

Become INDIAN and Do Not Imitate the West

Second Edition

A Compilation from the Works of
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla

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Sri Aurobindo Society
AUROPUBLICATIONS
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

Become Indian and Do Not Imitate the West

Second Edition

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Earlier e-books released on India are:

1. *India and Her Mission*
2. *The Task of Building India Is Spiritual*
3. *The Splendour of Bharat's Past Be Reborn*
4. *Spirit of Kshatriya with a Large Liberal Ideal*

Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

> "*It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc.*"
>
> (CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

> "*If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the contradictions complement*

one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"*It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.*"

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

Our entire country is celebrating the auspicious occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo and the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence on 15 August 2022. This year, we at Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society present a series of compilations on "India" from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We present the fifth e-book in the series on India—*Become Indian and Do Not Imitate West*. Once all the e-books are released, we hope that readers will recognize that the underlying theme of this series is "How India Can Achieve Its Mission". The aim of this series of compilations is to be as comprehensive as possible. All that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said about India, as well as all that is directly or indirectly related to India, is included in these compilations.

The quotations in this compilation are from *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA); *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition; Shri K. D. Sethna's book *India and the World Scene*; *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, recorded by Shri A. B. Purani, First Edition; *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Shri Nirodbaran; and from Sri Aurobindo's Archives and Research Magazines. A few quotations are also from *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*.

Shri K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), Shri A. B. Purani, and Shri Nirodbaran were senior sadhaks who were close to Sri Aurobindo.

In the introduction to the book *India and the World Scene*, Shri K. D. Sethna writes, "Not only were my editorials written under his [Sri Aurobindo's] inner inspiration: they were also sent to him for approval. Only when his 'Yes' was wired to us did we plunge into publication." Thus, these quotations can be taken as representing Sri Aurobindo's opinion.

In the books by Shri Purani and Shri Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo, while talking to sadhaks, gave his opinion on many subjects.

After each quotation, the following abbreviations are used to represent the book or source from which it is taken.

CWSA: *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*
CWM: *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition
IWSKDS: *India and the World Scene* by Shri K. D. Sethna, First Edition
ISWFKDS: *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future* by Shri K. D. Sethna
CTMS: *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*
ETABP: *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo,* recorded by A. B. Purani, First Edition
TWSAN: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to go through the fuller text are advised to refer to the original books.

The section headings and sub-headings have been provided by the compiler to bring clarity to the selected topic.

The idea of taking up this comprehensive compilation on India was suggested to me by Vijaybhai [Shri Vijay Poddar] sometime in 2003. The hard copy of this compilation remained with him for many years. It was in May 2022 that he wrote to me: "I was looking again at your compilation on India. It is extremely comprehensive and very well done. I feel we should go ahead immediately to publish it as an e-book on our website." The quotations compiled in 2003 were drawn from the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* SABCL editions. With the devoted assistance of a few proofreaders, we have carefully revised and brought each of these quotations into conformity with

The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo CWSA editions, thus enabling us to bring forth this series of e-books.

I aspire, like the flame of a lamp or a candle, to the Divine, praying that the process of India's achievement of her mission may be hastened.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

Why a Compilation on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?

Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Sri Aurobindo was born in India, and the Mother was born in France. Their lives, however, were not confined by the boundaries of nationality. For both of them, India represented something far greater than a geographical territory or a political entity. India had a deeper significance—a spiritual destiny, a mission, and a role to play in the evolution of humanity.

It is with this understanding that this compilation of quotations on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has been prepared.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

> "I am impelled to this labour by the necessity of turning the mind of young India to our true riches, our real source of power, purification and hope for the future and of safeguarding it in the course of its search both from false lights and from the raucous challenges and confident discouragements cast at us by the frail modern spirit of denial. I write, not for the orthodox, nor for those who have discovered a new orthodoxy, Samaj or Panth, nor for the unbeliever; I write for those who acknowledge reason but do not identify reason with Western

materialism; who are sceptics but not unbelievers; who, admitting the claims of modern thought, still believe in India, her mission and her gospel, her immortal life and her eternal rebirth." (CWSA 12: 62–63)

These words point towards the purpose of this compilation. It is an attempt to bring together Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings on India so that the younger generation may encounter their vision of India—her true riches, her mission, her spiritual heritage, and her future.

But a question may arise: Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo? Part of the answer lies in a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to his wife, Mrinalini Devi:

> "I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength,—I am not going to fight with sword or gun,—but the strength of knowledge. The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one; there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable." August

30, 1905. (Letter written by Sri Aurobindo to his wife Mrinalini)

These words reveal that his concern for India was not merely political or intellectual. It was deeply rooted in his consciousness and in what he regarded as a great mission entrusted to him.

But Sri Aurobindo was not alone in this vision. The Mother, his collaborator in the spiritual work, gives another dimension to the same question:

> "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; [1972] … this would be a wonderful occasion to spread his teaching all over the country: ... his teaching about India, how to organise India, the mission of India. ...
>
> About all that has happened and all that is happening now, he has said clearly that to go back to it is useless. We must give the country its true position, that is, the position of relying on the Divine. Naturally, this is at the other end of what people try to believe now. But Sri Aurobindo explains it in such a way that even those who are against it can agree. You understand? He has found a way of saying it which can be understood by everybody. That's the

only solution, as far as I can see; it is the only solution. All the rest will mean complication, contradiction and fighting.

... And this is above politics, you see. ... 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 organized differently. It is a difficult time because of that.

Because we know what will come, we can help to make it come sooner and with less turmoil. There is no hope in going backwards; it would make things last endlessly. We must go forward, absolutely, and go beyond, beyond party. And nobody can explain that better than Sri Aurobindo, because he was so much, *so* much beyond party; he saw the advantages and disadvantages of all parties and he stated them exactly.

If you read carefully what he has written—so much—you will find the answer to all these questions. And at the same time you will know that you will have the full support of the Divine Power. The Power that was behind him is behind this transformation. It is time for transformation. We can't cling to the past.

The best way to go beyond politics is to spread the message of Sri Aurobindo. Because he is no more a political element wanting to take power; there are only his ideas and ideals. And, of course, if people could understand and realise his programme, the country could be very strong, very strong." (CWM 15: 405–406)

This compilation also contains quotations from the Mother's *Collected Works of the Mother*. Although the Mother was born in France, she always felt that India was her true country, the country of her soul and spirit. She declared herself Indian by choice and predilection.

"I want to mark this day by the expression of a long cherished wish; that of becoming an Indian citizen. From the first time I came to India—in 1914—I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free. But I had to wait still longer because of my heavy responsibilities for the Ashram here in Pondicherry. Now the time has come when I can declare myself.

But, in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution. So I hope I

shall be allowed to adopt a double nationality, that is to say, to remain French while I become an Indian.

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two, on the contrary, they combine very well and complete one another. I know also that I can be of service to both equally, for my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine Unity upon earth through an organised and harmonious diversity." *15 August 1954* (CWM 13: 43)

The reason for the Mother's deep connection with India becomes clearer in another of her statements:

"It is true that this body was born in Paris and that its soul has declared that it is Indian, but I belong to no nation in particular." (CWM 13: 44)

She further explains why she chose France as the country of her birth:

"It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of her present bad

condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth, although I am not French." (CWM 13: 379–380)

These words suggest that, for the Mother, nationality was never an end in itself. India and France could each have their own role, while both could participate in a larger movement towards human unity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, therefore, cannot be understood merely in the narrow sense of being Indian. Their work extended far beyond the boundaries of one country. Their aim was the upliftment of humanity and the movement of the earth towards a higher stage of evolution. Their love for India was intense because they saw in her a special role in the future of humanity.

The Mother says,

"Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it

down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it." (CWM 13: 123)

The quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are several decades old. A natural question therefore arises: How can words spoken so long ago remain relevant to India today?

When a Yogi or a realised person speaks, even on worldly matters, there will be Truth [Capital Truth] in what he says. This Truth will help one much more than what one would arrive at through one's own thinking. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had the highest spiritual realisations. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke from a vast spiritual vision. Their writings on India were not confined to the problems of a particular decade or generation. Their concern was with the deeper destiny of India and with her place in the evolution of humanity. This is why their words invite us to look beyond the immediate difficulties of the present moment.

Their vision and guidance can only lift India out of the present challenges she faces and help her achieve her mission. If one reads about the mission that India has to achieve and considers the present-day condition of our country, then one will realise that Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's quotations are as valid today as they were at that

time. On reading these compilations, one will feel that they are relevant to today's conditions.

On reading these compilations, one may discover that the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not belong only to the past. They can become a living subject of reflection for the present and the future.

There is, however, one caution that needs to be kept in mind while reading the quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: one need not become dogmatic about them. One really needs to live in the spirit behind these quotations.

It is not enough to know what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said about India. The greater question is whether we can discover the spirit behind their words and allow that spirit to awaken something within us.

India, in their vision, is not merely a country with a glorious past. She is a country with a future to fulfil. And if that future is indeed a part of humanity's larger evolution, then these words are not merely words about India. They are an invitation—to remember, to understand, to aspire, and to participate.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

Contents

Section One: India Has to Make a Choice Between Past Spiritual National Life or Methods Borrowed From the West 1

I—Either India Is Rising as a Defender of Spiritual Truth or as a Copyist of English Politics and Society 2

II—As a Defender of Spiritual Truth, India's Aspiration Must Be Great Enough to Remould the Civilisations of the World 2

III— As a Copyist of English Politics and Society, No Greatness of Soul Is Needed, and Having the Intellectual Ideals of the Anglo-Celtic Race Is Sufficient 3

Section Two: When One's Own Separate Character Is Denied, the Nation Perishes 4

I—If the Vitality Is Imitative, Imported, Artificial, Then the Nation Is Moving Towards Self-Sterilisation and Death 5

II—Not Being Able to Live in One's Own Law Leads to Disintegration, Decline and Loss of Vitality 6

III—By Europeanization India Would Lose Spiritual Capacity, Intellectual Force, National Elasticity and Power of Self-Renovation 6

Section Three: Not to Imitate the West 8

I—The Effort to Identify Our True Selves Was Hampered by Unthinking Imitation of the West 9

II—The Temperament of the West Is Extravert Rationalistic Hedonistic Utilitarian 9

III—A Tendency to Believe That a Westernised India Alone Could Result in a Resurgent India 10

IV—In the West There Is a Confusion of Morals With Spiritual Values 11

V—The West Is Supposed to Be Spiritually Short-Sighted 12

VI—The West Has Cherished the Idea of a Single Religion for All Mankind, While This Has Never Been Able to Take Firm Hold of the Free and Supple Mind of India 12

VII—The Tradition of Western Philosophy Is a Sterile Intellectual Manner Lacking Direct Experience 14

VIII— The Indian Intelligentsia Has to Discard Skepticism Following Interactions With the West 15

IX—The Ideal the West Sets Before Humanity Is an Incomplete Ideal 16

X— Europeans Consider Reason to Be the Faculty by Which One Arrives at the Truth 18

XI—Nowadays Indians Adopt the European Idea of Spirituality 19

XII—No Imitation of Western Religious Modes, No Indianised Christianity, No English Theism Will Save Hinduism 20

XIII—Our Political Salvation Cannot Be Attained by European Politics 20

XIV—By Aping European Society, We Shall Never Achieve Social Renovation 22

XV—India Is Blindly Imitating the West, Neglecting Her Soul 22

Section Four: To Live in One's Own Law of Being, *Swadharma* Is the First Necessity 24

I—Those Who Live Powerfully in Themselves Reach Almost Divine Proportions 25

II—If Development Is a Means of Self-Expression, Then the Nation Wakes, Lives and Grows 26

Section Five: First Become Indian 27

I—Recover the Patrimony of Your Forefathers 28

II—India Must Re-Aryanise Herself 29

III—Arya Expressed Not a Difference of Race, but a Difference of Culture 30

IV—The Highest Aspirations, Noblest Religious Temper, and Idealistic Thought Are Summed Up in Vocable Arya 31

V—Realise Ourselves First and Mould Everything to the Law of India's Eternal Life 32

VI—To the Indian Mind Dogma Is Least Important and Religious Spirit Matters, While to the Western Mind Intellectual Belief Is the Most Important 33

VII—Not to Cling to Every Detail That Has Been Indian and Be Ready to Replace Them with Better and Truer Ones 35

VIII—In Education, Teach the True Nature of One's Country 36

IX—The Gospel of Nationalisation Has to Be Established by the Experience of the Statesman and the Harmonising Generalisations of the Scientist 36

X—When India Has Found the Secret of Expressing Herself Through Various Activities, Her Industrial and Social Life Will Become Strong and Expansive 38

XI—Whenever the Indian Spirit Rises, European Glamour Diminishes 39

Section Six: India Following Her Own Law Does Not Mean Rejection of Everything New 41

I—True Spirituality Rejects No New Light and Assimilates All That We Receive to Evolve 42

II—A Reshaping of the Forms of Our Spirit Will Have To Take Place 42

Section Seven: How the Veil of Westernisation Fell From the Indian Eyes 44

I—The Westernised Indians Saw in Ramakrishna an Authentic India Stand Up 45

II—The Soul of India Awoke When an Educated Youth Bowed to the Illiterate Self-Illuminated Hindu Ascetic 47

III—Vivekananda Going Forth Was the First Sign to the World That India Was Awake to Conquer 48

IV—Once the Soul Awakens in Religion, It Will Throw Itself into All Spiritual and Intellectual Activities 49

Section Eight: India's Destiny Is Coming to Fulfilment 51

I—India Had Developed in the Past on Spiritual Lines Under the Inspiration of a Destiny Which Is Now Coming to Fulfilment 52

II—This Movement with Divine Force Is for the Service of the World, and So It Is Sure of Its Fulfilment 53

III—India of the Ages Has Not Spoken Her Last Creative Word 54

Section Nine: According to the Gita, Why India Should Become Indian and Not Imitate the West 55

I—India Not to Forget the Gita's Emphasis on Following the Law of One's Own Being 56

II—Better Is One's Own Law of Works, Though in Itself Faulty, Than an Alien Law Well Wrought Out 56

III—Action Which Is Intrinsically One's Own Is Better Because It Is Evolved from Within, in Harmony With the Truth of One's Being 57

IV—To Follow the Law of Another's Nature Is Dangerous to the Soul and Contradictory to the Natural Way of Evolution 57

V—Work Not One's Own Is Inferior Because It Has an External Motive and a Mechanical Impulsion 58

VI—Each Soul Guides Its Evolution of Self-Finding and Inevitable Growth to Fullness 59

Section Ten: Today India Is a Meeting Ground of the East and the West 60

I—Indian Genius Holds Something of All National Souls, Functioning With Assimilative Capacity....61

II—European Culture Bestowed Three Needed Impulses....62

III—The Three Lines Which India Must Take to Help the Future of Humanity....63

IV—Factors Favouring Association with the Commonwealth and Britain....63

V—Eager Minds in Both England and the USA Are Turning to the Aurobindonian Thought....66

VI—Difference Between European and Indian Politics....67

Other Comprehensive Compilations by Jamshed M. Mavalwalla....78

Section One: India Has to Make a Choice Between Past Spiritual National Life or Methods Borrowed From the West

I—Either India Is Rising as a Defender of Spiritual Truth or as a Copyist of English Politics and Society

1.

"There is no question so vital to the future of this nation as the spirit in which we are to set about the regeneration of our national life. Either India is rising again to fulfil the function for which her past national life and development seem to have prepared her, a leader of thought and faith, a defender of spiritual truth and experience destined to correct the conclusions of materialistic Science by the higher Science of which she has the secret and in that power to influence the world's civilisation, or she is rising as a faithful pupil of Europe, a follower methods and ideas borrowed from the West, a copyist of English politics and society." (CWSA 8: 92)

II—As a Defender of Spiritual Truth, India's Aspiration Must Be Great Enough to Remould the Civilisations of the World

1.

"In the one case her aspiration must be great, her faith unshakable, her efforts and sacrifices such as to command the admiration of the world; … In the one case her destiny is to be a great nation remoulding and leading the civilisations of the world, ..." (CWSA 8: 92)

III—As a Copyist of English Politics and Society, No Greatness of Soul Is Needed, and Having the Intellectual Ideals of the Anglo-Celtic Race Is Sufficient

1.

"... in the other no such greatness of soul is needed or possible;—a cautious, slow and gradual progress involving no extraordinary effort and no unusual sacrifices is sufficient for an end so small. … in the other it is to be a subordinate part of the British Empire sharing in the social life, the political privileges, the intellectual ideals and attainments of the Anglo-Celtic race." (CWSA 8: 92)

Section Two: When One's Own Separate Character Is Denied, the Nation Perishes

I—If the Vitality Is Imitative, Imported, Artificial, Then the Nation Is Moving Towards Self-Sterilisation and Death

1.

"No National awakening is really vital and enduring which confines itself to a single field. It is when the soul awakens that a nation is really alive, and the life will then manifest itself in all the manifold forms of activity in which man seeks to express the strength and the delight of the expansive spirit within. It is for *ananda* that the world exists; for joy that the Self puts Himself into the great and serious game of life; and the joy which He sees is the joy of various self-expression. For this reason it is that no two men are alike, no two nations are alike. Each has its own separate nature over and above the common nature of humanity and it is not only the common human impulses and activities but the satisfaction and development of its own separate character and capacities that a nation demands. Denied that satisfaction and development, it perishes. By two tests, therefore, the vitality of a national movement can be judged. If it is imitative, imported, artificial, then, whatever temporary success it may have, the nation is moving towards self-sterilisation and death; even so the nations of ancient Europe perished when they gave up their own individuality as the price of Roman

civilization, Roman peace, Roman prosperity." (CWSA 8: 61)

II—Not Being Able to Live in One's Own Law Leads to Disintegration, Decline and Loss of Vitality

1.

"Not to be able to do that [to live in accordance with one's own law of being] means disintegration of the life; not to do it sufficiently means languor, weakness, inefficiency, the danger of being oppressed by the environing forces and overborne; not to be able to do it wisely, intuitively, with a strong use of one's inner material and inner powers, means confusion, disorder and finally decline and loss of vitality. But also not to be able to use the material that the life around offers us, not to lay hold on it with an intuitive selection and a strong mastering assimilation is a serious deficiency and a danger to the existence. To a healthy individuality the external impact … there is some resultant of change and growth, some increment of the power and material of life; the energies of the being are stimulated and helped by the attack." (CWSA 20: 49)

III—By Europeanization India Would Lose Spiritual Capacity, Intellectual Force, National Elasticity and Power of Self-Renovation

Section Two: When One's Own Separate Character Is Denied, the Nation Perishes

1.

"If we had succeeded in Europeanising ourselves, we would have lost for ever our spiritual capacity, our intellectual force, our national elasticity and power of self-renovation. That tragedy has been enacted more than once in history, only the worst and most mournful example of all would have been added. Had the whole activity of the country been of the derivative and alien kind, that result would have supervened." (CWSA 8: 62)

Section Three: Not to Imitate the West

I—The Effort to Identify Our True Selves Was Hampered by Unthinking Imitation of the West

1.

"… we were overawed by the material prowess and pomp of our foreign rulers and our efforts to find our true selves were spoiled by either an unthinking imitation of the West or else a defensive anti-Western conservatism. We had not struck upon the master-key to the problem of national existence." (IWSKDS: 29)

2.

"The illusion of the golden chain is to be dispelled (lit. cut off), giving up English imitation and English leadership, we shall have to discover the proper means for the accomplishment of our desire according to our national character and the condition of (our) country. And the newly risen India will have to be shown a noble ideal and thereby infused with a new life. It is this path which is the path of salvation, or else there will be nothing but thraldom (lit. bondage) for us." (Sri Aurobindo *Archives and Research*; Vol.15, No.2; Pg. 243)

II—The Temperament of the West Is Extravert Rationalistic Hedonistic Utilitarian

1.

"The Indian civilisation has many points of serious difference from that of the Commonwealth. The temperament of the West is an extravert rationalistic hedonistic utilitarian one with spiritual values serving as a sort of background only. Of course there have been keenly idealistic souls in Europe, but they are not representative of the general trend of the European mind. Religion and spirituality, except in ceremonial and institutional forms, are rare visitations in the West and not, as in the East, intensified states of the very texture of the prevailing consciousness." (IWSKDS: 100)

2.

"But to the Western mind thought is the highest thing …" (ETABP: 686)

III—A Tendency to Believe That a Westernised India Alone Could Result in a Resurgent India

1.

"It is in the nineteenth century that India began slowly to arise out of the decline into which she had fallen—the decline whose one result was her defeat at the hands of foreign invaders and another the strong stamp put on her by the culture of those who held her in subjection. But the stir of the native consciousness was neither complete nor

sufficiently dynamic. There were many imitative elements, apings of the West, and a general tendency to believe that a westernised India alone could be India resurgent and India competent to cope with the shackles imposed by imperialist England. Denuded altogether of westernisation the only Indian feature seemed the superstition-ridden illiteracy of the common peasant or at the best the stagnant though not uncultured religious conventionalism of the common pundit. Surely here was not any creative source: everything else seemed a cross between India and England, with the latter herself providing by her home tradition of democratic humanism the directive energy for the former's fight against her colonial policy." (IWSKDS: 54–55)

IV—In the West There Is a Confusion of Morals With Spiritual Values

1.

"There is also in the West a confusion of moral with spiritual values, the mistaking of a narrow willed virtue for the outflow of benevolence from a deeper mystically realised consciousness which is more than human. Pandit Nehru would not know all this very clearly, but the nation's instinct is there in him too and he feels, no matter how vaguely, that India has something special by way of idealism to give to an erring world and that this something

can be best developed by drawing upon pure native sources without unnecessary interference from abroad and by accepting even the best of European thought after dipping it into the typical Indian genius." (IWSKDS: 100)

V—The West Is Supposed to Be Spiritually Short-Sighted

1.

"It is a sham realist who never looks beyond appearances and the impact of the crudely immediate. Even the West which is supposed to be spiritually short-sighted has shown in Truman and Acheson an admirable instinct of the right course. Britain has taken note of the increasing evidence of Mao's alignment with Stalin and recently tempered her original clamour for recognition on business grounds." (IWSKDS: 181)

VI—The West Has Cherished the Idea of a Single Religion for All Mankind, While This Has Never Been Able to Take Firm Hold of the Free and Supple Mind of India

"The Indian mind has always realised that the Supreme is the Infinite; it has perceived, right from its Vedic beginnings, that to the soul in Nature the Infinite must always present itself in an endless variety of aspects. The

mentality of the West has long cherished the aggressive and quite illogical idea of a single religion for all mankind, a religion universal by the very force of its narrowness, one set of dogmas, one cult, one system of ceremonies, one array of prohibitions and injunctions, one ecclesiastical ordinance. That narrow absurdity prances about as the one true religion which all must accept on peril of persecution by men here and spiritual rejection or fierce eternal punishment by God in other worlds. This grotesque creation of human unreason, the parent of so much intolerance, cruelty, obscurantism and aggressive fanaticism, has never been able to take firm hold of the free and supple mind of India. Men everywhere have common human failings, and intolerance and narrowness especially in the matter of observances there has been and is in India. There has been much violence of theological disputation, there have been querulous bickerings of sects with their pretensions to spiritual superiority and greater knowledge, and sometimes, at one time especially in southern India in a period of acute religious differences, there have been brief local outbreaks of active mutual tyranny and persecution even unto death. But these things have never taken the proportions which they assumed in Europe. Intolerance has been confined for the most part to the minor forms of polemical [strongly critical] attack or to social obstruction or ostracism [exclusion from a society]; very seldom have they transgressed across the line to the

major forms of barbaric persecution which draw a long, red and hideous stain across the religious history of Europe. There has played ever in India the saving perception of a higher and purer spiritual intelligence, which has had its effect on the mass mentality. Indian religion has always felt that since the minds, the temperaments, the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite." (CWSA 20: 186–187)

VII—The Tradition of Western Philosophy Is a Sterile Intellectual Manner Lacking Direct Experience

1.

"All the more eagerly will the gravitation occur because of three factors. Sri Aurobindo brings a philosophy not in the sterile intellectual manner that has been traditional in the West heretofore. His philosophy is not an abstract logic-spinning from a few principles of thought mixed with a few data of ordinary observation. It is only the intellectual elucidation and systematisation of concrete and direct experience of realities lying beyond the mere mind: it is but a mental picture of what is realised by the inmost consciousness in its Yogic penetration of the subliminal and the supraliminal. Modern man is rather impatient with the

old purposes and methods of philosophising: when he wants to go further than physical science he is more a psychologist than a metaphysician, and this turn—enlightened increasingly by research in what is termed extra-sensory perception—is likely to be attracted by a metaphysics based totally on Yoga which is after all a super-psychology seeking to grip fundamental truth by breaking out from our present narrow limits of consciousness and widening forth to be one with the inmost stuff of existence. Of course, there are many obstructions in the modern mind, especially the incubus of nineteenth-century scientific materialism which, though theoretically neutralised by the new physics, could still be in actual life a haunting influence opposed to Yogic philosophy. But the general trend of the present age, as it develops further, will approach such philosophy more and more gratefully." (IWSKDS: 322)

VIII— The Indian Intelligentsia Has to Discard Skepticism Following Interactions With the West

1.

"India is the one outstanding instance of a never-dying ever-resurgent collectivity. And the sooner she throws off the cloud of scepticism put by her recent intercourse with the West upon so many of her intelligentsia, and quickens to her own profundities and sees as the Soul of her soul

the supreme Godhead, the Divine World-Mother, the more apt will she be to use her acutely felt youthfulness today for genuine growth in greatness: then she will carry to a still more glorious height than in the past the wonder of her perpetually young civilisation." (IWSKDS: 10)

IX—The Ideal the West Sets Before Humanity Is an Incomplete Ideal

1.

"The Western social life rests on interests and rights. It depends upon the vitalistic existence of man which is largely governed by his rational mind helped by scientific inventions. Reason gives man the rigid methods of classification and mental construction and theory to justify his interests and rights, and science gives him the required efficiency, force and power. Thus he is sure of his goal. But one may say that, though organised and effective, European life is not organic. The view that it takes of man is a very imperfect view, and the ideal it sets before man an incomplete ideal. That is why you find there class-war and struggle for rights governed by the rational intellect. European life is very powerful because it can put the whole force of its life at once in operation by a coordination of all its members. In old times the ideal was different. They—the ancients—based their society on the structure of religion. I do not mean narrow religion but the highest law

of our being. The whole social fabric was built up to fulfil that purpose. There was no talk in those days of individual liberty in the present sense of the term. But there was absolute communal liberty. Every community was completely free to develop its own Dharma,—the law of its being. Even the selection of the line was a matter of free choice for the individual." (ETABP: 29–30)

2.

"How shall we recover our lost intellectual freedom and elasticity? By reversing, for a time at least, the process by which we lost it, by liberating our minds in all subjects from the thraldom [bondage] to authority. That is not what reformers and the Anglicised require of us. They ask us, indeed, to abandon authority, to revolt against custom and superstition, to have free and enlightened minds. But they mean by these sounding recommendations that we should renounce the authority of Sayana for the authority of Max Muller, the Monism of Shankara for the Monism of Haeckel, the written Shastra for the unwritten law of European social opinion, the dogmatism of Brahmin Pandits for the dogmatism of European scientists, thinkers and scholars. Such a foolish exchange of servitude can receive the assent of no self-respecting mind. Let us break our chains, venerable as they are, but let it be in order to be free,—in the name of truth, not in the name of Europe. It would be a poor bargain to exchange our old Indian illuminations,

however dark they may have grown to us, for a derivative European enlightenment or replace the superstitions of popular Hinduism by the superstitions of materialistic Science." (CWSA 12: 40)

X—Europeans Consider Reason to Be the Faculty by Which One Arrives at the Truth

"Sri Aurobindo: All European philosophers after the Greeks consider Reason as the faculty by which one arrives at Truth. The question about sense perceptions and their reliability is easily met. We perceive certain things by our senses, and for all men sensations are the same because our senses have a common origination. Even then, different persons perceive the same thing differently.

But if Reason could work in the abstract and be an ideal faculty it might arrive at a perception of the Truth beyond itself. As it is, it deals with different ideas and there it differs in different individuals. What I say is that if Reason was sufficient for arriving at the Truth then all reasonings would arrive at the same conclusions. But we find that different persons using reason arrive at different conclusions even from the same premisses.

Reason can perceive that there is something beyond itself that is the Truth. But it is not right when it asserts that what it perceives is the whole Truth. Truth is infinite and it has infinite sides. What can be known by the mind

is Sat, Chit, Ananda. In other words, when the Absolute presents itself to the mind it formulates itself as Sachchidananda. One can know the Absolute through that only." (ETABP: 733–734)

XI—Nowadays Indians Adopt the European Idea of Spirituality

1.

"Disciple: Nowadays 'spiritual' is a word of which the meaning is known to very few people.

Sri Aurobindo: In ancient India they knew the meaning. But now obviously the Indians have got the European idea of spirituality. It is not a very deep idea. If you have strong emotion, or strong passion, or a particular type of thoughts—that is what they call spirituality. Or it is something bound up with ethics, morality and philanthrophy. In Europe they use the word 'spirit' in contrast to 'matter'. Whatever is not matter is spirit; and so if any man has high mental ideals and an aesthetic turn of mind or some ideas of social service they call him 'spiritual'." (ETABP: 297–298)

2.

"Sri Aurobindo: I know the Western people won't leave aside reason in their dealing with the material sciences, but

when they come to Yoga or spiritual experiences they do not seem to keep their heads; they are like children in these things." (ETABP: 73–74)

XII—No Imitation of Western Religious Modes, No Indianised Christianity, No English Theism Will Save Hinduism

"… if Hinduism is to last and we are not to plunge into the vortex of scientific atheism and the breakdown of moral ideals which is engulfing Europe, it must survive as the religion for which Vedanta, Sankhya & Yoga combined to lay the foundations, which Srikrishna announced & which Vyasa formulated. No apeings [imitating] or distorted editions of Western religious modes, no Indianised Christianity, no fair rehash of that pale & consumptive shadow English Theism, will suffice to save us." (CWSA 1: 332)

XIII—Our Political Salvation Cannot Be Attained by European Politics

1.

"We do not believe that our political salvation can be attained by enlargement of Councils, introduction of the elective principle, colonial self-government or any other formula of European politics. We do not deny the use of

some of these things as instruments, as weapons in a political struggle, but we deny their sufficiency whether as instruments or ideals and look beyond to an end which they do not serve except in a trifling degree. They might be sufficient if it were our ultimate destiny to be an outlying province of the British Empire or a dependent adjunct of European civilisation. That is a future which we do not think it worth making any sacrifice to accomplish. We believe on the other hand that India is destined to work out her own independent life and civilisation, to stand in the forefront of the world and solve the political, social, economical and moral problems which Europe has failed to solve, yet the pursuit of whose solution and the feverish passage in that pursuit from experiment to experiment, from failure to failure she calls her progress. Our means must be as great as our ends and the strength to discover and use the means so as to attain the end can only be found by seeking the eternal source of strength in ourselves." (CWSA 13: 5)

2.

"As for the second factor, the democratic affinity, the truth is that the western democratic model has to a considerable extent misguided India. While stressing most helpfully the ideals of liberty and equality, it has led India to impose on herself a Parliamentary Government which, by its purely numerical representation of the people and its over-

centralisation of power, is untrue to the ancient Indian polity with its various autonomous units functioning federally within a larger national whole with a limited centre." (IWSKDS: 100)

XIV—By Aping European Society, We Shall Never Achieve Social Renovation

1.

"We do not believe that by changing the machinery so as to make our society the ape of Europe we shall effect social renovation. Widow-remarriage, substitution of class for caste, adult marriage, intermarriages, interdining and the other nostrums of the social reformer are mechanical changes which, whatever their merits or demerits, cannot by themselves save the soul of the nation alive or stay the course of degradation and decline. It is the spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become socially and politically great and free." (CWSA 13: 5–6)

XV—India Is Blindly Imitating the West, Neglecting Her Soul

1.

"*One sees that the world in general is at present in a sort of disequilibrium and chaos. Does this mean that it is*

preparing itself for the manifestation of a new force, for the descent of the Truth? Or is this the result of the action of hostile forces in revolt against this descent? And what place does India occupy in all this?

It is both at the same time. It is a chaotic means of preparation. India should be the spiritual guide explaining what is happening and helping to shorten the movement. But, unfortunately, in her blind ambition to imitate the West, she has become materialistic and neglectful of her soul." (CWM 13: 365–366)

Section Four: To Live in One's Own Law of Being, *Swadharma* Is the First Necessity

I—Those Who Live Powerfully in Themselves Reach Almost Divine Proportions

1.

"As we rise in the scale we find that the power of original development from within, of conscious self-determination increases more and more, while in those who live most powerfully in themselves it reaches striking, sometimes almost divine proportions. But at the same time we see that the allied power of seizing upon the impacts and suggestions of the outside world grows in proportion; those who live most powerfully in themselves, can also most largely use the world and all its material for the Self,—and, it must be added, most successfully help the world and enrich it out of their own being. The man who most finds and lives from the inner self, can most embrace the universal and become one with it; the Swarat, independent, self-possessed and self-ruler, can most be the Samrat, possessor and shaper of the world in which he lives, can most too grow one with all in the Atman. That is the truth this developing existence teaches us, and it is one of the greatest secrets of the old Indian spiritual knowledge.

Therefore to live in one's self, determining one's self-expression from one's own centre of being in accordance with one's own law of being, *swadharma*, is the first necessity." (CWSA 20: 48–49)

II—If Development Is a Means of Self-Expression, Then the Nation Wakes, Lives and Grows

1.

"If, on the other hand , the peculiar individuality of a race stamps itself on the movement in its every part and seizes on every new development as a means of self-expression, then the nation wakes, lives and grows and what-ever the revolution and changes of political, social or intellectual forms and institutions, it is assured of its survival and aggrandisement." (CWSA 8: 61)

Section Five: First Become Indian

I—Recover the Patrimony of Your Forefathers

1.

"We say to the individual and especially to the young who are now arising to do India's work, the world's work, God's work, 'You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of humanity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-

eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world'." (CWSA 13: 7—8)

II—India Must Re-Aryanise Herself

1.

"India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is *she* who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal Religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. In the sphere of morality, likewise, it is her mission to purge barbarism (mlecchahood) out of humanity and to *aryanise* the world. In order to do this, she must first re-aryanise herself.

It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached. If the work does not progress as it once promised to do it is because we have once again allowed the terrible cloud of *tamas* to settle down on our souls—fear, doubt, hesitation, sluggishness. … but lack of Shakti, from the lack of Karma, we have not been able to make our Bhakti a living thing. May we remember that it was Kali, who is Bhawani, Mother

of strength whom Ramakrishna worshipped and with whom he became one.

But the destiny of India will not wait on the *falterings* and failings of individuals; the Mother demands that men shall arise to institute her worship and make it universal." (CWSA 6: 84-85)

III—Arya Expressed Not a Difference of Race, but a Difference of Culture

1.

"What is the significance of the name, 'Arya'?

The question has been put from more than one point of view. … Indians know the word, but it has lost for them the significance which it bore to their forefathers. Western Philology has converted it into a racial term, an unknown ethnological quantity on which different speculations fix different values. Now, even among the philologists, some are beginning to recognise that the word in its original use expressed not a difference of race, but a difference of culture. For in the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration. The Aryan gods were the supraphysical powers who assisted the mortal in his struggle towards the nature of the godhead." (CWSA 13: 441)

IV—The Highest Aspirations, Noblest Religious Temper, and Idealistic Thought Are Summed Up in Vocable Arya

1.

"All the highest aspirations of the early human race, its noblest religious temper, its most idealistic velleities of thought are summed up in this single vocable [Arya].

In later times, the word Arya expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect for the wise and learned, the social accomplishments. It was the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. Everything that departed from this ideal, everything that tended towards the ignoble, mean, obscure, rude, cruel or false, was termed un-Aryan. There is no word in human speech that has a nobler history." (CWSA 13: 441)

2.

"The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, *śreṣṭha*, the good and noble man, *ārya*. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindliness, patience; in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty,

continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride; in the mind wisdom and intelligence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being a strong religious sense, piety, love of God, seeking after the Highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all the social dharmas, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or caste: this was the total ideal of the Arya, the man of high upbringing and noble nature. The ideal is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums and it is the very life-breath of Hindu ethics. It was the creation of an at once ideal and rational mind, spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply religious, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life's difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline. This was the mind that was at the base of the Indian civilisation and gave its characteristic stamp to all the culture." (CWSA 20: 164)

V—Realise Ourselves First and Mould Everything to the Law of India's Eternal Life

1.

"We say to the nation, `It is God's will that we should be ourselves and not Europe. We have sought to regain life by following the law of another being than our own. We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future. Our business is to realise ourselves first and to mould everything to the law of India's eternal life and nature. It will therefore be the object of the *Karmayogin* to read the heart of our religion, our society, our philosophy, politics, literature, art, jurisprudence, science, thought, everything that was and is ours, so that we may be able to say to ourselves and our nation, ` *This is our dharma*.' We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians. And the *dharma* once discovered we shall strive our utmost not only to profess but to live, in our individual actions, in our social life, in our political endeavours'." (CWSA 13: 7)

VI—To the Indian Mind Dogma Is Least Important and Religious Spirit Matters, While to the Western Mind Intellectual Belief Is the Most Important

"This misunderstanding springs from the total difference of outlook on religion that divides the Indian mind and the normal Western intelligence. The difference is so great that it could only be bridged by a supple philosophical training or a wide spiritual culture; but the established forms of religion and the rigid methods of philosophical thought practised in the West make no provision and even allow no opportunity for either. To the Indian mind the least important part of religion is its dogma; the religious spirit matters, not the theological credo. On the contrary to the Western mind a fixed intellectual belief is the most important part of a cult; it is its core of meaning, it is the thing that distinguishes it from others. For it is its formulated beliefs that make it either a true or a false religion, according as it agrees or does not agree with the credo of its critic. This notion, however foolish and shallow, is a necessary consequence of the Western idea which falsely supposes that intellectual truth is the highest verity and, even, that there is no other. The Indian religious thinker knows that all the highest eternal verities are truths of the spirit. The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the affirmations of credal statement, but fruits of the soul's inner experience. Intellectual truth is only one of the doors to the outer precincts of the temple. And since intellectual truth turned towards the Infinite must be in its very nature many-sided and not narrowly one, the most varying intellectual beliefs

can be equally true because they mirror different facets of the Infinite. However separated by intellectual distance, they still form so many side-entrances which admit the mind to some faint ray from a supreme Light. There are no true and false religions, but rather all religions are true in their own way and degree. Each is one of the thousand paths to the One Eternal." (CWSA 20: 180-181)

2.

"The endless variety of Indian philosophy and religion seems to the European mind interminable, bewildering, wearisome, useless; it is unable to see the forest because of the richness and luxuriance of its vegetation; it misses the common spiritual life in the multitude of its forms. But this infinite variety is itself, as Vivekananda pertinently pointed out, a sign of a superior religious culture." (CWSA 20: 186)

VII—Not to Cling to Every Detail That Has Been Indian and Be Ready to Replace Them with Better and Truer Ones

1.

"Nationalism has been hitherto largely a revolt against the tendency to shape ourselves into the mould of Europe; but it must also be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been Indian. That has not been the

spirit of Hinduism in the past, there is no reason why it should be so in the future. … We will sacrifice no ancient form to an unreasoning love to change, we will keep none which the national spirit desires to replace by one that is a still better and truer expression of the undying soul of the nation." (CWSA 8: 66)

VIII—In Education, Teach the True Nature of One's Country

1.

"In any country the best education that can be given to children consists in teaching them what the true nature of their country is and its own qualities, the mission their nation has to fulfil in the world and its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a wide understanding of the role of other nations, but without the spirit of imitation and without ever losing sight of the genius of one's own country." (CWM 12: 252–253)

IX—The Gospel of Nationalisation Has to Be Established by the Experience of the Statesman and the Harmonising Generalisations of the Scientist

1.

"To him [rationalist] there is order, development, progress, evolution, enlightenment in the history of Europe, but the

past of India is an unsightly mass of superstition and ignorance best torn out of the book of human life. These thousands of years of our thought and aspirations are a period of the least importance to us and the true history of our progress only begins with the advent of European education! The rest is a confused nightmare or a mere barren lapse of time preparing nothing and leading to nothing. This tone is still vocal in the organs of the now declining school of the nineteenth century some of which preserve their influence in the provinces where the balance in the struggle between the past and the future has not inclined decidedly in favour of the latter. … it is still represented by an undercurrent of the old weakness and the old want of faith which struggles occasionally to establish itself by a false appearance of philosophical weight and wisdom. … There is plenty of weakness still lingering in the land and we cannot allow it to take shelter under the cry of expediency and rationality and seek to kill the faith and force that has been born in the hearts of the young. … The gospel of Nationalism has not yet been fully preached; its most inspiring tenets have yet to be established not only by the eloquence of the orator and inspiration of the prophet but by the arguments of the logician, the appeal to experience of the statesman and the harmonising generalisations of the scientist." (CWSA 8: 94–95)

X—When India Has Found the Secret of Expressing Herself Through Various Activities, Her Industrial and Social Life Will Become Strong and Expansive

1.

"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)

XI—Whenever the Indian Spirit Rises, European Glamour Diminishes

1.

"Why are a certain class of Indians still hypnotised in all fields by European culture and why are we all still hypnotised by it in the field of politics? Because they constantly saw all the power, creation, activity on the side of Europe, all the immobility or weakness of a static inefficient defence on the side of India. But wherever the Indian spirit has been able to react, to attack with energy and to create with éclat, the European glamour has begun immediately to lose its hypnotic power. No one now feels the weight of the religious assault from Europe which was very powerful at the outset, because the creative activities of the Hindu revival have made Indian religion a living and evolving, a secure, triumphant and self-assertive power. But the seal was put to this work by two events, the Theosophical movement and the appearance of Swami Vivekananda at Chicago. For these two things showed the spiritual ideas for which India stands no longer on their defence but aggressive and invading the materialised mentality of the Occident. All India had been vulgarised and anglicised in its aesthetic notions by English education

and influence, until the brilliant and sudden dawn of the Bengal school of art cast its rays so far as to be seen in Tokio, London and Paris. That significant cultural event has already effected an aesthetic revolution in the country, not yet by any means complete, but irresistible and sure of the future. The same phenomenon extends to other fields. Even in the province of politics that was the internal sense of the policy of the so-called extremist party in the Swadeshi movement; for it was a movement which attempted to override the previous apparent impossibility of political creation by the Indian spirit upon other than imitative European lines. If it failed for the time being, not by any falsity in its inspiration, but by the strength of a hostile pressure and the weakness still left by a past decadence, if its incipient creations were broken or left languishing and deprived of their original significance, yet it will remain as a finger-post on the roads. The attempt is bound to be renewed as soon as a wider gate is opened under more favourable conditions. Till that attempt comes and succeeds, a serious danger besets the soul of India; for a political Europeanisation would be followed by a social turn of the same kind and bring a cultural and spiritual death in its train. Aggression must be successful and creative if the defence is to be effective." (CWSA 20: 62—63)

Section Six: India Following Her Own Law Does Not Mean Rejection of Everything New

I—True Spirituality Rejects No New Light and Assimilates All That We Receive to Evolve

1.

"India can best develop herself and serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. This does not mean, as some narrowly and blindly suppose, the rejection of everything new that comes to us in the stream of Time or happens to have been first developed or powerfully expressed by the West. Such an attitude would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible, and above all unspiritual; true spirituality rejects no new light, no added means or materials of our human self-development. It means simply to keep our centre, our essential way of being, our inborn nature and assimilate to it all we receive, and evolve out of it all we do and create." (CWSA 20: 38)

II—A Reshaping of the Forms of Our Spirit Will Have To Take Place

1.

"India's nature, her mission, the work that she has to do, her part in the earth's destiny, the peculiar power for which she stands is written there in her past history and is the secret purpose behind her present sufferings and ordeals. A reshaping of the forms of our spirit will have to take place; but it is the spirit itself behind past forms that we

have to disengage and preserve and to give to it new and powerful thought-significances, culture-values, a new instrumentation, greater figures. And so long as we recognise these essential things and are faithful to their spirit, it will not hurt us to make even the most drastic mental or physical adaptations and the most extreme cultural and social changes. But these changes themselves must be cast in the spirit and mould of India and not in any other, not in the spirit of America or Europe, not in the mould of Japan or Russia." (CWSA 20: 88–89)

Section Seven: How the Veil of Westernisation Fell From the Indian Eyes

I—The Westernised Indians Saw in Ramakrishna an Authentic India Stand Up

1.

"Then a strange thing occurred. Out of a temple in which the Goddess Kali was worshipped by stagnant though not uncultured religious conventionalism there came a man who had all the outer look of representing superstition-ridden illiteracy. And yet he was as little the common peasant as he was the common pundit. He came with a religious message but it was something the pundit was utterly incapable of. He came with an absolute lack of education but it was something quite unlike the ignorance of the peasant. Here was one altogether innocent of western formulas, one who seemed akin at the same time to the two specimens thought possible of sheer Indianness and who still was entirely different from them and carried a tremendous conquering creativity. Before him bowed down the finest flower of educated Bengal. In him the westernised Indians saw authentic India stand up, clear of every colour of the West, clear even of every tinge of what typical India appeared to be in that age—a representative was he of some hidden essence of the national being, the country's very soul in pure power. At one stroke the emergent Nationalism was made to recognise its central meaning and direction. The attractive veil of westernisation fell from the eyes, the feebleness of the country's

decadence went out of the limbs and India knew what she was and grasped the essential energy of her own self.

Ramakrishna, the illiterate man from the temple of conventional Kali-worship, was a veritable colossus of mystical experience: in him direct and immediate realisation of the Divine Being reached an intensity and variety which made him a marvellous summing-up of the whole spiritual history of India, with a face carrying the first gleam of a new age of the human soul—the age that will be known as the Aurobindonian. He could neither read nor write English: not even a word of English could he understand. Bengali itself he could only speak: he had no schooling at all. All that he had was God: he could unite himself with the Supreme Omniscience, his heart's home was the Infinite, he lived constantly in the Eternal. The Divine Being and the Divine Force that he called the Mother were a presence with him at all times—from deep within him, from near and far around him, from some absolute transcendence high above. His feelings were not of the ordinary emotional kind but radiant with the true spontaneous psyche which is an everlasting spark of the Supreme, a child of the World-Mother. His thoughts were not of the brain-mind but luminous with an intuitive perception which was in contact with the inward as well as the outward. Apparently ignorant but wise beyond measure, frail and helpless to an initial view yet a power-house that could move the world, poor and ascetic yet

holding the thrill of the Beauty that is immortal, he sat day after day at Dakshineswar with the most educated men of Calcutta about him together with simple village folk. And from his strange spiritual personality the true Indian Nationalism was born. For the first time came the awareness of what it was that had to be resurrected and put against the shallow vitalism from the West that was keeping India in chains or, at its most benevolent, bringing her up to be an artificially galvanised part of its own glittering scheme." (IWSKDS: 55–56)

II—The Soul of India Awoke When an Educated Youth Bowed to the Illiterate Self-Illuminated Hindu Ascetic

1.

"Had the whole activity [in the nineteenth century] of the country been of the derivative and alien kind, that result would have supervened. But the life-breadth of the nation still moved in the religious movements of Bengal and the Punjab, in the political aspirations of Maharashtra and in the literary activity of Bengal. Even here it was an undercurrent, the peculiar temperament and vitality of India struggling for self-preservation under a load of foreign ideas and foreign forms, and it was not till in the struggle between these two elements the balance turned in the favour of the national *dharma* that the salvation of

India was assured. The resistance of the conservative element in Hinduism, tamasic, inert, ignorant, uncreative though it was, saved the country by preventing an even more rapid and thorough disintegration than actually took place and by giving respite and time for the persistent national self to emerge and find itself. It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic [Ramakrishna Paramahamsa], a self-illuminated ecstatic and 'mystic' without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won." (CWSA 8: 62)

III—Vivekananda Going Forth Was the First Sign to the World That India Was Awake to Conquer

1.

"The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer. Afterwards when the awakening was complete a section of the nationalist movement turned in imagination to a reconstruction of the recent pre-British past in all its details. This could not be. Inertia, the refusal to expand

and alter, is what our philosophy calls *tamas*, and an excess of *tamas* tends to disintegration and disappearance. Aggression is necessary for self-preservation and when a force ceases to conquer, it ceases to live—that which remains stationary and stands merely on the defensive, that which retires into and keeps within its own *kot* or base, as the now defunct *Sandhya* used graphically to put it, is doomed to defeat, diminution and final elimination from the living things of this world. Hinduism has always been pliable and aggressive; it has thrown itself on the attacking force, carried its positions, plundered its treasures, made its own everything of value it had and ended either in wholly annexing it or driving it out by rendering its further continuation in the country purposeless and therefore impossible. Whenever it has stood on the defensive, it has contracted within narrower limits and shown temporary signs of decay." (CWSA 8: 62–63)

IV—Once the Soul Awakens in Religion, It Will Throw Itself into All Spiritual and Intellectual Activities

1.

"Once the soul of the nation was awake in religion, it was only a matter of time and opportunity for it to throw itself on all spiritual and intellectual activities in the national existence and take possession of them. The outburst of

anti-European feeling which followed on the Partition gave the required opportunity. Anger, vindictiveness and antipathy are not in themselves laudable feelings, but God uses them for His purposes and brings good out of evil. They drove listlessness and apathy away and replaced them by energy and a powerful emotion; and that energy and emotion were seized upon by the national self and turned to the uses of the future. The anger against Europeans, the vengeful turning upon their commerce and its productions, the antipathy to everything associated with them engendered a powerful stream of tendency turning away from the immediate Anglicised past, and the spirit which had already declared itself in our religious life entered in by this broad doorway into politics, and substituted a positive powerful yearning towards the national past, a still more mighty and dynamic yearning towards a truly national future." (CWSA 8: 63)

Section Eight: India’s Destiny Is Coming to Fulfilment

I—India Had Developed in the Past on Spiritual Lines Under the Inspiration of a Destiny Which Is Now Coming to Fulfilment

1.

"We believe that this nation is one which has developed itself in the past on spiritual lines under the inspiration of a destiny which is now coming to fulfilment. The peculiar seclusion in which it was able to develop its individual temperament, knowledge and ideas;—the manner in which the streams of the world poured in upon and were absorbed by the calm ocean of Indian spiritual life, recalling the great image in the Gita,—even as the waters flow into the great tranquil and immeasurable ocean, and the ocean is not perturbed;—the persistence with which peculiar and original forms of society, religion and philosophical thought were protected from disintegration up till the destined moment;—the deferring of that disintegration until the whole world outside had arrived at the point when the great Indian ideal which these forms enshrined could embrace all that it yet needed for its perfect self-expression, and be itself embraced by an age starved by materialism and yearning for a higher knowledge;—the sudden return of India upon itself at a time when all that was peculiarly Indian seemed to wear upon it the irrevocable death-sentence passed on all things that in the human evolution are no longer needed;—the miraculous

uprising and transformation of weakness into strength brought about by that return;—all this seems to us to be not fortuitous and accidental but inevitable and preordained in the decrees of an over-ruling Providence." (CWSA 8: 93–94)

II—This Movement with Divine Force Is for the Service of the World, and So It Is Sure of Its Fulfilment

1.

"It [rationalist] cannot really believe that this is a movement with a divine force within and a mighty future before it. … But the fundamental idea of the movement as a divine manifestation purposing to raise up the nation not only for its own fulfilment in India but for the work and service of the world and therefore sure of its fulfilment, therefore independent of individuals and superior to vicissitudes and difficulties, is one which they cannot yet grasp. It is a sentiment which has been growing upon us the movement progressed, but it has not yet been sufficiently put forward by the organs of Nationalism itself, partly because the old idea of separating religion from politics lingered, partly because the human aspects of the Nationalist faith had to be established before we could rise to the divine. But that divine aspect has to be established if we are to have the faith and greatness of soul which can

alone help us in the tremendous developments the signs of the time portend." (CWSA 8: 94–95)

III—India of the Ages Has Not Spoken Her Last Creative Word

1.

"Afterwards came the night and a temporary end of all political initiative and creation. The lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the West has been no true indication of the political mind and genius of the Indian people. But again amid all the mist of confusion there is still the possibility of a new twilight, not of an evening but a morning Yuga-sandhya. India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples. And that which must seek now to awake is not an anglicised oriental people, docile pupil of the West and doomed to repeat the cycle of the Occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti recovering her deepest self, lifting her head higher towards the supreme source of light and strength and turning to discover the complete meaning and a vaster form of her Dharma." (CWSA 20: 444)

Section Nine: According to the Gita, Why India Should Become Indian and Not Imitate the West

I—India Not to Forget the Gita's Emphasis on Following the Law of One's Own Being

1.

"The nineteenth century in India was imitative, self-forgetful, artificial. It aimed at a successful reproduction of Europe in India, forgetting the deep saying of the Gita—'Better the law of one's own being though it be badly done than an alien *dharma* well-followed; death in one's own *dharma* is better, it is a dangerous thing to follow the law of another's nature.' For death in one's own *dharma* brings new birth, success in an alien path means only successful suicide." (CWSA 8: 61–62)

II—Better Is One's Own Law of Works, Though in Itself Faulty, Than an Alien Law Well Wrought Out

1.

"The Gita says, indeed, 'All existences follow their nature and what shall coercing it avail?' which seems, if we take it by itself, a hopelessly absolute assertion of the omnipotence of Nature over the soul; 'even the man of knowledge acts according to his own nature.' And on this it founds the injunction to follow faithfully in our action the law of our nature. 'Better is one's own law of works, *svadharma*, though in itself faulty than an alien law well

wrought out; death in one's own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law'." (CWSA 19: 217–218)

III—Action Which Is Intrinsically One's Own Is Better Because It Is Evolved from Within, in Harmony With the Truth of One's Being

1.

"One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective. One does not incur sin or stain when one acts in the true spirit of the work and in agreement with the law of one's own nature. All action in the three gunas is imperfect, all human work is subject to fault, defect or limitation; but that should not make us abandon our own proper work and natural function. Action should be rightly regulated action, *niyatam ̇ karma*, but intrinsically one's own, evolved from within, in harmony with the truth of one's being, regulated by the Swabhava, *svabha ̄va-niyatam ̇ karma*." (CWSA 19: 510)

IV—To Follow the Law of Another's Nature Is Dangerous to the Soul and Contradictory to the Natural Way of Evolution

1.

"The Gita has laid some stress on this point and even assigned to it a great preliminary importance. At the very

start it has spoken of the nature, rule and function of the Kshatriya as Arjuna's own law of action, *svadharma*; it has proceeded to lay it down with a striking emphasis that one's own nature, rule, function should be observed and followed,—even if defective, it is better than the well-performed rule of another's nature. Death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement. To follow the law of another's nature is dangerous to the soul, contradictory, as we may say, to the natural way of his evolution, a thing mechanically imposed and therefore imported, artificial and sterilising to one's growth towards the true stature of the spirit. What comes out of the being is the right and healthful thing, the authentic movement, not what is imposed on it from outside or laid on it by life's compulsions or the mind's error." (CWSA 19: 508–509)

V—Work Not One's Own Is Inferior Because It Has an External Motive and a Mechanical Impulsion

1.

"All labour, all action and function, whatever it be, can be consecrated by this dedication of works, can convert the life into a self-offering to the Godhead within and without us and is itself converted into a means of spiritual perfection. But **a** work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, even though it may look

better from the outside when judged by an external and mechanical standard or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth precisely because it has an external motive and a mechanical impulsion." (CWSA 19: 510)

VI—Each Soul Guides Its Evolution of Self-Finding and Inevitable Growth to Fullness

1.

"And in Nature each of us has a principle and will of our own becoming; each soul is a force of self-consciousness that formulates an idea of the Divine in it and guides by that its action and evolution, its progressive self-finding, its constant varying self-expression, its apparently uncertain but secretly inevitable growth to fullness. That is our Swabhava, our own real nature; that is our truth of being which is finding now only a constant partial expression in our various becoming in the world. The law of action determined by this Swabhava is our right law of self-shaping, function, working, our Swadharma." (CWSA 19: 519)

Section Ten: Today India Is a Meeting Ground of the East and the West

I—Indian Genius Holds Something of All National Souls, Functioning With Assimilative Capacity

1.

"But India has been in history the home of the immensest aspiration and the intensest search after the Good, the Beautiful and the True. The dimming of the fire in the hearts of her inhabitants and the paling of the light in their minds are, therefore, the gravest of tragedies and most to be fought against. For, if Indians can bring forth the real genius of their country the world's degeneration will be halted: the hope of the future is in the renascence and resurgence of essential India. And all the more powerful will be her influence because her genius is not only the typical idealist of the Divine but also a multi-mooded idealist, holding something of all national souls, functioning with an assimilative capacity which makes her as diverse in expression as she is single in motive. She can be all things to all men and so her uplifting force will be everywhere the most creative. And today even her inherent omni-effectivity is rendered more concentrated because, as a result of a long and pervasive impress on her by the Western mind through her past British rulers, she is a meeting-ground of the East and the West, and the consciousness with which she works is profoundly Asiatic with yet a strong European colour. In rising victorious over the tide of decadence and debasement now sweeping

across the earth she will epitomise in every respect the entire humanity's victory." (IWSKDS: 12)

II—European Culture Bestowed Three Needed Impulses

1. **Revived the dormant intellectual and critical impulse**
2. **Awakened the desire for new creation**
3. **Put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel ideals**

"For whatever temporary rotting and destruction this crude impact of European life and culture has caused, it gave three needed impulses. It revived the dormant intellectual and critical impulse; it rehabilitated life and awakened the desire of new creation; it put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideals and the urgent necessity of understanding, assimilating and conquering them. The national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, re-awoke to its sense and import, but also at the same time saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas. Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian renaissance is arising, and that must determine its future tendency**."** (CWSA 20: 15)

III—The Three Lines Which India Must Take to Help the Future of Humanity

1.

"The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of the Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity." (CWSA 20: 15)

IV—Factors Favouring Association with the Commonwealth and Britain

1.

"There are, however, several factors which would seem to favour the keeping of some vital link with the Commonwealth. One is the recent change that has come over the British mentality. Imperialism is a dying creed in Great Britain. The Government today is liberal and socialist and despises the Churchillian megalomania of Europe. The erasing of the word 'British' and leaving just the term 'Commonwealth' is another sign of a change of heart.

Whatever a dominion like South Africa may do, the parent country shows admirable intentions. Another factor is democratic affinity. Great Britain and her dominion-associates are all of them political democracies. India too is a political democracy and a harmonious interplay of countries based on similar governmental principles seems desirable. A third factor is the most practical, and it has several shades of implication. Pakistan is likely to remain within the Commonwealth; so too is Ceylon. If India gets out of it, Pakistan and Ceylon may enjoy certain advantages in relation to her, both economically and militarily. Again, Indians staying outside their country may be treated as aliens and not have citizenship rights." (IWSKDS: 100–101)

2.

"The very first factor, however, is genuine: imperialism, though not dead, is dying and it would be a poor vision of world-affairs which would let itself be nightmarishly obsessed by the past. A great act of self-abnegation has been Britain's, by which under the Attlee Government she made unique history by voluntarily shedding nearly all her hard-won possessions in Asia. And as remarkable an act in the cause of civilisation has been her super-heroic stand, almost single-handed, against the monstrous might of Hitler launching the Luftwaffe out of his fortress of Western Europe. To associate with such a country is indeed an

honour; for, with all its faults and its remnant die-hards and its insufficiently opened inward eye, it has proved itself to be in rhythm with the élan vital's evolution towards the Light of lights. If Nehru favours association he cannot be accused of forgetting the words he once uttered. It is another Britain he faces than General Dyer's. Her glorious gestures in the near past have obliterated a multitude of sins." (IWSKDS: 101–102)

3.

"We in India have all the greater need to keep our wits about us. We had unpleasant associations in the past with Western colonialism. We fought for our independence and got it. The upsurge of our country as of many other Asian nations is conceived by us only in terms of shaking off the yoke of the West. We have had no direct experience of what it means to be a member of the Russian bloc. And we forget that the West, for all its colonial activity, was the home of just those ideals we most cherish—the ideals of democracy—and that this activity was in spite of and not because of what the West stands for. Besides, our own liberation was not unconnected with the West's growing desire to live as much as possible up to its highest principles. The minds of most Indians are not sharp enough to cut through old rancours and small superficialities: we fail to see to the full the meaning of Korea, the significance of the American intervention and the fraud of the Soviet

talk of 'peaceful settlement'." (IWSKDS: 293)

V—Eager Minds in Both England and the USA Are Turning to the Aurobindonian Thought

1.

"Eyes all over the world are awakening to this centre of light. The India Government's Ministry of External Affairs has been receiving enquiries from individuals and institutions abroad, especially from America, about the aims and activities of the Ashram in Pondicherry. Even arrangements are being discussed now for taking documentary films of the Ashram. And recently the Government ordered, for use in Indian Embassies in foreign countries, forty sets of Sri Aurobindo's Collected Poems and Plays as well as his philosophical exposition of his yogic vision of the world, The Life Divine, about which Aldous Huxley has remarked in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy: 'I consider it a book not merely of the highest importance as regards its content, but remarkably fine as a piece of philosophic and religious literature.' Eager minds in both England and the U.S.A. are turning to the Aurobindonian thought: two universities in the latter— Stanford and Cornell— have prescribed Essays on the Gita and The Life Divine respectively as part of post-graduate study. In India, too, Benares University has put Sri Aurobindo on its syllabus. The move, in the West no less than the East, to

suggest his name for the Nobel Prize is perhaps the intensest testimony to the growing recognition of him as a world-figure of far-reaching significance." (IWSKDS: 308)

2.

"It may not be possible for all of us to be Aurobindonian Yogis and share with him to whatever degree his integral Rishihood. But we can surely keep in contact with his harmonious being, draw to us the revealing vision that he commands, feel the direction of his fatherly hand in our day-to-day gropings, whether in private or national existence, for the right gesture, the right deed. Even without this Integral Yoga he would stand forth amongst men, a versatile genius with a mighty record as poet and thinker, politician and nation-builder, a living synthesis of the cultures of the East and West. With this unique Yoga he raises to the nth degree of inspiration all his creative powers and if men could consciously establish rapport with him they would lift themselves and their country to sterling greatness." (IWSKDS: 313)

VI—Difference Between European and Indian Politics

1.

"Disciple: What is the difference between European and Indian politics?

Sri Aurobindo: If you mean the politics of India today then there is absolutely no difference. It is a bad copy of Western politics, taking any catchwords, often even without any reference to realities. …

There are three elements in European politics:

1. Mental idea or ideal of political and social life.
2. Interest of the communities or classes.
3. Machinery of Government.

Now, in Europe people believe and think that if they succeed in bringing about a definite form of government on the lines of certain ideals such as democracy, monarchy, socialism, communism etc., then all the problems of humanity will be solved. They follow a mental ideal which they think to be the only truth and they create public opinion and try to catch, or get hold of, the machinery of the State. Among all the conflicting ideals none has yet proved successful. It was thought that democracy would be the most successful form but after experience it is proved that it is far from being a success.

Next comes the 'interests' of individuals and classes: It is really these interests which get the better of the mental ideal and succeed in getting hold of the 'Machinery of the State', i.e., power.

In the beginning it was the priest and the monarch with his aristocracy who ruled. Then the aristocracy, the fighting class, with the common man under it, and then came the middle class, the merchant class, which is now

having the machinery of power under what is called democracy. And now there is the effort in countries like Russia where the proletariat [working class] is trying to rule.

Now for Machinery of the State: It is a rigid and hard centralization and mechanization of the life of the nation perfectly organised in all details to meet an aggression, to defend and to expand.

In the old Indian collective life there were three things:

1. Spontaneously growing free communal units.
2. The Dharma-idea.
3. Harmonising of national life by a central agency.

We had nothing of the mental ideal in politics. We had a spontaneous and a free growth of communities developing on their own lines. It was not so much a mental idea as an inner impulse or feeling, to express life in a particular form. Each such communal form of life—the village, the town, etc., which formed the unit of national life, was left free in its own internal management. The central authority never interfered with it.

There was not the idea of 'interests' in India as in Europe, i.e., each community was not fighting for its own interests; but there was rather the idea of Dharma—the function which the individual and the community have to fulfil in the larger national life. There were caste organisations not based upon a religio-social basis as we

find nowadays; they were more or less groups organised for a communal life. There were also religious communities like the Buddhists, Jains, etc. Each followed its own law—Swadharma—unhampered by the State. The State recognised the necessity of allowing such various forms of life to develop freely in order to give to the national spirit a richer expression.

Then over the two there was the central authority, whose function was not so much to legislate as to harmonise and see that everything was going on all right. It was administered by a Raja, in some cases, also, by an elected head of the clan, as in the instance of Gautama Buddha. Each ruled over either a small State or a group of small States or republics. One was not at the head to put his hands over all organisations and keep them down. If he interfered with them he was deposed because each of these organisations had its own laws which had been established for long ages. The machinery of the State also was not so mechanical as in the West—it was plastic and elastic.

This organisation we find in history perfected in the reign of Chandragupta and the Maurya dynasty. The period preceding this must have been one of great political development in India. Every department of national life, we can see, was in charge of a board or a committee with a minister at the head and each board looked after what we now would call its own department and was left free

from undue interference of the central authority. The change of kings left these boards untouched and unaffected in their work. An organisation similar to that was found in the town and in the village and it was this organisation that was taken up by the Mahomedans when they came and it is that which the English also have taken up. The king as the absolute monarch was never an Indian idea. It was brought from Central Asia by the Mahomedans.

The English in accepting this system have disfigured it considerably. They have found ways to put their hands on and grasp all the old organisations, using them merely as channels to establish more thoroughly the authority of the central power. They discourage every free organisation and every attempt at the manifestation of the free life of the community. Now attempts are being made to have co-operative societies in villages; there is also an effort at reviving the Panchayats. But these organisations cannot be revived once they have been crushed and even if they revived they would not be the same.

If the old organisation had lasted it would have been a successful rival of the modern form of government." (ETABP: 303–306)

2.

"Disciple: Did India have the national idea in the modern sense?

Sri Aurobindo: The nation idea India never had. By that I mean the political idea of the nation. It is a modern growth. But we had in India the cultural and spiritual idea of the nation.

Disciple: Is it possible to continue the modern idea of the nation with the spontaneously growing institutions of the olden times?

Sri Aurobindo: The modern political consciousness of the national idea has come to Europe recently. It arose either by a slow growth as in England and Japan on account of their insular position more or less, or in response to outside pressure as with the French who got it after their conquest by the Britons. Practically, the French began to be a nation after the appearance of Joan of Arc. Up to that time England found always some allies among the French nobles. Italy got it not more than a century ago, and the Germans as late as the time of Bismarck.

This consciousness is more political than anything else and it aims at the organisation of the national forces for offence and defence. If you accept the idea of nations going on fighting and destroying for ever, then you have to give up the cultural and spiritual free growth of the nation and follow in the footsteps of European nations.

Disciple: In America (U.S.A.) each state makes its own laws—there the central authority is not oppressive.

Disciple: But the state legislates about everything. America, in fact, is a country of laws and regulations and

not free growth.

Sri Aurobindo: The present-day national spirit and the centralised mechanical organisation of the State are logical conclusions or consequences of 'nations'—of 'armed nations'; you feel more and more justified in centralising everything once you have begun.

But there is no reason to suppose that the present-day ideal of nationhood which is only aggressive and defensive would last for ever. If this state of affairs is to last for ever then you can give up all hope for humanity. Only a cataclysm, in that case, can save humanity.

Disciple: If the spirit of nationalism is given up by the European nations, what will they follow?

Sri Aurobindo: Do you want me to prophesy? But the modern tendency seems to be towards some kind of internationalism.

Disciple: What do you think of Tagore's idea of India becoming the meeting-ground of the West and the East?

Sri Aurobindo: What do you mean by the meeting of the West and the East? You mean like the meeting of the tiger and the lamb?

Disciple: Meeting like brothers and equals.

Disciple: Why meet in India? We can meet in London, as their brother! (Laughter)

Sri Aurobindo: We in India take time to assimilate and put into life this new national idea of the West. Other Asiatic nations like the Japanese and the Turks have been

able to catch it. There is a great difference between the Indian and the Japanese mind. The Japanese have got the mental discipline and capacity to organise. We in India have not that sort of ordered and practical mind. In Japan everyone lives for the Mikado and the Mikado is the symbol of the nation—he embodies the spirit of the nation. Everyone is prepared to die for him. This we could never have in India; Japan was more feudal in its past than any other Asiatic nation.

Disciple: Is there no similarity between the political institutions of the Middle Ages and the organisations of Chandragupta in India?

Sri Aurobindo: There is only a superficial resemblance. We had no feudalism as it was practised in Europe.

Disciple: Was there no penal system in ancient India?

Sri Aurobindo: There were no jails as we have them now.

Disciple: No jails!

Disciple: What will non-cooperators do?

Disciple: The laws of Manu—do they represent the ancient penal code of the past?

Sri Aurobindo: Manusmriti is a compilation made by the Brahmins and it is not very old. It was, I believe, somewhere about the first century that the laws were compiled. They must be embodying, of course, the former laws. There were punishments in those days, fines,

corporeal punishments, mutilation and even capital punishment.

Disciple: If we had all these things, why have we Indians come to our present condition?

Sri Aurobindo: Present-day Indians have got nothing to boast of from their past. Indian culture today is in the most abject condition, like the fort of Gingee—one pillar standing here, and another ceiling there and some hall out of recognition somewhere!" (ETABP: 307–309)

3.

"Sri Aurobindo: … England is comparatively less corrupt. The English are the only people who know how to work the parliamentary system. Parliamentary government is in their blood.

Disciple: It seems that our old Indian system was the best for us. How could it succeed so well?

Sri Aurobindo: The old Indian system 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 the mind. In Europe they are led by reason and want to make everything cut and dry without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only and no room for anything else. They

cannot be plastic.

India is now trying to imitate the West. Parliamentary government is not suited to India. But we always take up what the West has thrown off. Sir Akbar wanted to try a new sort of government with an impartial authority at the head. There, in Hyderabad, the Hindu majority complains that though Mahommedans are in minority they occupy most of the offices in the state. By Sir Akbar's method almost every interest would have been represented in the Government and automatically the Hindus would have come in, but because of their cry of responsible government the scheme failed. They have a fixed idea in the mind and want to fit everything into it. They can't think for themselves and so take up what the others are throwing off.

Disciple: It is possible in Hyderabad which has a Nizam, but how to do the same in an Indian Constitution? What is your idea of an ideal Government for India?

Sri Aurobindo: Sir Akbar's is as good as any. 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.

Mussolini started with the fundamentals of the Indian system but afterwards began bullying and bluffing other nations for the sake of imperialism. If he had persisted in his original idea, he would have been a great creator." (ETABP: 601–602)

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