CHAPTER : IV

SRI AUROBINDO’S CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM
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The meaning and implication of nationalism should be analysed before the discussion of Sri Aurobindo’s conception of it. Nationalism in general is known as "a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is due to the nation-state."\(^1\) It implies a group-feeling directed towards a set of values which the members of the group consider unique and valuable. With a sense of special unity among themselves, these group of men comes to separate themselves from others. The nationalists have a deep sense of love for their motherland. Hans kohn observes "nationalism is an idea, an idea-force which fills man’s brain and heart with new thoughts and sentiments and drives in to translate his consciousness into deeds of organised action."\(^2\)

Like all social phenomena, nationalism is a historical category. It emerged in the social world at a certain stage of evolution of the life of the community when certain socio-historical conditions, both objective and subjective matured.\(^3\) The integration of communities into nations was a prolonged historical process. The nascent nation had to struggle against various obstacles which prevented its growth. It has been recognized that, by and large the word "nationalism" came to be used in the present sense only after the Napoleonic wars. The English people were among the first to be welded into a nation after a successful fighting against the Roman Church through a series of political struggle, reformist as well as revolutionary. They have
replaced the feudal state by the nation state. Between 1830 and in 1848, many European nation-states rose in response to the nationalist urge and by fifties almost every big city became a center to nurse nationalism. Politicians, philosophers and other intellectuals subscribed liberally to the cause of nationalism and it gained popularity even among the masses. Intellectuals touched on their national problem through their work of history, Poetry and Philosophy and these instantly endeared themselves to the common man.

The development of nationalism in different countries followed the lines of their respective social and cultural history, their socio-economic and political structures and the specific characteristic nature of the social classes which were the vanguard of the struggle for a national social existence in those countries. Thus, every nation was born in a different manner due to the development of different internal forces as well as the impact of various outside forces on these countries.

The history of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is primarily the history of the formation of nations in different parts of the world. The process of nation-formation has continued during the twentieth century. The awakened peoples of Asiatic and African continents, such as Indians, the Chinese, the Turks, the Arabs and the Egyptians, organised movements to remove indigenous feudal or foreign imperialist obstacles in the way of their full development as free nations. At the end of the first World War, a number of national groups like the Hungarians, the Czechs and
others, who lived in a state of subjection under the Astro Hungarian Empire, organised struggles to shake off that subjection. The human world has been composed of nations and the nations are recognized as the dominant form of human community. Thus, the nation is the prime fact of the present epoch and the nationalism, the dominant emotion of man. Nationalism means not only the nation but also "something" in virtue of which a nation continues to exist even when it had lost its autonomy. This "something" continued to work in case of the jews. There is no other example in history of a community which has been chased round the globe quite as much which has survived its own death as a nation by two thousand years.

Nationalism in India:

Due to this decisive significance of the role of nationalism in the life of humanity, it has been made a special subject of study and investigation. Attempt has been made to study how and under what socio-historical conditions the nations came into existence and what role the leaders and fighters play in the growth of nationalism. Indian nationalism is a modern phenomenon. It came into being during the British period as a result of the action and inter-action of numerous forces and factors which developed within the Indian society under the conditions of the British rule and the impact of world forces. Indian nationalism has emerged under conditions of political subjection of the Indians by the British. The British Government for its own purpose, had changed the economic structure of the Indian society, established a centralized state and introduced modern education,
modern means of communication and other institutions. This resulted in the growth of new social classes and the unleashing of new social forces unique by themselves. Many nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pheroz Shah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Binin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sri Aurobindo etc. have provided massive motive powers for the rise and development of Indian nationalism. Among these group of nationalists Sri Aurobindo was outstanding due to his role in the early phases of the national movement. His nationalism is termed as neo-nationalism as it was based on spiritualism and Indian culture. This staunch nationalist sided himself with that extremist group which had transformed the national movement from that of a few into a mass movement.

**Aurobindo's National Ideas**

With a spiritual basis and cosmopolitan outlook, Aurobindo's nationalism is a comprehensive and broad one. Unlike the western concept of nationalism which merely implies a common political sentiment he treated nationalism as a religion and a spiritual 'Sadhana'. In a public meeting in Bombay in 1908, Aurobindo said "Nationalism is not a mere political programme, nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live." Let no man dare to call himself a nationalist if he does so merely with a sort of intellectual pride, thinking that his thinking is more patriotic and higher than those who do not call themselves by that name. If someone is going to be a Nationalist, he has to subscribe to this religion of nationalism in a religious spirit.
The celebrated Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s book “Ananda Math”, provides a reviving “mantra”. It is the mantra “Bande Mataram” which provides the key for understanding Sri Aurobindo’s concept of the nation. “For him India was no mere geographical entity, no mere physical and material land mass, no mere intellectual concept, but a Goddess incarnate, a mighty Mother who for centuries has cradled and nourished her children and who, at that time, was groaning under the yoke of the foreign oppressor — her pride shattered, her glory ground to the dust.⁶ His speeches and writings of that period show that he raised patriotism to the pedestal of religion. In his essay entitled “Bhawani Mandir” he wrote, “For what is a nation? What is our mother country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech for a fiction of mind. It is a mighty ‘Shakti’, composed of all the ‘shakties’ of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Gods ascribed in ore mass of force and welded into unity. The shakti we call in India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the shakties of three hundred million people.”⁷

On several occasions Aurobindo made it clear that so long as the members of a nation see it only as piece of land, it does not take the form of a divine mother power: so long as it does not cover their hearts and minds, the nation is not born.

**Patriotism and Nationalism:**

Giving highest place to patriotism among human sentiments, Aurobindo tried to introduce the youth of the country to this national sentiment. In every speech which he addressed, in every lecture
which he delivered and in every writing which he produced there were the reflection of high patriotism and deep national spirit. His flaming patriotism and religious devotion to Mother India is reflected in his speech addressed to the students of the Bengal National College. He said "there are times in nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland where nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end." If one wants to study, one should study for her sake and train oneself body and mind and soul for her service. He should earn his living so that he may live for her sake. He should go abroad with a view to enriching himself with knowledge with which he may serve her. As a result of that she may prosper. He should be prepared to suffer so that she may rejoice. Every thing is contained in this single advice. How lofty is the idea of nationalism Aurobindo harboured is evident from this statement.

His love for India was far deeper than the normal patriotism that everyone feels for one's country. In his own words, "Love has a place in politics, but is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine 'ananda' of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race." Everything Indian gives a sense of delight to the Indians – the touch of her soil, the winds blowing from the Indian seas, the rivers streaming from
Indian hills, the murmuring sound of the springs the Indian speech, music, poetry, and the scenic beauty, sounds, customs, habits, dress, and manners of the Indian life etc.

Sri Aurobindo considered nationalism as much deeper and more profound than mere patriotism. "In consonance with his concept of the nation as a divine entity, he looked upon nationalism as a spiritual imperative, a virtually religious practice which was essential for the emancipation of the motherland as well as the spiritual development of the devotee." Service of the nation was his highest religion. Sri Aurobindo wrote "The work of national emancipation is a great and holy "Yajna" of which Boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great or small are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the Yajna we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver." Swaraj:

When India, the Mother was in chains, being enslaved and humiliated by alien aggressors, it is the duty of sons to strive by all possible means to liberate her from her shackles. "In this task, there can be no compromise, there is no question of bartering or bargaining
with the Mother's liberty". Aurobindo exhorted every one to sacrifice everything for the motherland.

Aurobindo demanded complete 'Swaraj' and sanctioned every means for its achievement. He looked upon nationalism as a religious practice through which the emancipation of the motherland would be possible. With this view, Aurobindo stood poles apart from the less inspiring outlook of the moderate leaders who only demanded certain administrative and political reforms as the goal of genuine Indian nationalism. He recognized no method or action as politically good or evil except the fact that whether it helps or hinders the progress towards national emancipation. But Aurobindo had chalked out a programme of action to achieve the objective of complete liberation as a result of which national affairs would be managed without any foreign control. He had the conviction that nothing less than, absolute freedom or 'Purna Swaraj' should be the goal of the freedom-fighters. This idea of Aurobindo was able to bring about a mass awakening and revival in the Indian body politic. At that crucial period of Indian history with a religious appeal, the nationalist movement was converted from an intellectual pastime of the English-educated elite into a mass movement. Religion could create in the minds and hearts of the Indian people the will to freedom and the determination to achieve it at any cost. Among those leaders who applied this religious approach to politics, Sri Aurobindo stood exceptional. During his early Baroda period, such approach emerged in full bloom. But "it is no more rabble-rousing, demagogic trick. It
is a conviction passionately held and eloquently expressed, and represents one of the keys to a correct interpretation of Sri Aurobindo’s political thought. But Sri Aurobindo never allowed his nationalism to degenerate into mere chauvinism or narrow revivalism.

Aurobindo looked upon India’s emancipation as only an essential vantage point from which she could fulfil her destiny as the spiritual guide of humanity at large. He had the firm belief that India had a mighty role to play in the spiritual regeneration of the human race and a divine mission to fulfil on earth. He claimed that the nationalist movement sparked off by the Bengal partition was a divinely inspired and divinely guided movement. This is particularly evident in the inspiring speeches which he delivered during the days of the anti-partition agitation. Speaking of its leaders he says “They have had one and all of them, consciously or unconsciously, one overmastering idea, one idea which nothing can shake, and this was the idea that there is a great Power at work to help India, and that we are doing what it bids us ……. This movement in Bengal, this movement of nationalism is not guided by any self-interest, not at the heart of it. It is a religion which we are trying to live. It is a religion by which we are trying to realize God in the nation, in our fellow-countrymen.

In another occasion he says – “Nationalism is a religion that has come from God .... It has not been crushed. It is not going to be crushed. Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it
Nationalism is immortal. Nationalism can not die, because it is no human think, it is God who is working in Bengal.\textsuperscript{18}

In one of his inspiring editorial in "Bande Mataram" he writes "........ The political strife has assumed a religious character, and the question now before the people is whether India – the India of the holy Rishis, the India that gave birth to a Rama, a Krishna and a Buddha the India of Sivaji and Guru Gobinda – is destined for ever to lie prostrate at the proud feet of a conqueror. Are we going to sacrifice our national destiny to the whims and interests of the foreigner or are we again to take ourselves seriously and struggle for the right to live that we may fulfil in this world our Heaven – appointed mission."\textsuperscript{16}

In Aurobindo's concept of nation and nationalism, use of force had a significant place and he thought that the Britishers should be thrown out of India since India had been violently subjugated. She was to achieve her independence. Under certain circum-stances, a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle and the morality of war has been different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness, deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter in the field of "Kurukshetra". Gandhi had also held that if he were to choose between cowardice and violence, he would choose the latter.

Liberty is the life-breath of a nation and when the life is under attack, when it is sought to suppress all chances of breathing, by
violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable. This may be called right to self-preservation.

Before Aurobindo, there was an almost superstitions awe of the British among the Indian intelligentsia. But Aurobindo was fearless in attacking the British administration. With every criticism he made, he put forward a concrete programme of political action, whereby the goal could be achieved. He wrote and spoke profusely regarding the technique of practical politics. He was thus, one of those rare figures in political history – a profound theoretician who was at the same time a clever and discerning political tactician. With every criticism he made, he put forward a positive programme of action. While he advocated economic boycott, he also put forwarded the logical corollary of “Swadeshi”. He advocated educational boycott, but with it he propounded a system of national education. Thus his whole approach – as may be inferred from his writings in the “Vandemataram” and “Karmayogin” was one of constructive suggestions and programmes' alongwith an implacable attack on British rule.

**Nationalism : A Cult of the Mass**

Aurobindo clearly recognized the role of the masses in the organisation of a movement for the cause of national liberation. At that time, the Indian National Congress was already established as the premier political organisation of the Indian people. The liberal intelligentsia such as Surendra Nath Banarjee, M.G.Ranade, Dadabhai Naoroji, G.K.Gokhale etc. who dominated the Congress from 1885 to
1905 had almost unlimited faith in the British rule. They considered it as providentially brought about and designed to life Indian to a high plane of free, progressive, democratic national existence. They looked to British for guiding the Indians to overcome their social and cultural backwardness and for training them in the art of representative government. They have great confidence in the British sense of justice and generosity and considered the interests of Britain and India allied rather than antagonistic.

Aurobindo criticized the idealizing of the British culture by the liberal and moderate leaders as cultural capitulation to the British rulers. He asserted that this would only engender an inferiority complex among the Indians and would suppress their national pride and self-confidence which are vital to the struggle for freedom. Unless and until a large section of the population really desired the independence of India deeply and be prepared to make great sacrifices for it, ‘Swaraj’ would not be possible. They should feel that if a real effort was made, there was a good chance of success. Realising the widespread apathy and despair which prevailed in the then India, Aurobindo advocated a fight against this psychological barrier that existed in the minds of large sections of the people. In his own words, "we must first ourselves be free in heart before our country is free."

For this purpose, he wanted to re-instil pride in the minds of Indians in the glorious cultural heritage of the past. For a great and powerful political awakening in India, he wanted to infuse Indian politics with Indian religious fervour and spirituality.
Sri Aurobindo repeatedly asked the people to be brave and to face suffering cheerfully for the sake of their motherland. He realized that centuries of foreign rule had demoralised the Indians and the people had been over-awed by the mighty power of the British Empire. "Sri Aurobindo saw clearly that this timidity would be fatal to the success of the movement for national emancipation. He laid great stress upon the necessity for sacrifice on the part of the Indian people in order to gain their freedom." He was convinced that people has to pay the price of freedom in pain and suffering. He put stress on the need for Indians to shake off their centuries - old lethargy and become galvanized again with strength and power.

**Manifestation of Nationalism in his Life**

Growth of national spirit in the life of an Indian like Sri Aurobindo, whose father was determined that his children should receive an entirely European upbringing without undergoing any Indian influence, was really a matter of great interest. He was sent to London at the age of seven to get English education, so that he would become a great officer under the British Government. But subsequently, his disillusioned father, began sending his sons' cuttings from "The Bengalee" newspaper in which he marked passages relating to cases of maltreatment and insult of Indians by Englishmen. These communications, not only turned Sri Aurobindo's attention and interest towards Indian political situation but also built up his anti-British attitude and inspired him to work for the liberation of his country. With a patriotic fervour, he associated himself with the secret
society known as “Lotus and Dagger” which was dedicated to India’s freedom struggle. With the European inspiration of Irish patriotic movement and Mazzini’s role in Italy, Aurobindo desired at Cambridge to dedicate himself to the liberation of his country from foreign rule. He became an active member of the “Indian Majlis”, a revolutionary organisation dedicated to the freedom of India. He prepared for the Indian Civil Service and qualified in the written examination. But since he wanted an end of the British rule in India and was seriously thinking to return to his motherland, he deliberately turned up late for the riding test and was not selected in the final. Despite the absence from his native country for fourteen years, covering a most formative period of his life from the age of seven to twenty-one, Aurobindo had an eternal attraction towards India.

With a combination of intellectual ability, artistic sensibility and patriotic fervour, Sri Aurobindo returned India to take up a service in the State of Baroda and subsequently found himself in the very center-stage of the Indian political scene. After settling down in Baroda, he plunged into the study of Indian language, culture, history and religion and the message of the great Hindu culture made a deep impression upon him. In this way, he imbibed the best that is in Indian culture. So far, he was an intellectual having foundations in western materialism. The reading of Hindu philosophy made him realise actively and consciously the all pervasive spiritual reality. He started to believe that India was destined to play the role of “spiritual guru” of the world and of humanity. He wanted to inspire his
countrymen to shake off the torpor of centuries and to arise for making their country liberated.

At the instance of his Cambridge friend Shri K.G.Deshpande who edited the English section of the Anglo-Marathi paper known as "Indu Prakash", Aurobindo wrote a series of articles entitled "New Lamps for Old". Through these, he made a direct, incisive and eloquent attack on the policies adopted by the Indian National Congress. He realized that the Congress leaders did not adopt of clear-cut goal of national freedom and were content with the achievement of certain paltry administrative reforms. Instead of relying on the inherent strength of the nation, the moderate congress leaders sought to gain the goodwill of its foreign rulers. He condemned their methods of petition and prayer and advocated new leadership with dynamic and radical views. Instead of invoking and organizing the support of the vast Indian common mass, it remained restricted primarily as a middle-class organisation. Though the formation of the Indian National Congress initially thrilled him deeply, yet he subsequently became a trenchant critic of the Congress from him very first writing upon political affairs in 1893 to his withdrawal from active politics in 1910.

Every person who participated in India's liberation movement, was of necessity a critic of British Government. Until Shri Aurobindo's advent in India, this criticism had been indirect and muted by nature primarily not to incur the wrath of the government. But making a complete departure from the existing practice, he made a direct and eloquent attack upon the British. His objective in doing so was to
strengthen the anti-British sentiment in the country and also to break
the myth of British superiority with an elaborate historical analysis,
he sought to show that the British political organisation and system
was by no means the best in the world. He also directly criticized the
British policies in India and the behaviour of British officials. The
British policies not only stifled the Indian spirit and cramped her
potentialities for development but it also caused her economic ruin.
He vehemently criticized the rude, arrogant and mal administration
which the imperialistic British had set up in India. It is evident that
through out his stay at Baroda, he attempted how best he could
contribute towards liberating his motherland from its foreign yoke.
Apart from the "Indu Prakash" articles, he helped in establishing
secret groups in Bengal which would undertake revolutionary
propaganda and recruitment throughout that province. He was
accepted as the intellectual leader of the revolutionary movement in
Bengal. With the partition of Bengal in 1905, the ground was cut from
under the feet of the moderates and the mass opinion veered strongly
in favour of the nationalist creed. Sri Aurobindo, at that time, was a
frequent contributor to the English weekly journal "Yugantar", started
by his younger brother in Calcutta. Bipin Chandra Pal’s English
weekly called "Bande Mataram" as well as the "Karmayogin" which Sri
Aurobindo started in the middle of 1909, provided him excellent
opportunity for starting the public propaganda necessary for the
revolutionary purpose.
It may be mentioned here that, for the disunited, apathetic and unorganized Indians, it was not an easy task to challenge the might of the most powerful British Government. Despite his desire for an armed revolt, Sri Aurobindo soon realized that other methods would have to be used to oust the Britishers. Soon he was involved in the Alipore Bomb conspiracy case. The matter of the case is that though the revolutionaries aimed at killing the District Magistrate of Muzzaffarpore, yet by mistake they killed two innocent ladies. After a long trial he was acquitted on 6th May, 1909. Before his acquittal, he had spent one year in Alipore jail. It is said that Swami Vivekananda used to visit him while he was in the Alipore jail. It was in the Alipore jail that Aurobindo underwent a mystical change by realizing a spiritual radiance. He decided to leave active politics for taking up nobler and higher pursuits. On 4th April, 1910, he went to Pondicherry, a French territory and thus escaped out of the attention of British authorities who were planning vigorously to deport him on the charge of publishing seditions articles.

While at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo devoted himself to spiritual "Sadhana", keeping himself aloof from politics. Here, he started publishing two magazines - "Karma Yogin" and "Dharma" which were primarily non-political in nature. With his religious sadhana, he attained "Siddhi" on 24th November 1926.

When the Second World War broke out, Aurobindo could foresee its consequences. The Axis powers were proceeding in their victory march against the Allied powers in different wars.
realise that in case the Axis Powers won, it would prove havoc to the world. The authoritarian conservative nationalism of the Axis power would destroy the world peace leading to the domination of another imperialistic power over the world. Sri Aurobindo prayed the Almighty, as a result of which the course of the war could be changed causing the defeat of the Axis Powers. It may not appear plausible to the skeptics how a single man's spiritual sadhana could bring about the defeat of such mighty powers. But it is possible on the part of a true yogi who can realise the strength of spiritual power. Aurobindo died in 1950, but he left a message of patriotism and nationalism which could infuse Indian politics with religious fervour and spirituality.

A Critical Assessment

Aurobindo's concept of nationalism was subsequently criticized for basing the movement of "Swaraj" on the Hindu religion and traditions of the Hindu history. It has introduced religious obscurantism and mysticism in politics. He felt that a revival and regeneration of religious and cultural spirit was a pre-requisite for the liberation of India. All his political writings and public speeches were directed towards encouraging and hastening such a revival and regeneration.

Religious fervour, which was the keynote of Sri Aurobindo's approach to political thought and action, to some extent led to estrange the Muslims who comprised about a third of the Indian population. It is observed that "The insistence on orthodox religion as
the heart of the national movement, and the proclamation of the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu civilization to modern "western" civilization (what modern psychologists would no doubt term a compensatory delusion), inevitably retarded and weakened the real advance of the national movement and of political consciousness, while the emphasis on Hinduism must bear a share of the responsibility for the alienation of wide sections Moslem opinion from the national movement." It is said that Sri Aurobindo and other radical leaders like Tilak appealed to Hindu chauvinism to gain popularity. It widened the rift between the Hindus and the Muslims which finally culminated in the partition of the country.

Since his nationalism was based on the religious mysticism of Hinduism, many nationalists of that time, who would otherwise have supported it, dissociated from it. They preferred to remain with the liberals. Jawaharlal Nehru advanced this as one of the main reasons why Pandit Motilal Nehru abstained from the nationalist movement in 1907. Nehru commented "And then the background of these movements was a religious nationalism which was alien to his nature. He did not look back to a revival in India of ancient times .......... Socially speaking, the revival of Indian nationalism in 1907 was definitely reactionary."  

A nationalist movement ought to be based on a programme of the secular interests of the people. Then alone, the entire nation, irrespective of caste or community, can be brought within its orbit. It is observed "The political, social and economic programme of the
national movement, should and can unite the masses of the Indian people above, across and apart from religious affiliations. Such a strengthened, secularized, modernized, united democratic movement, can be the strongest force at the present stage to counter communal agitation."

It is popularly believed that since the imperialistic British Government applied the policy of "divide and rule", the Muslims remained indifferent towards the liberation movement. But one of the reasons why Muslims did not join the nationalist following period, was perhaps, due to the nature of Indian nationalism. It was openly based by on the Hindu ideology and was propounded by national leaders like Aurobindo, Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal etc. They sought to build on a basis of Hindu religion for their agitation and to identify the national awakening with a revival of Hinduism. By this act, they cut off the Moslem masses from the national movement and opened the way to the Government's astute counter-move with the formation of the Moslem League in 1906.

Though Aurobindo made a powerful contribution to the national awakening, yet it is a fact that he wrote primarily in English. It led to his greatest impact being on the minds of the English educated intelligentsia. Before 1910, his masterly editorials, first in the "Bande Mataram" and then in "Karmayogin", dealt with various subjects, which he illuminated with his deep knowledge of Indian culture. Referring to his outstanding role, Bipin Chandra had commented "morning after morning not only Calcutta, but the
educated community almost in every part of the country eagerly awaited for the vigorous pronouncement of "Bande Mataram" on the stirring questions of the day.²⁴ With a religious approach to politics, though Aurobindo wanted to involve more and more people in the national movement, yet most of his writings and speeches enriched with high philosophical thought, were out of their understanding. Moreover, his writings in English, were out of the understanding of common mass.

But it would be high injustice to brand Sri Aurobindo as a Hindu chauvinist. To his credit, Aurobindo never allowed his nationalism to degenerate into mere chauvinism or narrow revivalism. He looked upon India's emancipation as only an essential vantage point from which she could fulfil her destiny as the spiritual guide of humanity at large. His nationalism thus develops logically into an internationalism that has as its goal the elevated ideal of human unity.

It is also important to point out that Sri Aurobindo had realized the importance of evoking Muslim support for the great cause of nationalism. So at the very height of the partition agitation, he wrote "Nationalism depends for its success on the awakening and organizing of the whole strength of the nation, it is therefore vitally important for nationalism that the politically backward classes should be awakened and brought into the current of political life; the great mass of orthodox Hinduism which was hardly ever touched by the old Congress movement, the great slumbering mass of Islam which has remained politically inert throughout the last century, the shopkeepers, the
artisan class, the immense body of illiterate and ignorant peasantry, the submerged classes, even the wild tribes and races still outside the pale of Hindu civilization, Nationalism can afford to neglect and omit none." Thus, Sri Aurobindo could realise the importance of the united effort of the Indian mass in their fighting against the powerful British. He could not be 'criticised as a sectarian Hindu chauvinist'.

Sri Aurobindo along with the other radical leaders, wanted to transform the national movement from a narrow intellectual pastime of the English-educated intelligentsia into a broad mass movement. At that time the British repression was in massive form. Such transformation would not have been successful unless the Indian mass were galvanized and awakened from their stupor. It should be remembered that the vast majority of the mass are Hindus. Unless they were touched at their deepest level and appealed in the name of their valuable possession, it would have been impossible to mobilize them. In a country like India where the age-old civilization is based predominantly on Hinduism, obviously for the greater national interest the radical leaders including Sri Aurobindo had appealed the Hindus than any other religious group. Moreover, most of the radical leaders were Hindus of deep religious and spiritual convictions. So their appeal to the masses could not have been couched in non-religious terms. These religious minded leaders appealed the majority of the Indian mass who are Hindu for the greater interest of the nation. It is an unfortunate fact that such appeal, though it did not have any intention to underestimate or to alienate any of the other religions of
India, had created mysticism in politics and also had estranged the Muslims.

Sri Aurobindo thus, shines as one of the brilliant stars on the horizon of Indian sky of Renaissance and Indian nationalism. His coming on the Indian political scene was dramatic and no less dramatic was his exit from political life for spiritual perfection. Most of the Indian Philosophers have been idealists and this applies to Sri Aurobindo also who desired India to be politically free not only for her own sake but specifically because thereby alone could she play her true role in the spiritual regeneration of the world and in spearheading mankind's spiritual evolution.
REFERENCES


13. Ibid, P.78.


