Special Number On:

Mother India

Present Problems & the Future Work

Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother

Part One

What must be done to pull the country out of its difficulty?

Sri Aurobindo has foreseen all the troubles and he has given the solution. Just now we are approaching his Centenary; it seems arranged, you know, divinely arranged, because this would be a wonderful occasion to spread his teaching all over the country: **the teaching, the practical teaching, his teaching about India, how to organise India, the mission of India. ...** His teaching could be spread all over the country with a little more organising — so that his ideas get spread.

(CWM 15: 405, 2nd ed.)

The Mother

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Part Two

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The Source of National Strength

Spirituality and a Powerful Psychic Tendency

Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it. India saw from the beginning, — and, even in her ages of reason and her age of increasing ignorance, she never lost hold of the insight,— that life cannot be rightly seen in the sole light, cannot be perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities. ... Hence from long ages of this insight and practice there was ingrained in her her spirituality, her powerful psychic tendency, her great yearning to grapple with the infinite and possess it, her ineradicable religious sense, her idealism, her Yoga, the constant turn of her art and her philosophy.

(CWSA 20: 6-7) Sri Aurobindo

Prolific Creativity, — The Abundance of Energy

... spirituality itself does not flourish on earth in the void, even as our mountaintops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base. When we look at the past of India, what strikes us next is her stupendous vitality, her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least, — it is indeed much longer,—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with an inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual, arts worldly, trades, industries, fine crafts, — the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity.

(CWSA 20: 7-8) Sri Aurobindo

India, — The Land of Dharma and Shastra

India has been pre-eminently the land of the Dharma and the Shastra. She searched for the inner truth and law of each human or cosmic activity, its dharma; that found, she laboured to cast into elaborate form and detailed law of arrangement its application in fact and rule of life. Her first period was luminous with the discovery of the Spirit; her second completed the discovery of the Dharma; her third elaborated into detail the first simpler formulation of the Shastra; but none was exclusive, the three elements are always present.

(CWSA 20: 9) Sri Aurobindo

India, — The Land of Reconciling the Extremes

In life the ideal of opulent living and the ideal of poverty were carried to the extreme of regal splendour and the extreme of satisfied nudity. Its intuitions were sufficiently clear and courageous not to be blinded by its own most cherished ideas and fixed habits of life. ... If all its political needs and circumstances compelled it at last to exaggerate the monarchical principle and declare the divinity of the king and to abolish its earlier republican city states and independent federations as too favourable to the centrifugal tendency, if therefore it could not develop democracy, yet it had the democratic idea, applied it in the village, in council and municipality, within the caste, was the first to assert a divinity in the people and could cry to the monarch at the height of his power, "O king, what art thou but the head servant of the demos?" Its idea of the golden age was a free spiritual anarchism. Its spiritual extremism could not prevent it from fathoming through a long era the life of

the senses and its enjoyments, and there too it sought the utmost richness of sensuous detail and the depths and intensities of sensuous experience. Yet it is notable that this pursuit of the most opposite extremes never resulted in disorder; and its most hedonistic period offers nothing that at all resembles the unbridled corruption which a similar tendency has more than once produced in Europe. For the Indian mind is not only spiritual and ethical, but intellectual and artistic, and both the rule of the intellect and the rhythm of beauty are hostile to the spirit of chaos. In every extreme the Indian spirit seeks for a law in that extreme and a rule, measure and structure in its application.

(CWSA 20: 11-12) Sri Aurobindo

The Cause of India's Decline

If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religion in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell. It is possible, that on one side we deviated too much into an excessive religiosity, that is to say, an excessive externalism of ceremony, rule, routine, mechanical worship, on the other into a too world-shunning asceticism which drew away the best minds who were thus lost to society instead of standing like the ancient Rishis as its spiritual support and its illuminating life-givers. **But the root of the matter was the dwindling of the spiritual impulse in its generality and broadness, the decline of intellectual activity and freedom, the waning of great ideals, the loss of the gust of life.***

(CWSA 20: 39) Sri Aurobindo

* Emphasis is added at several places in this compilation by using bold type-face. Titles and sub-titles are of the editor.



At the All India Convention of the then Indian National Congress at Surat, Dec. 1907

Sri Aurobindo presiding over a Nationalist Conference after the split between the Moderates and the Nationalist at the Surat Congress, December 1907. In the picture above at his right is G.S. Khaparde and his left is Bal Gangadhar Tilak, speaking.

Henry Nevinson, the special correspondent of "The Manchester Guardian", describes the scene in graphic words: "Grave and silence, I think without saying a single word — Mr. Aurobindo Ghose took the chair and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes, as one who gazes at futurity. In clear, short sentences, without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and someone kindled a lantern at his side."

The Cry for Change

Need for Social Reform

One is astonished at the position of the orthodox. They labour to deify everything that exists. Hindu society has certain arrangements and habits which are merely customary. There is no proof that they existed in ancient times nor any reason why they should last into the future. ... Neither antiquity nor modernity can be the test of truth or the test of usefulness. All the Rishis do not belong to the past; the Avatars still come; revelation still continues. ...

We have similar apologies for the unintelligent preservation of mere customs; but, various as are the lines of defence, I do not know any that is imperiously conclusive. Custom is *shishtachar*, decorum, that which all well-bred and respectable people observe. But so were the customs of the far past that have been discontinued and, if now revived, would be severely discountenanced and, in many cases, penalised; so too are the customs of the future that are now being resisted or discouraged, — even, I am prepared to believe, the future no less than the past prepares for us new modes of living which in the present would not escape the censure of the law. … All long-continued customs have been sovereignly useful in their time, even totemism and polyandry. We must not ignore the usefulness of the past, but we seek in preference a present and a future utility. ...

Orthodox and reformer alike lose themselves in details; but it is principles that determine details. ...

Kali [Yuga] is the age for a destruction & rebirth, not for a desperate clinging to the old that can no longer be saved. ... That which is saved is merely a temporary platform which we have erected on the banks of the sea of change awaiting a more stable habitation; and it too must one day break down under the crash of the waves, must disappear into the engulfing waters. Has the time arrived for that destruction? We think that it has. Listen to the crash of those waters,—more formidable than the noise of assault, mark that slow, sullen, remorseless sapping,—watch pile after pile of our patched incoherent ramshackle structure corroding, creaking, shaking with the blows, breaking, sinking silently or with a splash, suddenly or little by little into the yeast of those billows. Has the time arrived for a new construction? We say it has. Mark the activity, eagerness and hurrying to and fro of mankind, the rapid prospecting, seeking, digging, founding — see the Avatars & great vibhutis coming, arising thickly, treading each close behind the other. Are not these the signs and do they not tell us that the great Avatar of all arrives to establish the first Satya Yuga of the Kali?

(CWSA 12: 50-56) Sri Aurobindo (1912)

Need to Revert to the Fuller Truth

Ancient Hinduism aimed socially at our fulfilment in God in life, modern Hinduism at the escape from life to God. ... If we are to make our society perfect and the nation is to live again, then we must revert to the earlier and fuller truth. We must not make life a waiting for renunciation, but renunciation a preparation for life; instead of running from God in the town to God in the forest, we must rather plunge into the mountain solitude in our own souls for knowledge & joy & spiritual energy to sustain any part that may be given to us by the master of the Lila. If we get that strength, any society we build up must be full of the instinct of immortal life and move inevitably towards perfection. ... One thing seems to me clear that the future will deny that principle of individual selfishness and collective self interest on which European society has hitherto been based and our renovated systems

will be based on the renunciation of individual selfishness and the organisation of brotherhood, — principles common to Christianity, Mahomedanism and Hinduism.

(CWSA 12: 58) Sri Aurobindo(1912)

The Degeneration of Caste System

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

(CWSA 7: 684) Sri Aurobindo(Sept. 21, 1907)

Caste with the proper safeguards is an admirable means of social organisation and conservation, but it has not and should not be allowed to have any political meaning.

(CWSA 7: 779) Sri Aurobindo (Dec. 6, 1907)

Awakening the Heroic Spirit of India

Mother India (Bharat Mata)

India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being, as much living as, say, Shiva. India is a goddess as Shiva is a god. If she likes, she can manifest in human form.

(CWM 13: 372) The Mother

Just as each individual has a psychic being which is his true self and which governs his destiny more or less overtly, so too each nation has a psychic being which is its true being and moulds its destiny from behind the veil: it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountainhead of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of the country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. In India it has been made into an almost divine entity, and all who truly love their country call it "Mother India" (Bharat Mata) and offer her a daily prayer for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolizes and embodies the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world.

The thinking élite in India even identifies her with one of the aspects of the universal Mother, as the following extract from the *Hymn to Durga* illustrates:

"Mother Durga! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength,... we, born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

"Mother Durga! Giver of force and love and knowledge, terrible art thou in thy own self of might, Mother beautiful

and fierce. In the battle of life, in India's battle, we are warriors commissioned by thee; Mother, give to our heart and mind a titan's energy, to our soul and intelligence a god's character and knowledge.

"Mother Durga! India, world's noblest race, lay whelmed in darkness. Mother, thou risest on the eastern horizon, the dawn comes with the glow of thy divine limbs scattering the darkness. Spread thy light, Mother, destroy the darkness.

"Mother Durga! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

"Mother Durga! Thou art Kali... sword in hand, thou slayest the Asura. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest.

"Mother Durga! India lies low in selfishness and fearfulness and littleness. Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear.

"Mother Durga! Extend wide the power of Yoga. We are thy Aryan children, develop in us again the lost teaching, character, strength of intelligence, faith and devotion, force of austerity, power of chastity and true knowledge, bestow all that upon the world. To help mankind, appear, O Mother of the world, dispel all ills.

"Mother Durga! Slay the enemy within, then root out all obstacles abroad. May the noble heroic mighty Indian race, supreme in love and unity, truth and strength, arts and letters, force and knowledge, ever dwell in its holy woodlands, its fertile fields, under its sky-scraping hills, along the

banks of its pure-streaming rivers. This is our prayer at the feet of the Mother. Make thyself manifest."

"Mother Durga! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest."*

(CWM 12: 42 – 44) The Mother (August 1952)

Aggressive but not an Unthinking Defence of Culture

There arises the necessity of a defence and a strong, even an aggressive defence [of our culture]; for only an aggressive defence can be effective in the conditions of the modern struggle. But here we find ourselves brought up against an opposite turn of mind and its stark obstructive temper. For there are plenty of Indians now who are for a stubbornly static defence, and whatever aggressiveness they put into it consists in a rather vulgar and unthinking cultural Chauvinism which holds that whatever we have is good for us because it is Indian or even that whatever is in India is best, because it is the creation of the Rishis. As if all the later clumsy and chaotic developments were laid down by those much misused, much misapplied and often very much forged founders of our culture. But the question is whether a static defence is of any effective value. I hold that it is of no value, because it is inconsistent with the truth of things and doomed to failure. It amounts to an attempt to sit stubbornly still while the Shakti of the world is rapidly moving on her way, and not only the Shakti of the world but the

* *Hymn to Durga,* translated by Shri Nolini Kanta Gupta from Sri Aurobindo's Bengali original.

Shakti in India also. It is a determination to live only on our past cultural capital, to eke it out, small as it has grown in our wasteful and incompetent hands, to the last anna: but to live on our capital without using it for fresh gains is to end in bankruptcy and pauperism. The past has to be used and spent as mobile and current capital for some larger profit, acquisition and development of the future: but to gain we must release, we must part with something in order to grow and live more richly, — that is the universal law of existence. Otherwise the life within us will stagnate and perish in its immobile torpor. Thus to shrink from enlargement and change is too a false confession of impotence. It is to hold that India's creative capacity in religion and in philosophy came to an end with Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa and Chaitanya and in social construction with Raghunandan and Vidyaranya. It is to rest in art and poetry either in a blank and uncreative void or in a vain and lifeless repetition of beautiful but spent forms and motives. It is to cling to social forms that are crumbling and will continue to crumble in spite of our efforts and risk to be crushed in their collapse.

(CWSA 20: 75-76) Sri Aurobindo

The Need for Strength

We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms.

(CWSA 6: 80) Sri Aurobindo (1905)

The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting, which we must strive to acquire before all others, is strength — strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual which is the

one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others. If we have strength, everything else will be added to us easily and naturally. In the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot seize or strike, who have feet but cannot run.

(CWSA 6: 82) Sri Aurobindo (1905)

If India is to survive, she must be made young again. Rushing and billowing streams of energy must be poured into her; her soul must become, as it was in the old times, like the surges, vast, puissant, calm or turbulent at will, an ocean of action or of force.

(CWSA 6: 83) Sri Aurobindo (1905)

What India needs especially at this moment is the aggressive virtues, the spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearless resistance, courageous attack; of the passive tamasic spirit of inertia we have already too much.

(CWSA 7: 487) Sri Aurobindo (June 7, 1907)

Our Chief National Heritage: The Gita

It is undoubtedly true that selflessness, courage, a free and noble activity have been preached as the kernel of the ethics of the Gita. That teaching has in no country been condemned as ignoble, criminal or subversive of morality, nor is a philosophy of any value to any sensible being if it is only transcendental and cannot be lived. We strongly protest against the brand of suspicion that has been sought to be placed in many quarters on the teaching and possession of the Gita, — our chief national heritage, our hope for the future, our great force for the purification of the moral weaknesses that stain and hamper our people.

(CWSA 8: 453) Sri Aurobindo (Feb. 12, 1910)

On Applying Non-Violence at the Mass Level

I am afraid Gandhi has been trying to apply to ordinary life what belongs to spirituality. Non-violence or ahimsa as a spiritual attitude and its practice is perfectly understandable and has a standing of its own. You may not accept it in toto but it has a basis in reality. You can live it in spiritual life, but to apply it to all life is absurd….

(Informal talk recorded from memory) Sri Aurobindo (Jan. 16, 1939)

Patriotic Sentiments and Yoga

Patriotic sentiments are not incompatible with our yoga — far from it — to will for the strength and the integrity of one's Motherland is a quite legitimate sentiment, the will that she may make progress and that more and more she may manifest, in full freedom, the truth of her being, is a fine and noble will which cannot be harmful for our yoga.

But one must not get excited, one must not plunge prematurely into action. One can and should pray, aspire and will for the victory of the truth and, at the same time, continue to discharge one's daily duties and wait quietly for the unmistakable sign to come, indicating the action to be done.

(CWM 13: 356) The Mother (Oct. 27, 1962)

True Source of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity

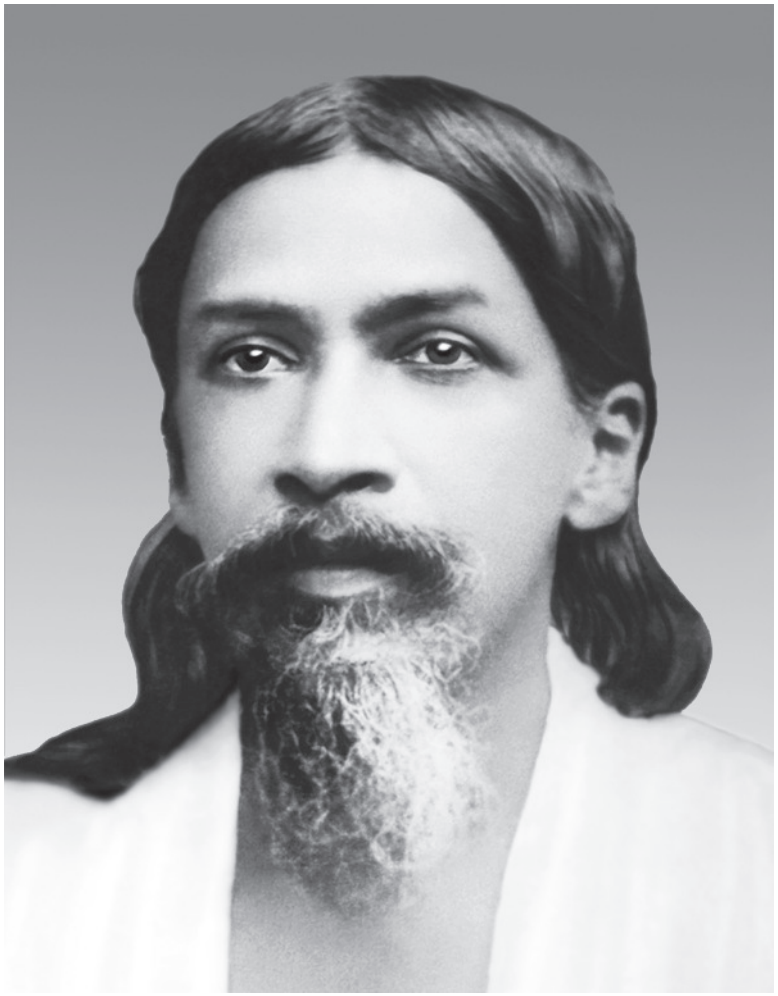
Her [India's] mission is to point back humanity to the true source of human liberty, human equality, human brotherhood. When man is free in spirit, all other freedom is at his command; for the Free is the Lord who cannot be bound. When he is liberated from delusion, he perceives the divine equality of the world which fulfils itself through love and justice, and this perception transfuses itself into the law of government and society. When he has perceived this divine

equality, he is brother to the whole world, and in whatever position he is placed he serves all men as his brothers by the law of love, by the law of justice. When this perception becomes the basis of religion, of philosophy, of social speculation and political aspiration, then will liberty, equality and fraternity take their place in the structure of society and the Satya Yuga return. This is the Asiatic reading of democracy which India must rediscover for herself before she can give it to the world. **It is the *dharma* of every man to be free in soul, bound to service not by compulsion but by love; to be equal in spirit, apportioned his place in society by his capacity to serve society, not by the interested selfishness of others; to be in harmonious relations with his brother men, linked to them by mutual love and service, not by shackles of servitude, or the relations of the exploiter and the exploited, the eater and the eaten. It has been said that democracy is based on the rights of man; it has been replied that it should rather take its stand on the duties of man; but both rights and duties are European ideas. Dharma is the Indian conception in which rights and duties lose the artificial antagonism created by a view of the world which makes selfishness the root of action, and regain their deep and eternal unity.**

(CWSA 7: 931-32) Sri Aurobindo (March 16, 1908)

Vedanta realised is the only practicable basis for a communistic society. It is the kingdom of the saints dreamed of by Christianity, Islam and Puranic Hinduism.

(CWSA 12: 465) *Sri Aurobindo*



Sri Aurobindo (1918-20)

The winning of freedom is an easy task, the keeping of it is less easy. ... The second requires an united, organised and settled strength. ... For the second India requires to organise her scattered strengths into a single and irresistible whole.

(CWSA 7:939) Sri Aurobindo (March 19, 1908)

Awakening the National Life

Extract from a Letter of *13 July 1911* to Parthasarathi Aiyangar

Be very careful to follow my instructions in avoiding the old kind of politics. Spirituality is India's only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. **I have no doubt we shall have to go through our Parliamentary period in order to get rid of the notion of Western democracy by seeing in practice how helpless it is to make nations blessed.** India is passing really through the first stages of a sort of national Yoga. It was mastered in the inception by the inrush of divine force which came in 1905 and aroused it from its state of complete *tamasic ajnanam*. But, as happens also with individuals, all that was evil, all the wrong *sanskaras* and wrong emotions and mental and moral habits rose with it and misused the divine force. Hence all that orgy of political oratory, democratic fervour, meetings, processions, passive resistance, all ending in bombs, revolvers and Coercion laws. It was a period of *asuddha rajasi*c activity and had to be followed by the inevitable period of *tamasic* reaction from disappointed *rajas*. God has struck it all down,— Moderatism, the bastard child of English Liberalism; Nationalism, the mixed progeny of Europe and Asia; Terrorism, the abortive offspring of Bakunin and Mazzini. The latter still lives, but it is being slowly ground to pieces. ... For it is only when this foolishness is done with that truth will have a chance, the *sattwic* mind in India emerge and a really strong spiritual movement begin as a prelude to India's regeneration. No doubt, there will be plenty of trouble and error still to face, but we shall have a chance of putting our feet on the right path. In all I believe God to be guiding us, giving the necessary experiences, preparing the necessary conditions.

(CWSA 36: 170-71) Sri Aurobindo

Ideal Form of Government for India

*(**Three** excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's informal conversations with a few disciple, noted by A.B. Purani and Nirodbaran, provide glimpses of Sri Aurobindo's view on the form of government suitable to India.)*

December 27, 1938

The old Indian system [of government] **grew out of life**. It had room for everything and every interest. There were monarchy, aristocracy, democracy. Every interest was represented in the Government, while the Western system **grew out of mind.** In Europe they are led by reason and want to make everything cut and dried without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only and no room for anything else. They can't be plastic. ...

*Q: What then is your idea of **an ideal government** for India?*

My idea is like what Tagore once wrote. There may be one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will combine into a federation, united at the top, leaving ample scope to local bodies to make laws according to their local problems.

Sri Aurobindo

January 26, 1939

In Socialism you have the State which intervenes at every step with its officials who rob you of money.... it is the State bureaucracy that dictates its policy irrespective of the good of the commune; while in Communism the land is held as the common property of the whole unit and each one in it is entitled to labour and have his share from the produce.

In our country they had a kind of Communism in the villages. The whole village was like a big family and the lowest had his right as a member of the family. The washerman, the carpenter, the blacksmith, all got what they wanted.

Sri Aurobindo

February 2, 1939

Nowadays people want the modern type of democracy — the parliamentary form of government. The parliamentary system is doomed. It has brought Europe to its present sorry pass. ...

[In India] one should begin with the old Panchayet system in the villages and then work up to the top. Panchayet system and the guilds are more representative and they have a living contact with people. They are part of the people's ideas. On the contrary, the parliamentary system, with local bodies — the municipal councils — is not workable. These councils have no living contact with the people. The councillors make only platform speeches and nobody knows what they do for three or four years. At the end they reshuffle and rearrange the whole thing, making their own pile during their period of power.

Sri Aurobindo

Government Without Party

What must be done to pull the country out of its difficulty? Sri Aurobindo has foreseen all the troubles and he has given the solution. ...

And this is above politics, you see. It is not a question of party, it's not that: because some are for it, others will naturally not be. It is above all politics. It is to organise the country beyond politics. And it is the only way. In politics it is always fight and ugly fight — ugly. And it has become so bad. He was telling me always that things would become

worse and worse, because it is the *end* of this age. We are entering into an age where things must be organised differently. It is a difficult time because of that. ...

Politics is always limited by party, by ideas, by duties also — unless we prepare a government that has no party, a government that admits all ideas because it is above parties. Party is limitation; it is like a box: you go into the box *(Mother laughs)*. Of course, if there were some people who had the courage to be in the government without a party — "We represent no party! We represent ***India***" — that would be magnificent.

Pull the consciousness up, up, above party.

And then, naturally, certain people who couldn't come into political parties — that! that is truly working for tomorrow. Tomorrow it will be like that. All this turmoil is because the country must take the lead, must go above all these old political habits. Government without party. Oh, it would be magnificent!

(CWM 15: 405-07) The Mother (May 25, 1970)

Need for a Federal Structure with Mutual Respect & Tolerance

The nation-idea in India will realise itself, in all its departments, along what may be called federal lines... The Mahomedan, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Christian in India will not have to cease to be Mahomedan, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian, in any sense of the term, for uniting into one great and puissant Indian nation. Devotion to one's own ideals and institutions, with toleration and respect for the ideals and institutions of other sections of the community, and an ardent love and affection for the common civic life and ideal of all — these are what must be cultivated by us now, for the building up of the real Indian nation.

(CWSA 6: 169) Sri Aurobindo (Sept. 17, 1906)

The Soul of India is One

It is only India's soul who can unify the country.

Externally the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in language, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results.

But her soul is one, intense in her aspiration towards the spiritual truth, the essential unity of the creation and the divine origin of life, and by uniting with this aspiration the whole country can recover a unity that has never ceased to exist for the superior mentality.

(CWM 13: 368) The Mother (July 7, 1968)

Q: You have said in one of Your messages:
"The number one problem for India is to find back and manifest her soul."
How to find back India's soul?

Become conscious of your psychic being. Let your psychic being become intensely interested in India's Soul and aspire towards it, with an attitude of service; and if you are sincere you will succeed.

(CWM 13: 370) The Mother (June 15, 1968)

Fulfilment of Socialism, — The Indian Way

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

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

(CWSA 7: 684-85) Sri Aurobindo (Sept. 21, 1907)

Assimilating the Spirit of Democracy, — The Indian Way

We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content. ... We had to come to close quarters with that democratic organisation, draw it into ourselves and absorb the democratic spirit and methods so that we might rise beyond them. Our half-aristocratic half-theocratic feudalism had to be broken, in order that the democratic spirit of the Vedanta might be released and, by

absorbing all that is needed of the aristocratic and theocratic culture, create for the Indian race a new and powerful political and social organisation. ... We have to throw away the individualism and materialism and keep the democracy.

(CWSA 8: 247-48) Sri Aurobindo (Sept. 25, 1909)

Need to Awaken the Political Sense of the Masses

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

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

(CWSA 7: 1049-50) Sri Aurobindo (April 20, 1908)

Decentralisation and Village Life

It is the European idea that makes you think that the parliamentary form or constitution is the best. [In ancient

India] we had great communal liberty and the communities were the centre of power and of national life. The king could not infringe the right of the commune. ... If these rights were interfered with, the people at once made themselves felt. That was the form which the genius of the race had evolved. ...

I don't understand why everything should be centralized as in the parliamentary constitution. We must have different, numerous centres of culture and power, full of national life spread all over the country and they must have political freedom to develop themselves.

(A disciple:) Village organization can also help in the creation of such centres.

Yes. But it is not by lectures and sermonizing to the village people, as we are trying to do now. ... If you want to work in the village, you must take to a natural profession, go and settle down among the village people and be one of them. When they see that you are a practical man they will begin to trust you. If you go there and work hard for ten or fifteen years you will gain your status and you will be able to do something because they will be prepared to listen to you.

The parliamentary form would be hardly suitable for our people. Of course, it is not necessary that you should have today the same old forms [as in ancient India]. But you can take the line of evolution and follow the bent of the genius of the race.

(Informal talk recorded from memory) Sri Aurobindo (April 7, 1926)

Reorganising Village Life around the Nation Idea

We are now turning our eyes again to the village under the stress of an instinct of self-preservation and part of our programme is to recreate village organization. In doing so we must always remember that the village can be so organized as to prove a serious obstacle to national cohesion. ...

Nothing should be allowed to distract us from the mighty ideal of Swaraj, national and pan-Indian. This is no alien or exotic ideal, it is merely the conscious attempt to fulfil the great centripetal tendency which has pervaded the grandiose millenniums of her history, to complete the work which Srikrishna began, which Chandragupta and Asoka and the Gupta Kings continued, which Akbar almost brought to realisation, for which Shivaji was born and Bajirao fought and planned. The organization of our villages is an indispensable work to which we must immediately set our hands, but we must be careful so to organize them as to make them feel that they are imperfect parts of a single national unity, and dependent at every turn on the co-operation first of the district, secondly of the province, and finally of the nation. The day of the independent village or group of villages has gone and must not be revived; the nation demands its hour of fulfilment and seeks to gather the village life of its rural population into a mighty, single and compact democratic nationality.

(CWSA 7: 909-10) Sri Aurobindo (March 7, 1908)

The Village and Drying up of the Springs of Love

But now that we look to a foreign source for everything, this love for our countrymen, this habit of mutual assistance, this sense of mutual duty has disappeared. E**ach man is for himself and if anything is to be done for our brothers, there is the Government to do it and it is no concern of ours.** This drying up of the springs of mutual affection is the cause which needs most to be removed and the village Samiti is again the first condition of a better state of things. It will **destroy the aloofness, the separateness of our lives and bring us back the sense of community, the habit of mutual assistance and mutual beneficence.** It will take up the want of water and remove it. It will introduce arbitra-

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

(CWSA 7:1050-51) Sri Aurobindo (April 20, 1908)

The Two Faces of Poverty

The condition of the poorer classes in this country is a subject which has till now been too much neglected, but can be neglected no longer if the blessing of God is to remain with our movement. The increasing poverty of the masses has been the subject of innumerable pamphlets, speeches and newspaper articles, but we are apt to think our duty done when we have proved that the poverty problem is there; we leave the solution to the future and forget that by the time the solution comes, the masses will have sunk into a condition of decay from which it will take the nation many decades to recover. We have been accustomed to deal only with the economical side of this poverty, but there is a moral side which is even more important. The Indian peasantry have always been distinguished from the less civilized masses of Europe by their superior piety, gentleness, sobriety, purity, thrift and native intelligence. They are now being brutalized by unexampled oppression; attracted to the liquor shops which a benevolent Government liberally supplies, bestialized by the example of an increasingly immoral aristocracy and gradually driven to the same habits of looseness and brutality... This degeneration is proceeding with an alarming rapidity. In some parts of the country it has gone so far that recovery seems impossible. We have heard of districts in which the peasantry are so far reduced to poverty by the exactions of Zamindars, planters and police that the sturdier classes among them are taking to highway robbery and dacoity as the only possible means of livelihood. We have heard of villages where the liquor shop and the prostitute, institutions unknown twenty-five years ago, have now the mastery of the poorest villagers. ... These conditions of the worst districts tend to become general and unless something is done to stem the tide of evil, it will sweep away the soul of India in its turbid current and leave only a shapeless monstrosity of all that is worst in human nature. ...

The educated classes are now the repositories of the hope of resurgence; it is in them that the spirit has entered, to them the masses look for guidance. Their duty is to be worthy of their mission, to bring hope, strength and light into the lives of their downtrodden countrymen. We have so far been occupied with Swadeshi as the economical means of saving the people: we must now set ourselves to the restoration of the moral tone of the nation by ourselves setting an example of mercy, justice, self-denial, helpfulness and patient work for the people.

(CWSA 7: 985-986) Sri Aurobindo (March 31, 1908)

The Need to Transform the Middle Class

For good or for evil the middle class now leads in India, and whatever saving impulse comes to the nation, must come from the middle class, whatever upward movement begins, it must initiate and lead. But for that to happen the middle class must by a miracle be transfigured and lifted above itself; the natural breeding ground of the bourgeois, it must become the breeding ground of the Samurai. It must cease in fact to be a middle class and turn itself into an ar-

istocracy, an aristocracy not of birth or landed possessions, not of intellect, not of wealth and commercial enterprise, but of character and action. India must recover her faculty for self-sacrifice, courage and high aspiration. Such a transformation is the work which has been set before itself by the new Nationalism; this is at the back of all its enthusiasm, audacity & turbulence and provides the explanation of all that has shocked and alarmed the wise men and the elders in the movement in Bengal. The new Nationalism is a creed, but it is more than a creed; it is a method, but more than a method. The new Nationalism is an attempt at a spiritual transformation of the nineteenth century Indian; it is a notice of dismissal or at least of suspension to the bourgeois and all his ideas and ways and works, a call for men who will dare & do impossibilities, the men of extremes, the men of faith, the prophets, the martyrs, the crusaders, the [. . .] & rebels, the desperate venturers and reckless doers, the initiators of revolutions. It is the rebirth in India of the Kshatriya, the Samurai.

(CWSA 7: 1107-08) Sri Aurobindo (1907-08)

Reconstructing the Industrial and Social Life

No department of our life can escape this great regenerating and reconstructing force. There is not the slightest doubt that our society will have to undergo a reconstruction which may amount to revolution, but it will not be for Europeanisation as the average reformer blindly hopes, but for a greater and more perfect realisation of the national spirit in society. Not individual selfishness and mutually consuming struggle but love and the binding of individuals into a single inseparable life is the national impulse. It sought to fulfil itself in the past by the bond of blood in the joint family, by the bond of a partial communism in the village system, by the bond of birth and a corporate sense of honour in the caste. It may seek a more perfect and spiritual bond in the future. In commerce also so long as we follow the European spirit and European model, the individual competitive selfishness, the bond of mere interest in the joint-stock company or that worst and most dangerous development of co-operative Capitalism, the giant octopus-like Trust and Syndicate, we shall never succeed in rebuilding a healthy industrial life. It is not these bonds which can weld Indians together. India moves to a deeper and greater life than the world has yet imagined possible and it is when she has found the secret of expressing herself in these various activities that her industrial and social life will become strong and expansive.

(CWSA 8: 65-66) Sri Aurobindo (June 26, 1909)

On Capitalism and Taxation

It is better not to destroy the capitalist class as the Socialists want to: they are the source of national wealth. They should be encouraged to spend for the nation. Taxing is all right, but you must increase production, start new industries, and also raise the standard of living; without that if you increase the taxes there will be a state of depression.

(Informal talk recorded from memory) Sri Aurobindo (Jan. 29, 1939)

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Sri Aurobindo is in no way bound by the present world's institutions or current ideas whether in the political, social or economic field; it is not necessary for him either to approve or disapprove of them.* He does not regard either capitalism or orthodox socialism as the right solution for

* Sri Aurobindo dictated this note to his secretary, who replied to the correspondent.

the world's future; nor can he admit that the admission of private enterprise by itself makes the society capitalistic, a socialistic economy can very well admit some amount of controlled or subordinated private enterprise as an aid to its own working or a partial convenience without ceasing to be socialistic. Sri Aurobindo has his own view as to how far Congress economy is intended to be truly socialistic or whether that is only a cover, but he does not care to express his view on that point at present.

(CWSA 35: 222) Sri Aurobindo (April 15, 1949)

The age of Capitalism and business is drawing to a close.

But the age of Communism, too, will pass. For Communism as it is preached is not constructive, it is a weapon to combat plutocracy. But when the battle is over and the armies are disbanded for want of employment, then Communism, having no more utility, will be transformed into something else that will express a higher truth.

We know this truth, and we are working for it so that it may reign upon earth.

The Mother (March 21, 1956)

Freedom of Speech and the Ideal of Truth and Sincerity

The ancient Romans had a class of slaves born in the family and pampered in their childhood by their masters who were called *vernae* and enjoyed a peculiar position of mingled licence and subjection. They were allowed to speak with the most unbounded licence, to abuse their masters, to play tricks sometimes of a most injurious character and were yet indulged — so long as the master was in a good humour; let the master's temper turn sour or break into passion and the lash was called into requisition. The freedom of speech enjoyed by us under the bureaucratic rule has been precisely of this kind. It depended on the will of a despotic administration, and at any moment it could be withdrawn or abridged, at any moment the lash of the law could be brought down on the back of the critic. This freedom of speech was worse than the Russian censorship; for in Russia the editor laboured under no delusion, he knew that freedom of speech was not his, and if he wrote against the administration, it was at his own risk; there was no pretence, no dissimulation on either side. But our freedom of speech has demoralised us, fostered an ignoble mixture of servility and licence, of cringing and impudence, which are the very temperament of the slave. ... Our public expressions were full of evasions, falsehoods, flatteries of British rule coupled with venomous and damaging attacks on that which in the same breath we lauded to the skies. A habit of cowardly insincerity became ingrained in us, which was fatal to the soundness of the heart, an insincerity which refused to be confined to our relations with the rulers and pursued us into our relations with our own countrymen. The same dry rot of insincerity vitiated all our public action and even our private lives, making a farce of our politics, a comedy of our social reform, and turning us from men into masks. ...

It was the proud privilege of the Nationalist party to strike at the root of this terrible evil. From the first outburst of the Swadeshi movement, their speakers and writers decided to be no longer masks but men, to speak and write the truth that was in their minds, the feeling that was in their hearts without disguise, without equivocation, as free men vindicating their freedom, — a freedom not bestowed but inborn.

(CWSA 7: 970-71) Sri Aurobindo (March 26, 1908)

Media Simply Pampering the Common Man's Taste

(A disciple:) These newspapers print anything they like. Can they print the talk that takes place in one's house?

If you expect manners from modern newspapers you will be sorely disappointed in these democratic days. It is one of the blessings of modern democracy! If you were in America and did not give any interview, even then they would invent one! The press is a public institution; formerly, it was something dignified, but now the newspapers are the correct measure of the futility of human life.... It is the same with all other modern things — the press, the theatre, the radio; they drag down everything to the level of the crowd.... They succeed only if they can pamper the common man's tastes....

It is the same old question of the mass being pulled up by something higher. But, as it always happens, instead of being pulled up it is the mass that pulls everything down to its level.

(Informal talk recorded from memory) Sri Aurobindo (June 1, 1926)

The Debasement of Taste and Artistic Perception

The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which the young Nationalism has always insisted. The practical destruction of our artistic perceptions and the plastic skill and fineness of eye and hand which once gave our productions pre-eminence, distinction and mastery of the European markets, is also a thing accomplished. Most vital of all, the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which

we ought to devote ourselves. And as the loss of originality, aspiration and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective. … To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency.

(CWSA 8:245-46) Sri Aurobindo (September 25, 1909)

Awakening the Sense of the Beautiful

The value attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry has become almost unintelligible to an age bent on depriving life of its meaning by turning earth into a sort of glorified antheap or beehive...

(CWSA 1:433) Sri Aurobindo (1909-10)

Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilizing forces.

(CWSA 1:448) Sri Aurobindo (1909-10)

It is not necessary that every man should be an artist. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty and insight

into form and colour and that which is expressed in form and colour, made habitually active, correct and sensitive. It is necessary that those who create, whether in great things or small, whether in the unusual masterpieces of art and genius or in the small common things of use that surround a man's daily life, should be habituated to produce and the nation habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realises the fullness of the expanding Spirit in itself.

(CWSA 1: 453) Sri Aurobindo (1909-10)

Pray and Stand by the Truth

This is because the whole world is steeped in falsehood — so all actions that arise will be false, and this situation may continue for a long time and will bring much suffering to the people and the country.

The only thing to do is to pray — from the heart — for the Divine intervention as that is the only thing that can save us. And all people who can become conscious of this must decide very firmly to stand only on the Truth and to act only in the Truth. ***There should be no compromise.*** This is very essential. It is the only way.

Even if things seem to go wrong and badly for us, as indeed they will, because of the present prevailing falsehood — we should not be deterred from our own determination to stand on the Truth.

This is the only way.

(CWM 13: 372) The Mother (July 1971)

Problem of Unity and Its Solution

Sanskrit as a Unifying National Language

The ideal would be, in a few years, to have a rejuvenated Sanskrit as the representative language of India, that is, a Sanskrit spoken in such a way that — Sanskrit is behind all the languages of India and it should be that. This was Sri Aurobindo's idea, when we spoke about it. Because now English is the language of the whole country, but that is abnormal. It is very helpful for relations with the rest of the world, but just as each country has its own language, there should... And so here, as soon as one begins to want a national language, everyone starts quarrelling. Each one wants it to be his own, and that is foolish. But no one could object to Sanskrit. It is a more ancient language than the others and it contains the sounds, the root-sounds of many words. ...

So I would like to have a simple Sanskrit taught here, as simple as possible, but not "simplified" — simple by going back to its origin.

(CWM 12: 414-15) The Mother

On Vande Mataram as a National Song

> *(A disciple:) There are some people who object to "Vande Mataram" as a national song. And some Congressmen support the removal of some parts of the song.*

In that case the Hindus should give up their culture.

> *(The disciple:) The argument is that the song speaks of Hindu gods, like Durga, and that is offensive to the Muslims.*

But it is not a religious song: it is a national song and the

Durga spoken of is India as the Mother. Why should not the Muslims accept it ? It is an image used in poetry. In the Indian conception of nationality, the Hindu view would naturally be there. If it cannot find a place there, the Hindus may as well be asked to give up their culture. The Hindus don't object to "Allah-ho-Akbar" . ...

Why should not the Hindu worship his god ? Otherwise, the Hindus must either accept Mohammedanism or the European culture or become atheists . ...

I told C. R. Das [in 1923] that this Hindu-Muslim question must be solved before the Britishers go, otherwise there was a danger of civil war. He also agreed and wanted to solve it.

(Informal talk recorded from memory) Sri Aurobindo (Dec.30,1939)

The Need of a National Consciousness

Patriotism is in its nature *sattwic*, whereas the national consciousness is *rajasic*. One who can lose his ego in the ego of the country is the ideal patriot; one who aggrandises the ego of the country, all the while maintaining intact his own ego is a nationally conscious individual. The Indians of that epoch were wanting in national consciousness. ... If full national consciousness spread everywhere in the country, then unity could be realised even in this land afflicted with division. Mere verbal repetition, "We want unity, we want unity!" is not sufficient.

(Bengali Writings, p. 218) Sri Aurobindo (Sept. 1909)

The Need and the Way to Unity

In our country there never was unity before, but there had always been a pull, a current tending towards unity, towards welding the different parts into some kind of unity. There were some major obstacles regarding this natural attempt: first, the provincial differences; secondly, the Hindu-Muslim conflict; thirdly, the lack of a vision of the country as Mother. Its vast area, the delays and difficulties of communication, and the differences in language are some of the primary factors responsible for provincial disunity. Thanks to modern science, except for the last factor, the rest have lost their separative vigour. ...

The day we see Her true indivisible image, struck by Her beauty and grace, we shall eagerly lay down our lives in Her service. Then this obstacle will be gone, and India's unity, freedom and progress be easier to achieve. The barrier of language will no longer divide. Accepting Hindi as a link language but with due regard for one's own regional language, we shall get rid of the disability. We shall succeed in finding a true solution of the Hindu-Muslim conflict. For want of a vision of the country as the Mother, the urge to do away with these obstacles has not been strongly felt. That is why the means has not been found and the conflict been growing worse. What is required is an image of the country, true and indivisible. But if, under the illusion of that true vision, we still cherish only the Mother of the Hindus or Hindu nationalism we shall fall for the old error and deprive ourselves of the full flowering of Nationalism itself.

(Bengali Writings, pp. 225-26) Sri Aurobindo (Dec. 1909)

The Hindu-Moslem Problem

We do not fear Mahomedan opposition; so long as it is the honest Swadeshi article and not manufactured in Shillong and Simla, we welcome it as a sign of life and aspiration. We do not shun, we desire the awakening of Islam in India even if its first crude efforts are misdirected against ourselves; for all strength, all energy, all action is grist to the mill of the nation-builder. In that faith we are ready,

when the time comes for us to meet in the political field, to exchange with the Musulman, just as he chooses, the firm clasp of the brother or the resolute grip of the wrestler. ...

The Mahomedan has not progressed so far. He has to taste the sweets of political privilege and find them turn to ashes in his mouth. He has to formulate demands, rejoice at promises, fume at betrayals, until he thoroughly discovers the falsity and impossibility of his hopes. ...

Of one thing we may be certain, that Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress flatteries. It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differences, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother, remembering always that in him too Narayana dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice. We believe this to be the only practical way of dealing with the difficulty. ... **Intellectual sympathy can only draw together, the sympathy of the heart can alone unite. But the one is a good preparation for the other.**

(CWSA 8: 30-31) Sri Aurobindo (June 19, 1909)

For the time the Government have succeeded in separating two of the largest communities in India; they have succeeded in drawing away the Mohammedans because of their want of education and enlightenment and of political

experience which allows them to be led away by promises that are meant for the ear, by promises of concessions which the Government cannot give without destroying their own ends. For a time until the Mohammedans by bitter experience see the falseness of their hopes and the falseness of the political means which they are being induced to adopt, until then it will be difficult for the two communities to draw together and to stand united for the realisation of their common interest.

(CWSA 8: 46) Sri Aurobindo (June 23, 1909)

Hindu Nationalism and the Unity of India

There are only two things strong enough to unite Hinduism, a new spiritual impulse based on Vedanta, the essential oneness of man, the transience and utilitarian character of institutions, the lofty ideals of brotherhood, freedom, equality, and a recognition of the great mission and mighty future of the Hindu spiritual ideas and discipline and of the Indian race,—or else a political impulse strong enough to unite Hindus together for the preservation and advancement of their community. ...

Lala Lajpat Rai struck a higher note, that of Hindu nationalism as a necessary preliminary to a greater Indian Nationality. We distrust this ideal. Not that we are blind to facts, — not that we do not recognise Hindu-Mahomedan rivalry as a legacy of the past enhanced and not diminished by British ascendancy, a thing that has to be faced and worked out either by mutual concession or by a struggle between nationalism and separatism. But we do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions. Hindu nationalism had a meaning in the times of Shivaji and Ramdas, when the object of national revival was to overthrow a Mahomedan domination which, once

tending to Indian unity and toleration, had become oppressive and disruptive. It was possible because India was then a world to itself and the existence of two geographical units entirely Hindu, Maharashtra and Rajputana, provided it with a basis. It was necessary because the misuse of their domination by the Mahomedan element was fatal to India's future and had to be punished and corrected by the resurgence and domination of the Hindu. And because it was possible and necessary, it came into being. But under modern conditions India can only exist as a whole. ...

The Mahomedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Mahomedans afterwards on the existence of great Mahomedan nations to which they feel themselves more akin, in spite of our common birth and blood, than to us. Hindus have no such resource. For good or evil, they are bound to the soil and to the soil alone. They cannot deny their Mother, neither can they mutilate her. Our ideal therefore is an Indian Nationalism, largely Hindu in its spirit and traditions, because the Hindu made the land and the people and persists, by the greatness of his past, his civilisation and his culture and his invincible virility, in holding it, but wide enough also to include the Moslem and his culture and traditions and absorb them into itself. It is possible that the Mahomedan may not recognise the inevitable future and may prefer to throw himself into the opposite scale.

(CWSA 8: 302-05) Sri Aurobindo (Nov. 6, 1909)

All Fanaticism is False

… you say that you ask only for the Truth and yet you speak like a narrow and ignorant fanatic who refuses to believe in anything but the religion in which he was born. All fanaticism is false, because it is a contradiction of the very nature of God and of Truth. Truth cannot be shut up

in a single book, Bible or Veda or Koran, or in a single religion. The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of the Mussulmans or of the Semitic religions only, — those that happened to be in a line from the Bible and to have Jewish or Arabian prophets for their founders. Hindus and Confucians and Taoists and all others have as much right to enter into relation with God and find the Truth in their own way. All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth; all are created in time and finally decline and perish. Mahomed himself never pretended that the Koran was the last message of God and there would be no other. God and Truth outlast these religions and manifest themselves anew in whatever way or form the Divine Wisdom chooses. You cannot shut up God in the limitations of your own narrow brain or dictate to the Divine Power and Consciousness how or where or through whom it shall manifest; you cannot put up your puny barriers against the divine Omnipotence. These again are simple truths which are now being recognised all over the world; only the childish in mind or those who vegetate in some formula of the past deny them.

(CWSA 32: 109-10) Sri Aurobindo (Oct. 23, 1929)

There is nothing noble besides in fanaticism — there is no nobility of motive, though there may be a fierce enthusiasm of motive. Religious fanaticism is something psychologically low-born and ignorant — and usually in its action fierce, cruel and base. Religious ardour like that of the martyr who sacrifices himself only is a different thing.

(SABCL 22: 490) Sri Aurobindo

On Religious Conversion

If it is meant by the statement that the form of re-

ligion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made, it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another, for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made by the Mahatma here; the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has a bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say "I will swap Krishna for Christ so that I may become socially respectable."

(CWSA 35: 189-90) Sri Aurobindo (Oct. 19, 1935)

The forests have to be preserved and also the wildlife. China destroyed all her forests and the result is that there is flood every year.

(Jan. 26, 1939) *Sri Aurobindo*

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