Sri Aurobindo and Politics: The Pondicherry Years (1910 – 1950)

THE ABSTRACT

Between 1910 and 1950 there were sixty major political events. It is believed and accepted that Sri Aurobindo had quit practical politics in 1910 and had lost interest in it. Such a position is incorrect and a partial reading of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo said that he was on 'self-denying ordinance'. This thesis paper shows how Sri Aurobindo remained 'engaged' and not 'involved' in practical politics and often denied his own ordinance.

For the first time, an attempt is made in this thesis to disprove the general notion about Sri Aurobindo’s quitting of practical politics and establish how he remained 'engaged' in it for forty years in Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo intervened and gave concrete suggestions on almost fifty-seven major political developments. On three occasions he intervened personally. To take his advice, political leaders often visited Pondicherry and maintained regular contacts with him.
He, however, used the Indian spiritual tradition as a support mechanism to re-define politics and tried to develop a spiritual-ethical form of political system devoid of power and authority.

Sri Aurobindo never held any political office or position. On the contrary, he refused lucrative political offers. He gave political advice but never tried to influence decisions, barring on a few occasions.

Politics was his 'first love' and 'pleasure' object. He tried to link it to the 'reality' principle of life. He advocated desire-free political action that was similar to Srimad Bhagavad Gita's nishkama karma.

This thesis projects Sri Aurobindo as a new political being, a scholar, critic, literary revolutionary and a social theorist. In this thesis he isn't a 'god-man', a life-denying yogi, guru and avatar. He himself detested such claims of projecting him as somebody who is 'beyond man' and once dubbed it as 'neurotic'.

This thesis shows, how Sri Aurobindo preferred to live in Pondicherry as a 'spiritual fugitive' only to perform as a wonderful 'political yogi' and visionary.

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