growth timid. The uniformity of any state is also not at all welcomed as bringing up uniformity among all parts of a state-government is also a mechanical process. Anything needs variation to grow rapidly. Variation among all things is certainly welcomed for this reason. Variation will bring change in the life-structure, whereas uniformity brings stagnancy and gradual death or decay of a state.

Eighthly, a state tends to become, in the view of Sri Aurobindo, very crude and rigid in nature. It always

³⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 28

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 28

tries to control over the lives of all of its inhabitants.³⁹ And this crude controlling over its inhabitants would destroy their power of liberty and make them dependent upon the state-government for taking any little bit decisions of their own lives. Thus the strong control of a state over its inhabitants is not worthy to be welcomed.

Ninthly, a state, being completely mechanical in nature, is devoid of any soul ingredients hidden within, either be the individual-soul or the collective group-soul. It is considered to be a 'military, political and economic force'.⁴⁰ It tries hard to suppress the natural growth of the individual and the group by the help of its political and administrative powers. This non-existence of soul-factor makes a state utterly different from that of a nation.

³⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "The Inadequacy of State Idea", p. 30

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 28

These are few reasons for which Sri Aurobindo was not in favor of using the notion of nation-state in his social and political thoughts.

G. Nation-Soul & Nationalism:

In the article named 'National Education' in book *Speeches* Sri Aurobindo clearly described his concept regarding nation and why it is known to be nation-soul to him.⁴¹ In this context Sri Aurobindo distributed between three parts of the nation. Such as man has three different body types, e.g. gross, subtle and causal bodies; the nation also has gross, subtle and causal bodies of it.⁴² A human being has a gross body made up of matters; a subtle body having soul within; and a causal body made up of the parents. The physical part of nation stands for geographical lands, regions or districts extended from Kashmir in North to Kanyakumari in South; Gujrat in West to North-Eastern regions in East. This is the gross body of the

⁴¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, "National Education", p. 13

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 13

nation-state in Sri Aurobindo's view. The citizens of Indian territory, thirty-three crores of population at that time of 1908, sharing their sorrows, pains, pleasures etc emotions with each other, are made up the subtle body of the nation. And that part of the nation which remains the same within every change around the time-period, and as permanent as the atom or seed state within any nation, is known to be the causal body of the nation.⁴³

Perhaps because of the existence of the subtle body of nation, which constitutes of individual-souls along with the group-souls, Sri Aurobindo considered nation as a living entity with unique kind of consciousness hidden within.⁴⁴ This can be called as the most acceptable criteria for calling a nation as nation-soul. But it is quite unfortunate that we commonly cannot be able to grasp the inner meaning of his doctrine regarding nation-soul.

⁴³ Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, "National Education", p. 13-14

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13

The nation-soul is comprised of the group-soul of the individual. In this context, for making our position clear, we can quote Sri Aurobindo's own explanation – 'One may see even that, like the individual, it (nation) essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life.....This objectiveness comes out very strongly in the ordinary emotional conception of the nation which centres round its geographical, its most outward and material aspect, the passion for the land in which we dwell, the land of our fathers, then land of our birth, *country, patria, waterland, janma-bhūmi*. When we realise that the land is only the shell of the body, though a very living shell indeed and potent in its influences on the nation, when we begin to feel that its more real body is the men and women who compose the nation-unit, a body ever

changing, yet always the same like that of the individual man, we are on the way to a truly subjective communal consciousness. For then we have some chance of realizing that even the physical being of the society is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence. Much more is it in its inner self a great corporate soul with all the possibilities and dangers of the soul-life.⁴⁵

Now we can try to discover the inherent meaning of this quotation as follows –

- According to Sri Aurobindo, a nation has inherent soul lying within. A man has soul. A group, made of several individuals with soul, also has inherent soul. And hence a nation, made up of individuals and groups, also has a soul inherent within.
- What is meant by ‘the land is only the shell of the body’? It means that, in making of a nation, the land

⁴⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, “The Discovery of the Nation-Soul”, p. 35-36

remains as the outer self or part of the nation. The inner self is the countrymen and women. The land is rigid and stagnant part of a nation that can never change. But the inner parts of a nation, comprised of individuals, is a living and dynamic part of the nation that can be changed with periods of time.

- The individuals, belonging to the same nation, share the same amount of consciousness i.e. 'communal consciousness' as described by Sri Aurobindo. Individuals have consciousness as every man is a conscious being. But when taken in group-sense, we can discover the existence of group-consciousness among all individuals residing into the nation.
- The 'physical being of the society' is made up of living individuals. Individuals are conscious living beings. Hence the physical part of the society i.e. the individual is clearly subjective in nature as dynamic and changing. The objective part of a society is made up of the static and constant geographical lands.

- In other nations, the nation is known to be the *pitṛ-bhūmi* i.e. ‘the land of our fathers’. But in India, the land is worshipped as our *māṭṛ-bhūmi* i.e. Motherland, as Sri Aurobindo beautifully calls it as our land of birth or *janma-bhūmi*.

In the theoretical doctrine of Sri Aurobindo we find out the difference between people and nation. He felt that even Asiatic civilizations in their most flourishing political periods had been dominated by social, religious and cultural ethos of the people and not by the ruling class. In Sri Aurobindo’s perception, nationalism is a living force and has a soul of its own. In his *The Human Cycle*, he has endeavored to discover the living force of nationalism and thus mentioned – ‘The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind, and a soul behind all these signs’.⁴⁶ He saw the genesis and growth of Indian

⁴⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, ‘The Discovery of the Nation-Soul’, p. 35

nationalism being primarily motivated from the West. The relation between nation-state and individual is that of the mother and son relationship.

H. Swaraj & Sanatana Dharma:

His doctrine of *swaraj* is co-related with that of nationalism.⁴⁷ In his keen observance India seems to have the urge for nationalistic demands. This demand of nationalism is not a mere political propaganda as it appears to other philosopher's eyes. Sri Aurobindo believed that it is a religion that directly comes from God. Hence this demand for *swaraj* seems to be eternal in nature. In this sense we can say that *swaraj*, in the sense of nationalism, is eternal religion. But why *swaraj* is called as religion taking it in the sense of *dharma*? For understanding it first of all we have to understand the meaning of *sanatana dharma* as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. In the etymological sense, we can translate it as Eternal religion, as the word '*sanatana*' stands for 'eternal' and the word

⁴⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, p. 5

'*dharma*' stands for 'religion'. However *swaraj* is not religion in the common sense. It is considered to be *dharma* in its spiritual overtone. Sanatana dharma is neither Hinduism, nor Judaism, nor Islam. Some critics draw resemblance between *sanatana dharma* and Hinduism which is not acceptable to Sri Aurobindo. In the article "The Ideal of Karmayogin" he exclaimed that Hinduism is a paradigm of eternal religion⁴⁸ which clearly shows that Hinduism, in the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, should not be compared with *sanatana dharma*. On the contrary, this *sanatana dharma*, according to him, contains 'the mere dress and body of Hinduism' and hence he concluded that the *Sanatana dharma* should be the higher kind of Hinduism.⁴⁹ Hinduism, in the view of Sri Aurobindo, can be the basis of *sanatana dharma*, the future world-religion. He accepted the devotional aspect of Islam and Judaism but never gave them equal position to

⁴⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, p. 5

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5

sanatana dharma.⁵⁰ His notion of *sanatana dharma* is somewhat similar with Vivekananda's 'Universal Religion' where he wanted to incorporate the goodness of all religions under one head.⁵¹ It is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a religion based on Truth as commanded by God.⁵²

But why *sanatana dharma* is believed to be the eternal religion proposed by God himself? And why *swaraj*, as a mere mandatory political tool for liberating India from the bondage of the foreign country, seems comparable with the metaphysical notion of *Sanatana dharma* or eternal religion?⁵³ Sri Aurobindo mentioned that political movement of India is nothing else but is a plan of the Divine.⁵⁴ The Divine Plan is nothing else but to make Indians spiritually uplifted so that they can

⁵⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-determination*, p. 51

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 425

⁵² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Present Situation", p. 661

⁵³ Ibid, p. 661

⁵⁴ Ibid, "Swaraj", p. 701

easily re-unite with the Supreme in the process of Involution. [Involution = *Sachchidanada* → Supermind → several Mental Stages, e.g. Overmind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive mind → Mind → Life → Matter; Evolution = Matter → Life → Mind → Mental stages → Supermind → *Sachchidanada*.] In the process of Evolution, *Sachchidanada* or the Almighty, with the help of *māyā* or *avidyā*, wants to illustrate his Lila and for creating the world, separates himself into material, spiritual, earthen levels as well as in lively creatures like man, animals, insects, trees etc. In the opposite process, namely the Involution, after some certain time-gap every lively or non-lively creature, especially men and animals, has to be destroyed and united with the Almighty as they actually emerge from it before. In this way, we can find out some inherent touch of his metaphysical doctrine into the social-political one. The main aim remains behind the spiritual divinization of human race by uniting them with the Supreme or *Sachchidanada* and in this way by making their life the

‘Divine Life’.⁵⁵ If political freedom lacks in the country, then no countrymen can breathe openly and even dream to indulge themselves into the process of achieving spiritual upliftment. And if political liberty is under the Divine rule of God, then *swaraj*, as its ultimate essential device, also has to be included within the master plan. It also has to be preached as a Divine Religion for this above reason. And as *Swaraj* is considered to be a part of the Divine Plan, so just like its Eternal creator it has the eternal character too. In my opinion, perhaps this is the easiest explanation of calling *Swaraj* as the *Sanatana Dharma* or Eternal Religion. To him, *Sanatana Dharma* is an all-embracing religion and an extended form of Hinduism, and yet considered to be the mixed-up form of all conventional religions.⁵⁶ We have to understand *swaraj*

⁵⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “The Present Situation”, p. 661

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 661

in this sense of eternal religion by whose help we can attain the kingdom of God hidden within us.⁵⁷

To Sri Aurobindo, the aim of the Indian nationalist movement was the expansion of the Indian civilization and he never wanted it to be confined to the demands for political sovereignty and liberty only. Thus he was not in favor of the division of India and Pakistan at the time of Indian Independence at 1947. That is why he refused to give the welcome address to the world in the All-India Radio on behalf of the Indian people when India gained Independence on 15th August, 1947 at his birthday. Instead he wrote a brief message on his doctrine of Sanatana Dharma, in which he mentioned his five dreams, i.e. (a) unity among Hindus and Muslims for making free and united India; (b) the role that Asia needs to play towards liberating humanity; (c) world unity for protecting humanity; (d) India's spiritual gift to the world; and (e) evolving global consciousness and human unity. Sri Aurobindo

⁵⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, p. 7

specifically mentioned that India has gained liberty, instead of unity between Hindu and Muslim races.⁵⁸ Unless they are united with each other, Indian Independence, according to him, will not become fruitful at all so that the Divine Life can be possible. And the process through which this essential Hindu-Muslim unity will be possible is none the other concept than this *sanatana dharma* or eternal religion. Again from this citation we can easily correlate Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of eternal religion with that of universalism as universalism is the ultimate goal of Sri Aurobindo for which he preached the doctrine of *swaraj*. His last four dreams are related with the question of world unity or universalism. That's why we can easily call Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of *swaraj* as a gateway of universalism.

I. Swaraj: Road towards Life Divine:

How could we reconcile between these two different spiritual meanings, i.e. *sanatana dharma* and *Mukti*,

⁵⁸ Navajata, *Sri Aurobindo: National Biography*, p. 47-48

drawn by Sri Aurobindo himself? In its answer we can say that his main goal is to reach towards *Life Divine*. *Swaraj* is just a tool to attain it. *Swaraj* as *sanatana dharma* reconciles all religious differences in human life and helps us to attain *mukti* in the sense of Collective salvation instead of individual salvation for the betterment of the society. These two steps make us nearer to the ideal of *Life Divine* as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. Let me make my position clear.

Swaraj is considered to be nationalism or *sanatana dharma* to Sri Aurobindo.⁵⁹ It is itself nationalism and by enchanting it we can unite the people of our nation irrespective of their cultural, social, racial differences. But an important question arises here – is *Swaraj* the ultimate goal to be achieved or is there any other goal to be accepted behind *swaraj*? According to Sri Aurobindo *Swaraj* is not the ultimate goal but is the gateway to make *Life Divine*. How can we call *swaraj* as the gateway of *Life Divine*? From the *Vedas* we get

⁵⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, p. 2

to know that *swaraj* stands for *Sva-Mahimni* i.e. the relation between *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*.⁶⁰ The person (*jīvātman*) has to be free from *ahaṅkāra* so that he can rise to the level of *Paramātman*. By the help of *tapasyā*, being free from *ahaṅkāra*, *jīvātman* can become *Paramātman*. *Swaraj*, in the sense of *mukti*, brings human beings to the level of *Paramātman* by removing the *ahaṅkāra* of *jīvātman*. In this way *swaraj* stands for the way towards achieving individual *mukti* or salvation. We need to attain it in the context of collective *mukti* or salvation also.

But how is it possible? If we accept Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of *swaraj*, in the sense of union between *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*, then we have to admit that we, the human beings, are none other than the manifestations of the Supreme Spirit. *Jīvātman* is the manifestation of the *Paramātman*. We have to truly realize that there is no difference between men to men, nation to nation, race to race, sect to sect. All

⁶⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "Justice Mitter and Swaraj", p. 512

humans are the true manifestation of God. Thus we have to go beyond the limit of Nationalism and to revive the feeling of Universal Brotherhood within us. But for realizing this we need the help of the concept of *swaraj* in the sense of *sanatana dharma* which will help us to be free from the bondage of *ahankāra*.

Actually the difference of Sri Aurobindo's thesis of *swaraj* with that of other Indian thinkers is that he always preached for collective salvation⁶¹ instead of individual salvation. Hence the spiritual sense of *swaraj* which means *mukti* or *mokṣa* has to be meant for the Salvation of all human beings irrespective of his caste, sect, race, nation, body color. If we can achieve collective salvation then it will be easier to go for universalism. This is the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo's concept of *swaraj*.

⁶¹ A person after getting individual salvation has to prepare himself for collective salvation of mankind which will help him to call forth Supermind on earthen level and to make Sri Aurobindo's ultimate goal of *Life Divine* possible.

J. Conclusion:

Gandhi was mistakenly thought to be the introducer of *Swaraj* in the sense of political independence. But Sri Aurobindo, much more previous than his age, introduced the *Swaraj* mantra in its true sense of political movement. In the article named “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance” first published in *Amritbazar Patrika*, he first clearly preached the use of *swaraj* as a mantra. However, the contribution of Sri Aurobindo or Bipin Chandra Pal, the Editor of the Newspaper, who first introduced the name of *swaraj* in the political arena through publishing several articles on it, is still unknown. Some critics firmly believed that it was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, following Shivaji’s *Swarajya*, first introduced the thesis in the political sphere. But apart from that controversy, we can clearly conclude that like *swaraj* no other political tool has ever come in the hands of the Indian masses to make them free from the British servitude and gather their political freedom. Sri Aurobindo’s *swaraj* theory is

unique in contribution as it serves as the gateway of universalism and *Life Divine* unlike others.

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Chapter Three: Boycott

In the social-political theory of Sri Aurobindo *swaraj* seems to be the path mandatory for transforming a common life into the Life Divine and boycott remains as one of its important corollaries. In his spiritual dream of fulfilling the union with the Divine, he had taken the political path as he truly realized that for making our country wholly prepared for this spiritual destination, our first priority must be the attainment of its political freedom. Political liberty, in his opinion, serves as the gateway of achieving the spiritual liberty.⁶² He had a firm belief over India's spiritual excellence and for making our mother-land as the spiritual guide of all other 'spiritually backward nations' it has to be made free from the shackles of its political servitude.⁶³ The boycott is actually treated as

⁶² "By our political freedom we shall once more recover our spiritual freedom" [Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, :Swaraj], p. 701]

⁶³ Ibid, p.5-6

an excellent weapon in this regard. A boycott is generally an act of voluntary abstaining from using, buying or dealing with a person, organization or nation as an expression of protest against any kind of exploitation, usually for political reasons. It can be used in the local, provincial, national as well as international context of politics. Local to international politics can be affected by the good as well as the bad sides of boycott. Prior to India, the Europe was quite accustomed to such use of boycott in the political context. However without entering into any historical details about the implementation of the tactics of boycott we may concentrate upon the concept of boycott as found in the social-political thought of Sri Aurobindo. Karan Singh⁶⁴ calls Sri Aurobindo 'the Prophet of Nationalism' and in his opinion Sri Aurobindo wanted to attain political liberty of India by whatever means, be it violent or not. The active resistance as a means may seem to be much more

⁶⁴ Singh, Karan, *Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, p. 118-119

acceptable as it gives us instant success. The active resistance or armed revolt including use of weapons, guerilla warfare, and secret attack over the ruling party, are to be limited within very limited area of a nation. Guerilla warfare includes use of violent weapons whose success may be attainable only for a very short time span. The formation of secret societies is also mandatory for the ultimate success of such active path of resistance.

Briefly speaking resistance, whether active or passive, was a means of showing protest against the British rule over India for nearly two decades. The boycott is supposedly the highest kind of passive resistance. The boycott is just a way to show our capability of political resistance to the foreign rulers.

Sri Aurobindo did not identify national movement for gaining freedom with just an affair of secret societies and clandestine activities. The attainment of India's political freedom, to him, through several violent acts of revolutionary parties or secret societies was not the

appropriate way. Sri Aurobindo, even though, known as a revolutionary activist or extremist, accepted both the path of violent and non-violent means to gain freedom from the British servitude. Both passive and active resistances are included within the vast arena of defensive resistance.⁶⁵ In his writings the need for an overall nationalist movement boycotting the tyrannical rule of the British government was an imperative. Boycott is the way to resist the ruling administration passively. In this respect boycott agitation became synonymous with the passive resistance movement spread over Bengal and all over India 1905 onwards.

Boycott is a mere form of passive resistance to Sri Aurobindo, however the highest of all. The boycott as an idea in the context of Indian history of nationalism stands for the refusal of Indians to help the British administration being completely passive towards the foreign laws and orders, instead of being indulged in

⁶⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Limits", p. 115

direct active revolt against it. While the idea of passive resistance also conveys somewhat similar meaning. So we can easily understand the truth behind Sri Aurobindo's mention of boycott as the first principle of passive resistance.⁶⁶

A. Etymological sense of Boycott:

Now let us concentrate on the expression 'boycott'. The expression 'boycott' entered into the dictionary of politics following the name of Captain Charles Boycott, the land agent under a landlord, Lord Erne, who lived in County Mayo of Ireland in 1880. As the condition of harvest had been very poor those days, Lord Erne offered his tenants a ten percent reduction in their rents instead of their demand of twenty-five percent. But peasants did not accept this offer and showed their protest against Lord Erne, the Landlord. Then, unable to put up with the situation, attempted to evict eleven tenants from the land to break the

⁶⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Methods", p. 101

backbone of the peasants. But the result was devastating in nature. The situation became worsen then as Boycott soon found him isolated – his workers stopped working in fields and in his home; local businessmen stopped working in the fields; and even the local postmen refused to deliver his mails. Within weeks Boycott’s name became famous in everywhere. The term ‘boycott’, derived from the name of Charles Boycott, was used by *The Times* in November, 1880 as a term for organized form of isolation.⁶⁷ From this movement named after Boycott, whenever any kind of violent or non-violent protest movement took place anywhere in the entire world to isolate the party concerned who was held responsible for causing unfair or illegal treatment it is named as Boycott.

There are many examples of boycott movements in the international political context, such as Montgomery bus boycott, the successful Jewish boycott organized

⁶⁷ The meaning of the word Boycott, as found in Google; http://www.google.co.in/history_of_boycott_movemnts

against Henry Ford in USA in the 1920, the boycott of Japanese products in China after the May Fourth movement, the Arab League boycott of Israel and other companies trading with Israel etc.⁶⁸

B. Two Trends of Boycott Movement in India:

Before entering into the question of two trends regarding the boycott movement in India let us briefly have a look upon the historical background at that time. Partition of Bengal, 1905 was effective on 16 October during the reign of Lord Curzon (1893-1905). It became the essential political event in the history of Modern Bengal. Bengal, which included Bihar (formerly Behar) and Orissa since 1765, was considered to be too large for being a single province in British India. The Bengal province, being so large in actual size, was unable to be administrated efficiently and effectively.⁶⁹ At 1905 Lord Curzon decided to

⁶⁸ History of Boycott Movements, as found in Google; http://www.google.co.in/history_of_boycott_movemnts

⁶⁹ The history of the partition of Bengal, as found in http://www.indiahistory.com/partition_of_Bengal

break the United Bengal in the name of customizing better administrative control over it. However the Extremists as well as the Moderates were well aware of the underlying reason i.e. to destroy the unity among the Hindu and Muslim races, two important corollaries of educated Bengali class because they were the strong protestors of British tyranny. The educated Bengali Hindus felt that it was a deliberate blow inflicted by Curzon at the national consciousness and growing solidity of the Bengali-speaking population. The Indian and specially the Bengali press opposed the partition move from the very beginning. The British press, the Anglo-Indian press and even some administrators also opposed the intended measure. The partition evoked fierce protest in West Bengal, especially in Calcutta and gave a new flip to Indian nationalism. In the history of Indian politics Boycott agitation played immensely efficient role in achieving Indian Independence. The cry for *swaraj* was aroused after the crude incident of Bengal Partition took place in

1905 by the order of Lord Curzon. By the sincere effort of nationalist party⁷⁰, the Anti-Partition Movement began to take the concrete shape. Boycott agitation was popularly known as one of its most important corollary. Actually to show protest against British tyrannical rule, the nationalist leaders took up the concept 'boycott' for their instant help. Boycott is that type of agitation in which result has to be gained instantly, not gradually. Hence, in the hands of Extremists, boycott agitation immediately became an essential corollary of Indian independence movement. However who among them first used the name 'boycott' in the Indian political context is not known. The leaders who raised their voice against the partition movement Sri Aurobindo was one among them.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Boycott agitation in India took the form of two different trends.⁷¹ The first trend was the constructive *swadeshi*. This is the

⁷⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'The Present Situation', p. 653

⁷¹ Ibid, "Graduated Boycott", p. 293

constructive side of boycott movement. In this phase the Indian merchants were given some chance to grow up in their own feet and to expand their *swadeshi* business in such a way that they could be able to compete with British merchants by abandoning the use of foreign imported goods and by rejecting the import of Indian goods, like silk, Indigo etc., to the foreign lands. This non-political trend's backbone was dependent upon the revival of the economical standard of the Indian men. This was first successfully employed by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra during 1893-1895 at the time of *Ganapati utsav* and *Shivaji festival*.

The second trend is the turn towards political extremism in Bengal. This side is extreme in nature as it tends to boycott the British government instead of constructing something new. It is the destructive side of boycott movement. This trend was advocated majorly by Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal. The Anti-Partition Movement or the *Banga-Vanga*

Andolon of 1905 was its most prominent example. This side of boycott was a mighty attempt at the vindication of the rights of the people to self-government, which used the various techniques of political agitation such as mass procession, public meetings, strikes, *dharna*, *anasan* or fasting, picketing etc.

C. Sri Aurobindo's notion of Boycott:

In Sri Aurobindo's opinion there are five different categories of Boycott ⁷² -

- Industrial/economic Boycott
- Educational Boycott
- Judicial Boycott
- Administrative/executive Boycott
- Social Boycott

• Economic Boycott & Swadeshi:

According to Sri Aurobindo, the British merchants were eventually responsible for the economic exploitation of India; thus we need to boycott the British goods so that we could promote our own *Swadeshi* industries. This was known as the Economic

⁷² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'the Doctrine of Passive Resistance : Its method', p. 102

or Industrial Boycott. The economic boycott is truly meant for boycotting British goods so that the foreign merchants should fail to exploit the Indian merchants and small traders. The main aim of the British government behind making India as one of its colonies, like America, is to exploit its richness. Clothes, sugar, indigo etc goods were indeed produced in India and sold in other foreign markets openly by the British merchants. Raw materials in India were very cheap, so they bought those materials in cheap rate from our country; exported them to England to make good quantity of goods made from them; and then imported them again in India and exported also to other foreign markets to sell these goods in high rates. For that reason the clothes made in Manchester and imported to India were higher in cost for the common Indian masses. These goods were, thus, made available only to British officials and Indian rich people. Hence the urge for economic boycott of foreign goods is just a time-bound incident. On August, 1905 at the Calcutta

Town Hall this resolution of economic boycott was taken by the intellectuals and common Indians. Its effect was tremendous over the British administration. The boycott movement of Non-Independent India was based on two major inferences – first, the British rule in India was mainly dependent on its economy which came from gradual exploitation of our country; secondly, by boycotting the British goods Indians could be able to give a devastating blow over the British economy. Eventually both of them are quite relative to each other. Because if the Indian economy was exploited by the British people then by boycotting their goods we can fetch back the golden era of the early India.⁷³

The reason behind Sri Aurobindo's preaching for economic boycott was not unfounded. The historical records provide more than enough justification for Aurobindo Ghose's and many others protest movements in the pre-independent India. Till 1757 the

⁷³ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'Graduated boycott', p. 293-294

East Company's main aim was revenue collection but after the Battle of Pallasey in 1757 they shifted their focus and in this endeavor the East India Company first of all tried to acquire the administrative power of Bengal, that time capital of India. For gaining administrative power they brilliantly used the economy of Bengal as one of its medium. Among them let us discuss some few relevant acts here. The East India Company Act of 1773 led towards a series of economic reforms and establishing the sovereign control of the British government over the East India Company's economic functions. The East India Company Act of 1813 first deprived the East India Company to enjoy complete trade monopoly over Indian economy except in the case of the export of tea and Indian trade exchange with China. The Industrial Revolution in Britain, in search for open markets of their goods and the rise in the *laissez faire*⁷⁴ economic

⁷⁴ Laissez faire, a French phrase stands for 'let go', is known to be an economic system in which transactions between private parties are

ideology spreading violently throughout Europe, put up the background of this Government of India Act in 1833. In this act the East India Company was allowed by the British government to enjoy the complete trade monopoly over India.

The transfer of Indian trade monopoly in the hands of the East India Company via the Charter Act of 1813 and Government of India Act of 1833 made India free to be economically exploited in the hands of the British government of India causing the Bengal famine in 1770 and the Bengal famine in 1943. The Bengal famine of 1770 (The famine of 76 according to the Bengali calendar) was caused due to the forced cultivation of opium by the East India Company in the place of food crops, resulting the extreme shortage of grain in Bengal and causing this famine. In the case of Bengal famine in 1943 there was a serious decrease in food production during that time while large amount of

free from any kind of governmental interference. [Laissez Faire, as found in Wikipedia; <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/laissez-Faire>]

the produced grains exported outside of India making the real situation worse than ever.

In this political background when economic exploitation over the Indian subjects increased day by day in pre-independent India then the preaching for economic boycott seemed very urgent in nature. In that situation Sri Aurobindo's support for economic boycott seemed quite justified. To quote from Sri Aurobindo who wrote as follows: 'Accordingly, we refuse henceforth to purchase foreign especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others. By an organised and relentless boycott of British goods, we propose to render the further exploitation of the country possible.'⁷⁵

The chronic famine and rapid impoverishment were cited by him as evidences for the failure of the British government to protect the people of India. After the win in the Battle of Pallasey it was very easy for them

⁷⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Methods", p. 102

to concentrate the entire economy of Bengal in their own hands. In this endeavor the Charter Act of 1813 and the Government of India Act of 1833 helped to gain the East India Company complete trade monopoly over India. These acts also gave them the sovereignty over Indian economy which was thoroughly exploited by them. Due to the concentration of Indian economy in the hands of the East India Company the economic condition of Indian people differentiated on the basis of their social status. The middle class and the upper class became richer while the lower class grew poorer. Due to the forceful cultivation of opium instead of food crops in 1770 and the forceful exportation of food crops outside India in 1943 the conditions of Indian farmers were worsen and these was the main causes behind the Bengal famine of 1770 and 1943.

However throughout our discussion it is notable that the British government not only failed to protect the people of India, but it also lacked the interest to do the same. That is the reason behind Sri Aurobindo's saying

about that the British government refused to protect the people and their industries. Actually the East Indian Company wanted to enjoy their sovereignty over Indian economy and if the small industries led by the Indian people could earn more than their trade monopoly would face difficulty. Till 1757 the Company was indulged with revenue collection from Indian states. After 1757 their main intention behind making India as their colony was shifted into import their local goods in Indian market in high rates and to export opium etc raw materials produced in India outside. Hence the East India Company tried to stop the development of the small Indian industries by hook or by crook.

These are the important reasons behind Sri Aurobindo's preaching for economic boycott.

An important corollary of economic boycott is *swadeshi* i.e. encouraging the development of national goods manufactured in any part of India. So, not only the negative side of Boycott, but also its positive side

was developing gradually. So boycott is not only used to hamper the British rule, but also to develop Indian industries by promoting Indian goods. Thus from Karan Singh's writings, we can find out that Boycott has two great objectives hidden behind. The first is to shake the foundations of British power in India; the second is to bring about a rapid growth in indigenous industries for producing in India goods required by its people, by whose help the economic resurgence of the nation will be possible.⁷⁶ The most successful example of economic boycott was 1917's Salt March of Gandhi where he made salts from the Sabarmati river near Dandi.

However the true founder of Gandhi's boycott thesis was none other than Sri Aurobindo himself. In his view, we can fulfill our aim of economic boycott only when the alternative is ready to be used. In Bengal we could start boycotting first clothes, sugar, salt and other materials depending on the successful

⁷⁶ Singh, Karan, *The Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, p. 124

implication of the alternatives of boycott of them. Liverpool salts could be boycotted only when *Karkach* (a desi salt popular at that time) was available. The import of Manchester clothes could be affected only when we have readymade handloom industry available to satisfy our need of clothes. According to him, we could boycott foreign clothes and sugar as we have alternatives available in hands.⁷⁷ But the trial of boycotting foreign sugar was not fruitful as the alternative was not available in our hands till 1917 (Dandi March of Gandhi). We could not boycott the use of foreign exported yarns as spinning industry that required yarns were limited in numbers till 1917. But it does not mean that economic boycott was not at all successful in India at that time. It had left great impact over the British administration as the administration was largely dependent on the taxes gained from foreign merchants. Economic boycott successfully gave a blow over the root of earning of British

⁷⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, Graduated Boycott, p. 29

administration which affected the foreign rule tremendously. This is the reason behind the instant success of economic boycott in India.

- **Educational Boycott & National Education:**

In the same way Indians have to reject the British system of education and try to reconstruct the educational system of India in new way. This was named as the Educational Boycott.

Now before going towards Sri Aurobindo's notion of educational boycott let us try to formulate the background of Indian educational system and the necessity of preaching for it in the two long decade old Company rule over India. When the East India Company managed to become the ruler of India, then they tried hard impulsively to destroy the educational system of our country which was one important source of India's greatness. Indian traditional *Tol* system was the cause of enlightenment among its countrymen. But after the arrival of the British people in India the main

focus was shifted towards the making of educated clerks who would help the British rulers to rule over entire India with their support. In the changing political arena of India, the British government wanted to make some obedient native *babus*, local *zamindārs*, provincial *rājās* to give them safe-guard against the rage of the Indian masses.

According to the Charter of the East India Company in 1813 the company had required to use Rs 100,000/- per year for the welfare of the citizens of India. By the time of 1820 the East India Company understood the necessity of making native (Indian) clerks educated in English language so that they could help the British administration to rule over India smoothly. The British high command realized this urgency and hence came the most famous English Education Act in 1835. Thomas Babington Macaulay, the Legal member of the Council of India at that time and to be President of the Committee, indulged in this endeavor. In 1833 in the House of Commons Macaulay had spoken in the favor

of the Company's Charter. In 1835 when the English Education Act, a Legislative Act, of the Council of India was employed by William Bentinck, the then Governor General of India, to reallocate funds gathered by the East India Company to spend upon the educational reform of India; Macaulay published his famous memorandum, namely *Minute on Education* on 2 February 1835 in its favor.

In his *Minute on Education* Macaulay clearly claimed that –

‘To sum up what I have said, I think it is clear that we not fettered by the Act of Parliament of 1813; that we are not fettered by any pledge expressed or implied; that we are free to employ our funds as we choose; that we ought to employ them in teaching what is best worth knowing; that English is better worth knowing Sanskrit or Arabic; that the natives are not desirous to be taught Sanskrit or Arabic; that neither as the languages of law, nor as the languages of religion, have the Sanskrit and Arabic any peculiar claim to our

engagement; that it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed.’⁷⁸

The main intention behind circulating this *Minute* became clear in the next quotations –

‘We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; A class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.’⁷⁹

⁷⁸ The history of English Education Act 1835, as found in Wikipedia; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Education_Act_1835

⁷⁹ Macaulay, text minute education 1835, as found in http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html

Now let me try to formulate this in my own language.

As we find out from this *Minute* there are several important topics are introduced –

- It is thought to be the key of success of the modern education system to employ English as medium of instruction instead of Arabic or Sanskrit. From then the neglect towards *Desi* or native languages became prominent.
- It became quite clear that English was being promoted by the British government. Native languages and their usages lost their past glory and it was actually pre planned by the foreign masters. They wanted to ruin the backbone of the India and sadly they were partially successful in this endeavor.
- They, the British officials, thought that English education would bring Indian renaissance. Here also their prediction was very right. After the introduction of English education in Indian territory Indians especially Bengalis grasped the true picture of the

world and it would be helpful enough to give birth to Bengal Renaissance.

- According to the British administration the Indians were reluctant to have Sanskrit or Arabic and that analysis was also partially right. There came a time when learning Sanskrit or Arabic would not help much for earning livelihood. Hence learning English seemed mandatory to all. But the main flaw of this declaration was that it was certainly not right to make for all Indians. There were plenty of Indians reluctant to accept education from English schools or colleges.
- In this charter it was hoped by Macaulay to make Indians good English scholars. But was it the main thought behind the employment of this English Education Act in 1905? I am afraid not so.
- The actual intention was made quite clear in the quotation where Macaulay said that what the British government actually wanted was to make some Indian

clerks to help in their administrative works so that they could rule over India for several more decades.

Lord Bentinck endorsed the *Minute* by writing only one line beneath it 'I give my entire consent to the sentiments expressed in the Minutes'. He passed the resolution on March 1835.

From here we can clearly see the main intention of employing English education, to produce Indian Clerks, in India by the British government which proposed the platform for educational boycott.

In the regime of Lord Curzon when in 1902 the Indian Universities Commission published its *Report* along with a note of dissent by Goro Das Banerjee, its only Hindu member. On the basis of this majority report the Government passed in 1904 the Indian Universities Act. The whole report and the Act led to a keen spurt in public interest regarding the problem of education, and to the establishment in 1902 of the *Dawn Society* by Satish Chandra Mukherjee. The 1904 Indian

University Act demanded self-less obedience from its students. For example, they should not be indulged into any kind of furious political agitation. They had to concentrate on their studies. To make the situation worsen the British government had declared an aggressive Circular, namely the Carlyle Circular⁸⁰ on 22 October, 1905 to ban the participation of the students in direct politics. They had nothing to interfere, according to the British government, with the ongoing political turmoil of India after 1905. When the Indian youths, mainly students of schools and universities, started opposing the notorious Partition of Bengal, in 1905, by leaving schools and colleges under the British government, then the Chief Secretary of Bengal, Carlyle issued a declaration known as Carlyle Circular in the history of Indian educational world on

⁸⁰ Carlyle, then Chief Secretary of Bengal, to stop students leaving Government colleges and universities made this notorious declaration on 22 October 1905. Here he clearly wrote in his Circular – If any college violates the government order and the student quits the educational institution then no assistance will be provided by the government to the institute.

22 October, 1905. According to it, students were banned to join any political agitation; they were not permitted to meet any political leader or to utter anything about politics openly. If they broke the governmental rules then the government had enough reasons to suspend or even send them under imprisonment.

This barbarous act of 1904 along with the Carlyle Circular of 1905 was capable enough to raise the fury of Indian masses. The political leaders were not in the mood to miss this golden opportunity and in this context included Indian students as an inevitable part of politics. In this way educational boycott i.e. to boycott the British educational system became a craze among pupils. Many of them refused to take the foreign degrees and so the effect of educational boycott seemed all-pervading over Indian students. However in Karan Singh's analysis, we can discover that the partition of Bengal in 1905 marked as immensely important for the upsurge of anti-British

feeling and agitation throughout the India and the cry of *boycott* and *Swadeshi* spread like wild fire. Its effect seen prominently in the educational field, and educational boycott became an important part in the political program of the new Nationalist party.⁸¹ In this political context of India, Sri Aurobindo, the first Principal of the Bengal National College, tried to reconstruct the national educational system by reuniting the glory of past with the scientific methods of the present so that it could lead us to a splendidly extraordinary future. In 1918 Tagore also established Sriniketan, for the same reason, which later took the form of today's Visva-Bharati University. This was the following necessary steps toward the establishment of the National Educational system.

In this context of educational system of the British-governed India let us try to realize Sri Aurobindo's theory of educational boycott. According to Sri Aurobindo 'We are dissatisfied also with the

⁸¹ Singh, Karan, *the Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, p. 128

conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its antinational 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 and 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.’⁸²

From this quotation let us try to evaluate Sri Aurobindo’s reasoning behind his advocating for educational boycott in 1905 in the context of Anti-partition movement. In his view the foreign educational system encouraged by the British government –

⁸² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Method”, p. 102

- Is unable to discover the national character of India as the traditional system of education would always encourage Indian youths to learn in English. Truly I feel that in British educational system Indian students were encouraged to know about how London Bridge falls, instead of knowing the history of India. It will never help the pupil to understand the national characteristic of India. Hence it will help the Indian youths to bar from taking part in the national movement started on 1905. However this plan of the British government was never be successful.

- The British government encourages calculated poverty in the context of spreading English education all over India. What did Sri Aurobindo mean when he uses the term 'calculated poverty'? It may mean that when the foreign government encouraged in learning English as a medium of instruction in Indian schools and colleges their main intention was to make *Desi* or native Clerks. The education received in the government schools and colleges were heavy in

expense and hence poor people are deprived of the opportunity of attaining education from them. The Bengali medium schools and colleges were not encouraged by the government. Hence very skillfully the British government encouraged the receiving of education, via English as a language in government schools and colleges, only among rich people; instead of all. As education is related with the question of earning so the poor Indians could not earn their livelihood. They became bound to live in extreme poverty. Perhaps this is the theory of calculative poverty in Sri Aurobindo's view.

- The government education system was always subordinate to the British government. The education they encouraged for the Indian youths had the only objective to make educated Indian clerks. These persons, because of their ignorance of their own culture, should follow their English officials blindly. They do not acquire independent thinking faculty because of their ignorance of their own culture. These

Indian clerks were explained by Macaulay as ‘A class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect’.

- Education nested upon the Indian youths via the medium of foreign language would, according to Sri Aurobindo, discourage the growth of patriotism in them. When we give them education through foreign medium then this foreign education bars Indian youths to realize the patriotic feelings for India. Seriously, even in my point of view, if we get too much energy wasted to learn an unknown language, like English, Latin, Greece etc, then it will be an unnecessary burden upon the weak shoulders of the Indian students. For understanding the national culture, ritual, religions they should be encouraged to learn their own languages that British government skillfully escapes in giving to them.

- Hence Sri Aurobindo called for the way of educational boycott by whose help the dominated India

could throw a threat towards the English medium educational system in the Pre-Independent India. In his view, if we can organize the educational boycott very skillfully then the British government would be made bound to accept the justified demands of the Indians and withdraw their clerk-making process. At the time of Bengal Partition movement or *Banga-Vanga Andolon* Indian youths made the foreign masters bound to accept their demands by the help of several successful demonstration of educational boycott. They boycotted governmental institutions and rejected governmental degrees and awards in the protest of the notorious Bengal Partition at 1905. In this way Sri Aurobindo's notion of educational boycott was made successful at the time of Bengal Partition in 1905.

However the process of establishing National Educational System never became much fruitful as the British government very soon realized the fault of the contemporary educational system in India. The students, who left their colleges or universities, after

the sudden departure of Sri Aurobindo from the political field, got distracted. Bipin Pal was deported. Tagore was busy with the fulfillment of his dream of *Shantiniketan* and his political career was too short just like Sri Aurobindo. Actually after the amendment of the Anti-Partition Bill in 1911 the whole movement lost its glory and also the educational boycott as its one of the essential part.

- **Judicial Boycott & National Arbitration Court:**

Judicial boycott is another very well-known form of boycott. British judicial system was another symbol of their tyrannical rule over India and its masses. The foreign government was never in favor of tolerating the political awakening of India. So the British rulers used the judicial system as a part of its dominative machinery. Whenever Indian people even tried to focus on their political urge for independence, the British constituency used their judicial system as a weapon against them. The immediate result was the hangings of Maharaja Nandakumar and Khudiram.

Entire India, as a result, became furious against the British domination. Several revolutionary groups were formed, revolutionary activities increased in Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra. Among them, Anushilan Samiti founded by Jatin Banerjee and Pramathanath Mitra in 1902, Jugantar Dal formed as one of its important corollary, Gadar party established by Lala Hardayal and Ajit Singh, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar taking part in Tilak's Swaraj Party, gained immense popularity among Indians. To stop them the British judges, as a part of dominative British administration, helped the government by giving judgments in their favor. They gave heavy punishments to Indian people even for smallest faults. The deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, *Bande Mataram* newspaper case, Alipore Bomb case and Sri Aurobindo's one year imprisonment were the prominent instances of the tortures of the British judicial system. Thus judicial boycott seemed mandatory in the pre-independent India after 1905.⁸³

⁸³ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'The Doctrine of Passive

Indian political leaders understood the necessity of establishing the national arbitration court. However this dream was never fulfilled as the Indians did not gain enough courage to establish supplementary judicial machinery against that of the British judicial system.

Before evaluating Sri Aurobindo's opinion about judicial boycott let us first try to understand the true picture of judicial exploitation over India. Whether his claim that the British judicial system made constant discrimination between native Indians and British persons was relevant? Let us try to find out its answer from history. While looking towards the history of Indian judiciary we can notice several Charters or Acts made by the East India Company in Pre-Independent India.⁸⁴ In the Bengal Regulation Act 1812 & Act III, 1818 prisoners under the regulations have no right of

Resistance', p. 38

⁸⁴ Muhaammand Munir, Hawliyat, *The Judicial System of the East India Company: Precursor to the Present Pakistani Legal System*, p. 53-68.

Habeas Corpus.⁸⁵ The Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878 and the purpose of the act was to control the printing and circulation of seditious materials in Indian newspaper against government. Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act of 1907 wanted to prohibit any unauthorized political meeting of more than twenty persons in any proclaimed area of any province as declared by the provincial authorities. Newspaper Act of 1908 and Press Act of 1910 were the legislative acts in British India imposing strict censorship on all kinds of publication of seditious materials in the Indian newspapers supporting Indian nationalism. In the Defense of India Act of 1915 the British government of India can detain any person on the basis of suspicion and the person could not get any judicial help. Rowlatt Act of 1919, popularly known as Rowlatt Act, was a legislative act to extend the power of British judiciary where anyone can be detained on

⁸⁵ Habeas Corpus, a Latin word, stands for a legal action or writ by means of which detainees can seek relief from unlawful imprisonment.

the basis of suspicion and held captive without trial. While Defense of India Act of 1939 provided special power in the hands of Special Courts against whose verdict nobody could have the power to appeal.

From the discussion of these above Regulation Acts of the British government it became quite clear that in British India the common Indians had no right claim to justice. The same thing had been prominent in the Bande Mataram Sedition case⁸⁶ in 1907 and Alipore Bomb Case⁸⁷ in 1908.

All these historical backgrounds account for Sri Aurobindo's thesis of judicial boycott. Sri Aurobindo wrote that – 'We are dissatisfied with the administration of justice, the ruinous costliness of the civil side, the brutal rigour of its criminal penalties and

⁸⁶ The Bande Mataram Newspaper Case, as found in the online newspaper published from Sri Aurobindo institute; http://www.sriurobindoinstitute.org/saioc/Sri_Aurobindo/bande_mataram_newspaper

⁸⁷ The Alipore Bomb Case, , as found in the online newspaper published from Sri Aurobindo institute; http://www.sriurobindoinstitute.org/saioc/Sri_Aurobindo/alipore_bo mb_case

procedure, its partiality, its frequent subordination to political objects. We refuse accordingly to have any resort to the alien courts of justice, and by an organised judicial boycott propose to make the bureaucratic administration of justice impassible while these conditions continue.⁸⁸

Let us try to reformulate Sri Aurobindo's reasons behind the preaching for judicial boycott.

- He was disappointed to see the discrimination in justice given by the British courts in pre-independent India. British people received far less punishment than their Indian counterparts for the same offence. This discrimination in law and justice made him feel the necessity of admitting the importance of judicial boycott.
- The main aim of the Indian judicial system in British India was to deprive the Indians from taking the help of law and order. The British

⁸⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Method", p. 102

administrations secured the law and order of their dynasty for the sake of their rule over India in the name of her Highness of England. They tried to protect their people rather their Indian subjects. Thus for establishing lower Courts, to protect their rights of justice, Indians had to wait till the Charter Act of 1793.

- Indians had been punished brutally by the British government. The cut off the limbs was the common practice for stealing in Pre-Independent India. They were thrown in front of fierce animals inhumanly very often for very small offences.
- At the time of National Movement the British judicial system played as an important corollary of the British torture and injustice over India and Indians. Deportation of Bipin Chandra Pal, Jaliwanwala Bagh Massacre, hangings of Maharaja Nanada Kumar, Khudiram, Surya Sen, Bhagat

Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were all prominent example of the fall of British jurisdiction.

- Sri Aurobindo thus strongly advocated to boycott the foreign judicial system and to establish a National Arbitration Court so that we can put an end to the British injustice over India and Indians.

However from Sri Aurobindo's own view it can be proved that this notion of Judicial Boycott was not paid much attention while compared with *swadeshi* and national education. It failed to achieve the settled goal because of two essential reasons – first, it was not at all possible to replace the supremely powerful British judicial system; and secondly, there was actually no need of replacing the old system (just because of such exceptions) as the British judiciary was partially devoid of any charge of partiality against their Indian counter-parts. The proper example of British Justice was perhaps Sri Aurobindo himself who in the able advocacy of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das escaped

from suffering a long punishment by transforming it into only one year's imprisonment in the Alipore Conspiracy Case. Perhaps we can consider this aspect as the weakest one among Sri Aurobindo's entire notion of Boycott.

• **Administrative Boycott & National Organization:**

The British administration played the major part to sustain the tyrannical rule over India for two long decades. The foreign rulers used its executive part to torture over Indian masses. The inhuman torture over Sushil Kumar; the suicide of Prafulla Chaki and the hanging of Khudiram Bose in the offence of killing Mrs. Kennedy with her daughter⁸⁹; the sacrifice of lives of Bagha Jatin and his gangs⁹⁰; the hanging of Masterda Surya Sen⁹¹ were among many evidences of

⁸⁹ The contribution of Khudiram Bose in Indian independence movement, as found in Wikipedia; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khudiram_Bose

⁹⁰ Bagha Jatin, as found in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagha_Jatin

⁹¹ Surya Sen, as found in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surya_Sen

British tyrannical rule over India. All of these incidents arouse limitless anger among the Indian masses. The domination of British rule never ended up with such sad incidents and its degree increased randomly. A successful administration has to unite its rulers with the subordinates. But the British executive rule had no connection with its people. So this dominative rule had to be soon ended and the Indian political atmosphere after 1905 also indicated towards the gradual downfall of the British empire. Being fade up with the crude and intolerable Executive administration of our British rulers Sri Aurobindo advocated for the organized form of Bureaucratic Administrative Boycott i.e. Executive Boycott. Actually the boycott of the foreign rule was meant for boycotting its executive part. The misbehavior of the police and the executive department over the common Indians led Sri Aurobindo to draw such analysis.⁹²

⁹² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'The Doctrine of Passive Resistance', p. 38

But before looking into Sri Aurobindo's theory regarding administrative boycott let us first try to evaluate the background of such comment. For it we have to go back to the history of the East India Company and try to discover the reason behind Sri Aurobindo's preaching for administrative boycott. There were several Regulatory Acts of British Parliament⁹³ that would show the true face of British raj over India. British men came in India in the disguise of merchants and till 1757 their main aim was just revenue collection and exporting local raw materials and importing their goods within Indian territory. Then they never considered making India as their colony but the battle of Pallasey in 1757 led them to spread control over the entire India. East India Company Act of 1773 first gave enormous power to the British Parliament to control the East India Company followed by East India Company Act of

⁹³ Regulatory Acts of 1773, from Wikipedia; http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regulatory_Acts_of_1773

1813. East India Company Act 1784 or Pitt's India Act granted the strong grip of the British government over the Indian territory by introducing the post of Governor-General in India. Act of 1786 empowered the Governor-General in such a way that, in special cases, he could override the opinion of the majority of his Council and could take the decision by himself. Government of India Act of 1833 gave the East India Company complete administrative sovereignty over their Indian subjects in the hands of the Governor-General with the help of his members of Council. Government of India Act of 1853 distributed for the first time the legislative and executive powers of Governor-Generals' Council for ensuring better judicial assistance.

After securing their strong foothold on the administration of India they started to impose many rigorous acts to stop the voices of the Indians. They are the Bengal Regulation Act of 1812 & Act III of 1818 (Prisoners act), Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act

of 1907, Newspaper Act of 1908 and the Press Act of 1910, Defense of India Act of 1915, Rowlatt Act of 1919, Defense of India Act of 1939. Judiciary is a part of administration; hence in the context of judicial boycott I have already gone through elaborate discussion on these rigorous acts. It seems irrelevant to me to explain them elaborately again here.

Now in the context of these rigorous acts imposed over the Indian subjects by the British government let us now try to understand Sri Aurobindo's opinion regarding administrative boycott.

According to Sri Aurobindo the reason behind administrative boycott is – 'Finally we disapprove of the executive administration, its arbitrariness, its meddling and inquisitional character, its thoroughness of repression, its misuse of the police for the repression instead of the people. We refuse, accordingly, to go to the executive for help or advice or protection or to tolerate any paternal interference in our public activities, and by an organised boycott of the executive

purpose to reduce executive control and interference to a mere skeleton of its former self.’⁹⁴ Let us try to reformulate Sri Aurobindo’s theory about administrative boycott as follows –

- The British administration held supreme power over the Indian subjects via the previously discussed Regulating Acts issued from 1773-1853. The Indian subjects were looked down upon by their foreign rulers and banned to take part in the high posts of the British administration.
- The British administration held supreme power over the Indian subjects via the previously discussed Regulating Acts issued from 1773-1853. The Indian subjects were looked down upon by their foreign rulers and banned to take part in the high posts of the British administration.

⁹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Method”, p. 102

- The thorough repressions of the British officials were in its supreme form everywhere. Their Partition Bill of Bengal in 1905 made the Bengalis as well as the entire India furious against the British administration. Even though lord Curzon gave an excuse of administrative problem to rule over the large province of Bengal and divided Bengal into East Bengal and West Bengal by including it into Bihar and Orissa the main reason was two folds – to satisfy the Muslim subjects' demand of having separate region and to make Bengalis, the most rebellious among the Indians, indulged into the provincial fights along with their Bihari and Asamiya counterparts so that they never have the chance to think about the freedom of India. Sri Aurobindo cited the reason for preaching for administrative boycott to reject this kind of British repression.
- The British administration used their police system to make the hands of the administration tight. The Muzzafarpur case was cracked for the efficiency of the

British police. In several cases like, the arrest of Masterda Surya Sen in the Chittagong armory case and the death of Bagha Jatin in Balashore, the Jalliwalaabagh Case, the Bande Mataram case, the Alipore Conspiracy Case, the British police used as an important tool to protect the British rule over India. But these were few examples while the repression of the British police was actually enormous over their Indian subjects. That is the reason why Sri Aurobindo quoted the 'misuse of the Police' and its repression over Indian subjects as one of the important reason of preaching for administrative boycott.

For this above reason Sri Aurobindo advocated for the establishment of national organization so that the administrative boycott could be made on strong basis. The Indian political leaders truly realized the necessity of establishing the national organization by whose help we can end the tyrannical foreign empire ruling over India for two decades. For that above reason Satish Chandra Mukherjee formed the Dawn Society in 1902;

Tilak formed *Swaraj* party; Pramathanath Mitra (along with Satish Chandra Basu) formed Anushilan Samiti in 1902 and Jugantar Dal also developed as its corollary. However the Indian National Congress got the reputation of a recognized national organization only after the appearance of Gandhi in the political arena of India.

And actually non-payment of taxes was the most effective and tremendously popular among other forms of executive boycott. In the opinion of Sri Aurobindo, by paying taxes we directly assist the administration and thus the non-payment of taxes directly hamper the executive activities of the foreign rule and in this way our goal of executive boycott would become possible in reality.

- **Social Boycott:**

Social boycott is the shunning of a person in attending any social meetings publicly. It also means the society's collective refusal to engage him in the normal

social and commercial relations with the society that makes his life impossible and forced him to leave the society. However the strategy of social boycott never involves any force or violence against the person whom we are socially boycotting.

In the context of India social boycott was introduced at the time of Anti Partition movement of Bengal in 1905. As the government attempted to crush the movement, *Swadeshi* became a creed or a gospel with the people. The priests refused to perform *puja* where offerings were made of foreign goods. Marriage presents which included foreign articles were returned. The vernacular papers of Bengal—*Sandhya* and *Bangavasi*—began to preach that the people would run the risk of losing their *dharma* (religion) if they made use of foreign sugar or salt which were refined by the use of blood and bones of swine and cows. The people often collected the rustic apparels of foreign goods and set them on fire. They greeted the blazing flames with shouts of *Bande Mataram*.

At the time of Anti Partition movement of Bengal in 1905 people also adopted a fourfold program of boycott — (a) to disown the English cloth; (b) to abjure the English speech; (c) to relinquish honorary offices under the government; and (d) to socially boycott those persons who use foreign goods. This social boycott made the life of the protagonists of the government doubly miserable. People would not talk to them. Native physicians would not care for them in illness. Barbers would not cut their hair. At times, it got to dangerous dimensions; several instances of physical attacks on the British employees were occurring also. In a few cases their property too was burnt down by agitators. This trail of social boycott included public burning of foreign cloth, boycott of foreign-made salt or sugar and the refusal by washer men to wash foreign clothes. This form of protest met with great success at the practical level to break the mental strength of the opposite party.

Sri Aurobindo, at that time of 1905 who was a budding politician, also mentioned about social boycott, which means not only to boycott the foreign administrators, but also their supporter *desi Babus* even from attending any social occasion. Social boycott theory is perhaps much more effective as compared with others because nothing could affect the British dynasty more than it. The concept of social boycott is much easier than other kinds of boycott. The foreign administrators and the English-minded *babus* had to be socially boycotted for their attitude towards common Indians. They actually helped the British dynasty to sustain over India for two long decades. That is why fellow Indians should boycott them from attending any social gathering or taking part in any kind of social ritual. Participation in any meeting or agitation is strictly prohibited for them. We have to avoid the guilty persons socially. We can arouse, in this way, guilt feelings among them. Here we are not allowed to do any direct violence to our enemies. In social boycott, no physical harm has to be

done to our opponents; rather mental pressure has been given to them.⁹⁵

Let us state Sri Aurobindo's theory of social boycott in his own words – 'Without the social boycott no national authority depending purely on moral pressure can get its decrees effectively executed; and without effective boycott enforced by a strong national authority the new policy cannot succeed. But the only possible alternatives tempered by petitions or aggressive resistance. We must therefore admit a third canon of the doctrine of passive resistance, that social boycott is legitimate and indispensable as against persons guilty of treason to the nation.'⁹⁶

According to him, social boycott is truly helpful in increasing moral as well as mental pressure over the persons who are socially boycotted. Suppose if we shun a person to attend public meetings, the washer

⁹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Karmayogin*, 'the Social Boycott', August 14, 1909, p. 25

⁹⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Obligations", p. 112

men stop washing his clothes, relatives and neighbors stop talking with him, he cannot let to use the water of village ponds as the villagers ban his usage of village water, everyone is boycotting him in every social occasion then definitely he will face tremendous mental and moral pressure upon him. Without social boycott we cannot pressurize the offenders morally. This is the reason of Sri Aurobindo's saying that social boycott increase the moral and mental pressures over the person who is boycotted by us.

Why social boycott is called as the cannon of passive resistance by Sri Aurobindo? Perhaps the reason behind such comment is that in social boycott we should not practice violence against the persons whom we are socially boycotted. Here we are passively resisting the wrong-doers, who are in majority the Government employees, to help their British rulers. We are forcing him, not violently, to shun the British government so that the anti-partition movement of Bengal could grow stronger. The main aim behind the

preaching of social boycott is to make the hand of Indian nationalistic movement in 1905 strong by decreasing the supporter lists of the opposite party.

Social boycott seemed the last chance of using passive resistance the failure of which could, according to Sri Aurobindo, help us to move towards active resistance. It is the most effective means of boycott. In economic, administrative, judicial and educational boycott we are trying to refuse the British Government and his policies. Even though the British Government sustained because of its strong officials and police system among whom most are Indians. But in social boycott we could very effectively cut short their support system of Indian officials. Hence it seemed as the most effective form of boycott whose failure could draw our attention towards the active resistance.

Social boycott, truly evaluated by Sri Aurobindo, is the best way to make the foreign government forced to hear our valid demands. The East India Company came in India in the disguise of the merchants. Hence the

most of their earnings were dependent on the import of their local goods in India on cheap rate. If we can boycott their cheap foreign goods then we can resist their economic power existing behind the British administration. At last we can make a scratch on their British economic wall. Sri Aurobindo's theory regarding social boycott proved very true in the context of 1905 Anti Partition Movement in Bengal.

Actually there is nothing new in accepting the former four types of boycott; rather the exclusiveness of his theory lies inherent in preaching for Social Boycott. However at that time in Bengal (from 1905's Bengal Partition movement) and even after his age in all over India (towards 1947), Boycott is somewhat limited within the arena of Industrial Boycott of Salt, Sugar, and Cloth made in England; and it becomes helpful only in hampering the British merchants directly (economic boycott) and British bureaucrats along with its judiciary indirectly (administrative and judicial boycott). Thus not only economic boycott, but also

some amount of executive boycott and judicial boycott was preferred by the Indian political leaders. However educational boycott along with the trial of Administrative Boycott also seemed prominent in these eras. In the context of accepting social boycott, we can find out the dissimilarity of Sri Aurobindo with that of Gandhi who never believes in the concept of social boycott at all.⁹⁷

However the boycott, approached by Sri Aurobindo, not only contains the negative side, but also the positive side. By the help of Industrial Boycott Sri Aurobindo dreamt of bringing a gradual development in indigenous industries based on goods manufactured in India (*Swadeshi*). By boycotting the foreign educational system, Sri Aurobindo developed the Bengal National College and accepted the role of its first Principal (National Education). But his dream of establishing National Arbitration Courts by boycotting

⁹⁷ According to M.K. Gandhi, we should not offend the wrong-doer. Social boycott will offend him and give tremendous moral pressure on him. Violence can also be employed against him.

the British Judicial system was never been fruitful and his other long cherished dream of establishing a National Organization becomes possible only in the hands of his successor, Mahatma Gandhi.

D. Boycott & Violence: Turn towards Just War:

Some critics can even argue that social boycott being non-violent in nature may be justifiable, but not burning or drowning British goods in the name of Industrial Boycott along with other forms of boycott. However Sri Aurobindo conceived the other kinds of boycott, except the social boycott, not as morally unjustifiable, even though illegal from the judicial and administrative context. Hence the question of violence is always related with the concept of Boycott.

In its response Sri Aurobindo clearly declared that – ‘The morality of a Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war, and boycott is a war.... Aggression is unjust

only when unprovoked; violence, unrighteous when used wantonly or for unrighteous ends.’⁹⁸

Boycott is considered to be a war by Sri Aurobindo. War is intrinsically violent in nature. Hence the critics always try hard to refute the utility of boycott by citing it violently aggressive. However if we look into Sri Aurobindo then we can receive a very nice answer of this question. Sri Aurobindo symbolically called the work of national freedom movement as a *Yajña* and the foreign masters as *Rakshas* and, just as we find in ancient scriptures, to drive away the demons ancient *ṛṣis* had performed *yajñas*; similarly we, the Indians, to drive away foreigners out of our country, have to perform the holy *yajña* of freedom movement. To drive away the *Rakshas* we can use both the *Brahmatejas* of the *ṛṣis* and the bows of the *Kṣatriyas*. Sometime the *Brahmatejas* of the Rishis cannot be successful alone to drive away the demons and then we have to use the bows of the *Kshatriyas*. Boycott is,

⁹⁸.Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, ‘The Morality of Boycott’, p. 127

according to Sri Aurobindo, to be compared not with the *brahmatejas* of the *r̥sis*, rather the bows of the *Kṣatriyas*. We have to use the bows of the *Kṣatriyas* at the time of war and hence boycott agitation is truly called as war-time by him.

Whether boycott is to be considered as unjust or not in its answer Sri Aurobindo answered that war has to be violent in nature but it cannot be unjust. He claimed that a war, even being violent, can be unjust only if it is unprovoked e.g. if we attack someone without any proper reason to attack then that violence is unjust to him.⁹⁹ But when we are provoked to use violence then it should not be considered unjust in nature, rather the just one. If one wants to attack us then we are just to use violence as a means.¹⁰⁰ Therefore the attack at Parliament by Bhagat Singh, sukhdev and Rajguru in the protest of the notorious Jaliwanwala Bagh Murder

⁹⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Morality of Boycott", p. 127

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 127

case and the pre-planned murder of Lala Lajpat Rai could be considered as just to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo beautifully used symbols to explain his position. Boycott is war and it cannot be considered as unjust, even though violently aggressive in nature, because it seems Just War or *dharma yudhha* to him. In this context let me try to concentrate on the notion of Just War or *dharma yudhha* theory. Sri Aurobindo derived this concept from *Mahabharata* where the war of *Kurukshetra* was known to be just war. But what is reason behind that? Arjuna, being a *Kshatriya*, had to be dominated by *rajas* as his essential quality. But he had an unusual *sattvic* bent of mind.¹⁰¹ Hence he became very skeptical about the usefulness of the battle of *Kurukshetra* where he had to slaughter his own relatives or *ātmiyas* (*ātman* = soul and hence *ātmiya* = persons connected to ones own *ātman* or soul i.e. soul-relatives). He was doubtful about the massive killing of his relatives in the battle field. In this context

¹⁰¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on Gita*, "Man and the Battle of Life", p. 53

comes the concept of just war. Sri Krishna quoted this battle as a just war or *dharma yudhha* where being a *Kṣatriya*, Arjuna had to follow his *swadharmā* and not to be overwhelmed by his *sattvic* quality rather to follow *rajasic* one. He condemned Arjuna for showing reluctance to follow his own *swadharmā*:

sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣamāpi na tyajet.
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenā gnir ivā `vṛtāḥ
||18/48||

[You should not reject the way of your *swadharmā* even though it is fallen. Because just like fire surrounded by smoke every works are surrounded by rajas.]

And in other most famous verse of *Gīta* Sri Krishna advised Arjuna –

Śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt
svanuṣṭhitāt
svadharme nidhanam Śreyāḥ paradharmo
bhayāvahaḥ ||3/35||

[Following one's own nature or *dharma*, though imperfect, is still better than following other's nature or *dharma* even though seems perfect. Even dying in

one's *swadharma* is far better as following others' *dharma* will naturally leads towards destruction and decay. Here *dharma* stands for *swadharma*.]

According to Sri Aurobindo we all have to be as courageous, as brave as the *Kṣatriya*, not for our sake, but for the sake of our motherland. A true *Kṣatriya* never gives up; he can even sacrifice his own life in the battle field. He never even thought to quite from it, even though the battle seems very much tough in nature. And boycott is nothing else but a strong battle by whose help we can gain our independence or *swaraj*. Thus no question of quitting from the battle-field seems relevant here. We all have to achieve the morality of the *Kṣatriya*¹⁰²; so that the use of violence would not be able to break up the firmness of our mind and we can, being prepared in that way, could be able to go ahead in our path of achieving the national freedom, where the question of violence seems inapplicable. Boycott is a battle, and in battle-field the

¹⁰² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, 'The Morality of Boycott', p. 127

question of violence or non-violence is unnecessary. However we cannot even have enough freedom to quit the battle of boycott as we are not the doers, rather just the instruments or tools used by. God himself is the doer, and uses us as equipments for such a devastating war.¹⁰³

And what is the need of such battle? In *Gita*, Lord Krishna himself preaches the great war of *Kurukshetra* as it seems mandatory for the well-being of India and its countrymen. Boycott has to be used as a *Kṣatriya*'s bow in our hands at the time of Indian political movement.¹⁰⁴ Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, this battle of *swadeshi* and boycott agitation also seems necessary as per God's wish. Boycott movement is called as *dharma yudhha* and it is our *swadharma* to be indulged into this war. To discover the nature of *swadharma* Shri Krishna told to Arjuna in *Gita* –

¹⁰³ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Present Situation", p. 661

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, "The Morality of Boycott", p. 128

karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalahetubhūr mā te saṅgo stvakarmaṇi
||2/47||

[O Arjuna, you only have right in your work. You have to work without making any desire (*lokasaṅgraha*). Don't be the cause of the sufferings caused by the desire of *karmaphala*. However because you have to get rid of desire don't try to get rid of your actions also.]

Sri Aurobindo truly analyzed that the necessity of Boycott as just war or *Dharma Yudhha* was to lying in the actual performance of our own *swadharmā* as Arjuna had to follow his own *swadharmā* on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In the same way a follower of boycott had to perform his duty by remembering that it was his just war and he had to follow his *swadharmā*.

Hence, according to Sri Aurobindo, whatever has been done in the pre-Independence age in India is all due to the Supreme Command of the Almighty. We, the

common Indians can become proud of being liberated from the hands of the British domination, even though the achievement of Indian independence in 1947 happens only due to the master plan of God and also whatever we have lost and whatever we have gained in the name of boycott agitation at the time of Indian independence from 1905 to 1947, has also been done according to the Divine will. Thus, whatever had been done at the time of India's political movement was not according to the free will of any human being, rather according to the supreme will of the Brahman. Thus whatever we have to do in the name of boycott agitation stands as a part of the Divine plan by Sri Aurobindo. Actually behind every theory of Sri Aurobindo the metaphysical touch is prevalent everywhere. His social-political thought is not at all an exception in this regard. And boycott as one of his most important political tool has to be allied with this inner metaphysical touch hidden behind. Actually spirituality is the inner basic tenets of Sri Aurobindo's

all theories, whether metaphysics, ethics, religion, philosophy or social-political thoughts. Hence the spiritual touch is also truly indispensable in his thesis concerning boycott.

E. Conclusion:

Boycott just like *swaraj* is nothing else but a divine tool in the hands of the Almighty. It is due to the master plan of the Divine that boycott is specially designed for the Indians. India is culturally and spiritually very strong. Hence India is destined to be the spiritual guide of every other nations. Sri Aurobindo is well conscious of the fact and so he advocated the notion of Boycott so firmly. It is falsely thought that Gandhi is the first implementer of Boycott in the context of Indian politics. Far away from his time Extremist INC [Indian National Congress] leaders preached for that. And Sri Aurobindo had a clearest idea of Boycott among all of them. Gandhi had no clear intention of applying social boycott, but Sri Aurobindo is much more far ahead of him. Perhaps in

this context he is somewhat influenced by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his book named *Swarajya*.

It was Tilak who first cried for *swarajya*¹⁰⁵ in the sense of absolute independence. Moderate Congress leaders following Mr. Gokhale accepted the notion of *Swarajya* in the sense of colonial self-government. But nationalists, following Tilak, accepted *Swarajya* as complete independence. Sri Aurobindo, as a nationalist leader, admitted *Swarajya* in the same sense used by Tilak.¹⁰⁶ He claimed that we should not accept *Swarajya* in the colonial sense as there could be nothing like ‘colonial *swarajya*’. Actually there is no difference between *Swarajya* and *swaraj* accepted by Sri Aurobindo. Both the words are used synonymously.

Boycott was strongly thought, by Sri Aurobindo, as one of the weapons to bring *swaraj* or *Swarajya*.

¹⁰⁵ *Swarajya* literally means ‘own kingdom’, because ‘swa’ stands for ‘own’ and ‘rajya’ stands for ‘kingdom’. But it was used in the sense of independence.

¹⁰⁶ “Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, “Our Work in the Future”. P. 59

Swaraj has to be made possible in reality by the help of boycott. But astonishingly the word 'boycott' is used in its spiritual sense also to him. However Sri Aurobindo's contribution was that he is the first person who could discover the Inherent spirituality is hidden behind this political tool named boycott. Whatever is the reason behind it, we should praise him for discovering the inherent spiritual sense of boycott from it which seemed an apparently political looking tool for all common Indians including well known contemporary Indian politicians.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought the existence of spirituality is prevalent. It is quite embarrassing to discuss with the spiritual overtone while discussing about the social-political thought of Sri Aurobindo. But if we go deeply with his social-political thought we can discover some amount of spirituality inherent within. Hence I cannot override the possibility of looking towards the Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought from the spiritual perspective. Let me state what I went through my different chapters one by one.

There arises controversy regarding the characteristic feature of Sri Aurobindo's thesis of nationalism. Is it just Hindu revivalism or something more than that? Romila Thapar mentioned that Sri Aurobindo, being influenced by Bankim, was attempting the regeneration of India on the basis of reviving the ancient glory of

Hinduism.¹⁰⁷ Hence, according to her, the characteristic feature of Sri Aurobindo's nationalism is based upon Hindu revivalism. It is often believed that the tenets of Hindu revivalism had its origin in the writings of Bankim and Vivekananda. Bankim's depiction that the political regeneration of India has to be dependent upon its cultural tradition is viewed as one of the sources of Hindu revivalist attitude. In his *Dharmatattva* he considered patriotism as equal to pure self-surrender to God.¹⁰⁸ Sri Aurobindo's notion of self-surrender to the national agitation as a plan made by the Almighty¹⁰⁹ was clearly influenced by Bankim. In Bankim's *Anandamath* he worshipped motherland as goddess and created a group of *sannyasins* who are prepared to die for the sake of gaining its freedom from foreign hands. Most critics discover the influence of Bankim's *Anandamath* upon

¹⁰⁷ Thapar, Romila, *The Past and Prejudice*, p. 13

¹⁰⁸ Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, *Essentials of Dharma*, p. 160

¹⁰⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Present Situation", p. 653

Sri Aurobindo's secret revolutionary activities. Sri Aurobindo was tremendously fascinated by the political works of Bankim as in his view Bankim, through his political writings, influenced the national mind of Indians. The Chicago conference lectures of Swami Vivekananda were reflections of his discovery of Hinduism as the best religion of the entire world. Vivekananda mentioned clearly that every improvement in India requires the upheaval in religion.¹¹⁰ *Vedanta* is the perfect example of universal religion to him and hence his theory of nationalism is considered as the concept of Hindu revivalism based on *Vedantism*.

The theory of Aurobindian nationalism has been nicknamed as religious nationalism by Peter Heehs.¹¹¹ However the question remains whether such characterization would be adequate or not. In the light

¹¹⁰ Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 3, p. 221

¹¹¹ Heehs, Peter, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 100-101

of present discussions it seemed quite adequate to call his kind of nationalism as spiritual nationalism. According to Heehs, Sri Aurobindo, influenced by Vivekananda, tried to format the thesis of nationalism on the basis of religion. Hence the nationalism preached by Sri Aurobindo, as argued by Heehs, stands for religious nationalism. The reasoning provided by Heehs is quite absurd as, according to him, the use of Hindu religious terms and symbols by Sri Aurobindo transforms it into a kind of religious nationalism. However the contradictory view can also be drawn from his own writings. Heehs in his book *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism* wrote that according to Sri Aurobindo, Indian soul was preeminently spiritual.¹¹² My observation and understanding of his writings suggest that we can derive a sort of spiritual nationalism. I am in the favor of using Sri Aurobindo's nationalism in the sense of spiritual nationalism. The

¹¹² Heehs, Peter, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism: Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 99

nationalism preached by Sri Aurobindo was indeed called by him as a creed or *dharmā*¹¹³ but this *dharmā* is completely different from religion. Sri Aurobindo's nationalism is universal religion or *sanātana dharmā* which is not limited within the narrow boundary of any religion. Spiritual goal hidden behind his social-political thought gave it a spiritual color hence it will not be irrelevant to call his nationalism as spiritual nationalism. Hence I cannot override the possibility of looking towards Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought from the spiritual perspective.

The reason behind describing Aurobindian nationalism as spiritual nationalism is that, in his view, spirituality holds higher position than that of religion. If we go through the views of Sri Aurobindo then we will discover that religion, in his view, has two forms – religionism and spiritualism, of the two, the latter was

¹¹³ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Present Situation", p. 652

conceived as ‘true religion’ by him.¹¹⁴ Spirituality, in his view, deals with ultimate union of the *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* via evoking our inner being or Psychic being (*Caitya Puruṣa*). Religionism, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the way towards spiritualism. His ultimate goal is to reach towards the Life Divine or the Kingdom of Heaven¹¹⁵ which religions fail to achieve. Hence it is not inappropriate to call Aurobindian nationalism as spiritual nationalism instead of religious nationalism.

In my first chapter of dissertation I want to focus on a very important social-political theory namely *swaraj* and its inherent spiritual connection. Sri Aurobindo’s doctrine of *swaraj* even though taken mostly in the sense of Complete Independence or *Purna Swaraj* by most critics, is quite different in inner meaning. It has a broad spiritual sense hidden within. It stands for *sva-*

¹¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, “Religion as the Law of Life”, p. 177-178

¹¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “The Demand of the Mother”, p. 853

mahimni in Sri Aurobindo's doctrine, as followed by the *Vedas*.¹¹⁶ What is the meaning of the term *sva-mahimni*? It means universal happiness. If we want to seek for the true happiness then we have to seek for universal happiness and if we got stuck within our limited boundary then we can never discover the true nature of universal happiness. For finding out the source of universal happiness we have to discover the divinity hidden inherent within. Hence *sva-mahimni* of the *Vedas* shows us the ultimate path of discovering the inherent touch of divinity hidden within every individual. And truly if we cannot understand the secret Godhead hidden within us then how could we seek for universal happiness? We have to realize that we, the individuals, are none but the manifestations of the *Brahman* as found in the *Vedanta*. (“*Tattvamasi*”; “*Ahamatmabrahmasmi*”). As a profound believer in the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*, Sri Aurobindo's thought was never debarred from the influence of such spiritualistic

¹¹⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “Justice Mitter & Swaraj”, p. 513

touch. Therefore his theory of *Swaraj* is accurately stands for the sense of *sva-mahimni* as followed by the Vedas which means the ultimate show of secret Godhead hidden within every individual.

However here can raise an important question – how could we relate Sri Aurobindo’s social-political theory of *swaraj* with that of Indian political movement if we have to accept that above mentioned spiritual sense of *swaraj*? In its answer let me say that unmistakably *swaraj* stands for the sense of freedom or *mukti* to him, but this theory of freedom or *mukti* is quite different than that of individual freedom. In Sri Aurobindo’s theory *swaraj* is a symbol of freedom from all limitations, all bars and all obstacles in life. *Swaraj*, to him, stands as a way leading towards *mukti* or *mokṣa* or liberation or salvation and gradually becomes akin with *mukti* or liberation. But he derived another essential meaning of *swaraj* i.e. the achievement of independence from the grasp of others. According to the ancient philosophical scriptures, while defining

mukti, we discover that *sarvam paravasham duhkham sarvam atmavasham sukham*: all dependence upon others is the cause of misery, while all dependence upon ourselves is blissful.¹¹⁷ If we cannot discover the Real Man hidden within, which is called as *Caitya Puruṣa* or Psychic Being by Sri Aurobindo, we cannot be free from the bondages of our lives. If we cannot discover our inherent relation with that of the Divine then we cannot discover the true nature of this *Caitya Puruṣa*, called as the meeting-place of the Divine with the individual). By understanding the existence of *Caitya Puruṣa* within us we can be free from the bondage of *māyā* or *avidyā* and can truly realize that we are the manifestations of the Almighty himself. Unless such realization comes into our minds we cannot be free from every kind of bondage of life. The way towards such realization is fondly called by Sri Aurobindo *sva-mahimni*. In this way we can correlate a purely political concept of *swaraj* with that of its

¹¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, 'Swadeshi & Boycott', p. 42

spiritual sense and there is nothing contradictory with the preaching of *swaraj* by Sri Aurobindo at the time of Indian political movement.

Let me make my position clear. *Swaraj* is called as *mukti* by Sri Aurobindo.¹¹⁸ If *Swaraj*, to be considered as *mukti* or Salvation in its metaphysical sense as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo, then I draw a similarity of it with that of *svārūpyo mukti* concept of the Vedanta where human beings has to be God-like (*Iswara-svarup*). According to the Vedanta doctrine, there are several types of *mukti*, e.g. *svārūpyo mukti*, *sāmīpyo mukti*, *sājujyo mukti*, *sālokya mukti*, *sāsthi mukti*. *Svārūpyo mukti* means that type of liberation where individual can become God-like after death (*Iswara-svarup*); *sāmīpyo mukti* means that type of liberation where individual has to be nearer to God after death (*Iswara-samip*); *sājujyo mukti* means that liberation where the individual has to be related with God after death (*Iswara-sahit-sājujya*); *sālokya mukti*

¹¹⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, “Swadeshi & Boycott”, p. 41

means that type of liberation where individual has to attain the same place or *loka* with God after death (*Iswarasya-loka*); *sāsthi mukti* means the lowest kind of liberation from all of these kinds. Among all of these kinds *svārūpyo* mukti is highest than all as here we can get the ultimate opportunity to be God-like. Sri Aurobindo also considered that individuals are nothing else but the manifestations of the *Brahman*. For making *līlā* necessary to create the world, he covered up himself with *māya* or *avidyā* and projects himself as created objects like humans. But when we, the individuals, by the help of *tattva-jñana* or self-knowledge can destroy the *mithyā-jñāna* or *avidyā*, easily realize the true nature of us i.e. we are nothing but the *vivarta* or manifestations of the *Sachchidanada*. In this regard we can see the influence of Shankara Vedanta on Sri Aurobindo. Hence if we have to accept Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of *Swaraj* then we can consider it an example of *svārūpyo mukti*. But astonishingly the doctrine of *Swaraj* does not end with

the attainment of Liberation, because according to Sri Aurobindo, when we can get rid of *avidyā* or ignorance then by realizing our true nature or *svarup* as none the less than *Brahman* himself we can prepare ourselves, like Bhagirath calling upon Ganga, to call forth the Supermind upon the earthen level. This is the way of attaining *Life Divine*. And in this way the spiritual sense of *swaraj* with that of Sri Aurobindo's goal of achieving *Life Divine*.

However if we look deep into Sri Aurobindo's explanation of *swaraj* doctrine we can discover the existence of spiritualistic touch everywhere. His comparison of *swaraj* with that of *sanatana dharma* or eternal religion is also spiritual in nature. Any religion has certain boundary against it, but an internal religion certainly lacks it. *Swaraj* as eternal religion is not limited within the boundary of any nation, but with the help of Universal Fellow-feeling, it has to reach the vast arena of internationalism. This preaching for Universal Fellow-feeling and internationalism are just

the gateway of Sri Aurobindo's dream of fulfilling *Life Divine* by the help of Collective Salvation theory. Sri Aurobindo's main aim was to make the individual life the *Life Divine* and the person who best fitted for it has to be self-less in nature and to think about the welfare of all. Individual salvation can make a person near to the Almighty or *Sachchidanada* but it cannot be done unless he has Universal Fellow-feeling for all individuals irrespective of their castes, sects or religions. In this respect I presume that the individual salvation theory of the *Vedas* has been transformed into the notion of Collective Salvation in the hands of Sri Aurobindo in his social-political thought.

In the second chapter I want to discover the hidden inherent touch behind the mere political doctrine of Boycott. According to Sri Aurobindo boycott movement is a worship of *Zeitgeist*; it is a holy

yajña.¹¹⁹ However *Zeitgeist* can be considered as Kali and Krishna both. When we compare the zeitgeist with that of Time or *Kāla* then he took the form of Krishna as depicted in Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the *Gita*. In *Gita* Sri Krishna clearly told Arjuna –

*Kalo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho lokān
samāhartumiha pravṛttah.*

*Ṛt'pi tvām na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye'vasthitāḥ
pratyanikeṣu yodhāḥ ||* ¹²⁰

[I (Sri Krishna) am Time who waste and destroy the peoples; I have arisen in my might; I am here to swallow up the nations. Even without me all they shall not be, I even exist in between the men standing in the opposite squadrons.]

Hence from this above we can derive that Brahman, according to Sri Aurobindo, was manifested in the form of Krishna. In this way Sri Aurobindo took

¹¹⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Conclusions, p. 122

¹²⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, "The Greatness of the Individual", p. 5

Zeitgeist in the form of Krishna. [*Zeitgeist*/Time/*Kāla*
= Krishna]

However *Zeitgeist*, according to Sri Aurobindo, can appear in the form of Kali also. Kali, in his view, is not compared with Time as Krishna, but she is carrying time as her tools to create, sustain and destroy her foes so that she could fulfill her aim. From his description it cannot be illogical to draw that the power of Kali as *Aghaṭṇa-ghaṭṇana-paṭīyasī* (the woman 'very skillful in bringing about the impossible'¹²¹) is beyond the limit of time. Her power actually supersedes time. Time is just a power in the hands of Kali. When we accept *Zeitgeist* in this sense then we will certainly accept him in the form of Kali. [*Zeitgeist*/*Mahākāla* = Kali]

But how from his spiritual outlook Sri Aurobindo justifies this concept of boycott? Indian political movement is considered as a great and holy *yajña* to Sri Aurobindo where boycott as an immediate tool or

¹²¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, "The Greatness of the Individual", p. 59

‘bow of Kshatriya’ has to be used. Boycott is considered to be a ‘bow of Kshatriya’¹²² (*Kṣatriya*) as it is according to the plan of the Divine in Sri Aurobindo’s views. Indian freedom movement is that type of movement where every participant has to be ready to sacrifice even his life just like a *Kṣatriya* does in war. And boycott agitation is just like a bow in the hands of the participants whom Sri Aurobindo considered to be Kshatriyas. To throw away the rule of the British, whom he called as demon or *rākṣas* sometimes we with the help of *brahmatejas* of the *ṛṣis* need the help of the *Kṣatriya*’s bow. And boycott is that *Kṣatriya*’s bow ready to be used at any time of such fierce battle against the foreign rule in pre-independent India. In this way symbolically Sri Aurobindo used the notion of boycott in its inherent spiritual sense and here no inconsistency arouse with that of its political sense.

¹²² Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Conclusion”, p. 122

Boycott agitation is nothing else but a circumstance of Just War or *dharma yudhha*. In a just war situation everybody is bound to perform his own *svadharma* or his own nature. *Svadharma* stands for following one's own nature in Sri Aurobindo's view. Here '*dharma*' stands for nature instead of quality. However the concept of *svadharma* is dependent upon four types of *swabhava* or fundamental character traits. Every man has unique character traits or *swabhavas* and from his *swabhavas* his *svadharma* is to be followed. Arjuna as a *Kṣatriya* is bound to be indulged into the Just War or *dharma yudhha* as it is his own *svadharma*. Indian political movement, in the same way, seems to be *dharma yudhha* for every Indian to Sri Aurobindo. Boycott, as a tool of such political agitation, is to be used as the 'bow of Kshatriya' in this endeavor.

Now let me try to focus on the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought. None before him correlates spirituality along with politics and in this endeavor he is also regarded as the profounder of this

thought. He was perhaps that first person among his contemporaries who undertook the huge task of discovering the relationship between spirituality and political thought. According to him, politics like, all other doctrines e.g. ethics, epistemology, psychology, feminism etc, ultimately leads towards the spiritual destination. Spirituality stands as the backbone of every other Aurobindian doctrine. In reality, he tried hard to transform the human life into the *Divine Life* and in this endeavor; he took the help of his educational, social-political, ethical doctrines. In his educational thesis, he tried to educate every Indian child in such a way that it can truly discover the hidden potentiality, the *Real Man* within. In this way we can discover his enormous similarity with that of Swami Vivekananda and Tagore. In his political thoughts, he wanted to make India free from its two decades long captivity under the British rule. However the ultimate reason behind that was his deep faith in India's gaining of the spiritual excellence over other materialistic

nations of Europe. In his ethical notions, he never focused on making human life ethical, but by the help of the notions of the Indian ethics tried to invoke the inner eye of his Indian counterparts so that they can comprehend the excellence of India's art, architecture along with the religious and cultural aspects.

Even behind the political thesis of Sri Aurobindo, we can find out the existence of human unity. In his two books – *The Human Cycle* (1918) and *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919) we can find out the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. First in his political doctrine we get acquainted with the concept of nation-state and this nation-state is considered as a necessary stage for the development towards the human unity. In this way, an individual can be successful to make his individual life into the so-desired *Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo. The human unity cannot be achieved by the financial, administrative, religious or economical advancement process; but through the inner process of growth of human race,

which can be somewhat mental and ethical in nature. Thus the eternal religion or *sanatana dharma* of humanity can spring from the inner law of human advancement. Every development of Nature is slow in speed and has to be faded out with some definite reasons. Current phrase of human history has two equal forces. First, an inner force of interconnection and interaction between the human races; and second, a common uniting force to unite smaller units to that of the larger elements by using external forces.¹²³ In the idea of World Government the trial for unification employing the external force is prevalent. Thus Sri Aurobindo was strongly against the conventional idea of the World Government. Rather he used the term world-union.¹²⁴ Rather loose and secure form of the National kind of Governments will be able to lead its countrymen through their cultural heritage, civilization, religion etc backgrounds towards the

¹²³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 251

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 270

achievement of the so-desired notion of Human Unity or *Universal Brotherhood*. In this way with the help of Sri Aurobindo's social-political thought we can easily move towards the spiritual notions of *Life Divine* and *Universal Brotherhood*.

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