



ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.36
IJRE 2025; 7(2): xx-xx
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 08-08-2025
Accepted: 10-09-2025

Shalu Soni
Dept. of English, BMU,
Rohtak, Haryana, India

Dr. Rajvir Singh
Professor Dept. of English,
BMU, Rohtak, Haryana, India

Sri Aurobindo: A Study of His Political Journey from Revolutionary Activism to the Exploration of Spiritual Thought

Shalu Soni and Rajvir Singh

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2025.v7.i2i.522>

Abstract

Aurobindo Ghosh was a yogi, a liberation fighter, a distinguished educator, and a profound and innovative thinker. He initially emerged as a political theorist before evolving into a spiritual integralist. Shri Aurobindo significantly contributed to the implementation of reforms to ensure that subsequent generations might benefit from his educational theories and methodologies. This research study discussed his participation as a politician and the significance of his ideas in the Indian political context.

Keywords: Yogi, innovative, spiritual, educational, Indian

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, a distinguished Indian patriot, leader, philosopher, yogi, and educator, played a crucial role in the Indian national movement. His vision encompassed the eradication of British rule and the pursuit of human advancement and spiritual development. Aurobindo's writings predominantly focus on the transformation of human existence into a state of divine life. V.P. Verma, in his work, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, stated that "Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was one of the major figures in the history of the Indian Renaissance and Indian nationalism" (12). Shri Aurobindo attended Cambridge University for advanced study. His location of birth was Kolkata. He had examined human and social evolution. He was an idealist who modelled his life after the Vedas and Upanishads. He was profoundly impacted by the spiritual nationalism of Bankimchandra and Swami Vivekananda.

Aurobindo Akroyd Ghosh was his birth name. His parents aspire to rear him in a European fashion. M.P. Pandit stated in this context "Dr Ghosh was a great admirer of Western Values, in fact an Anglophile who had turned his back on all that stood for Indian tradition' Thus, they registered him at Darjeeling's Loreto Convent School" (33). In 1893, he returned to his homeland with a heightened awareness of European nationalism. He expressed sympathy for the Italian independence fight, the United Nations, the Irish Home Rule campaign, and the Sinn Féin movement. He was the inaugural individual to adopt the Sinn Féin model throughout India's liberation war. From the outset, he disapproved of the actions of the National Congress. He regarded them as political mendicancy or an un-national congress. In his view, an entity such as the Congress, which represents not the general populace but rather a singular and highly restricted class, cannot genuinely be deemed national.

The populace exhibited a deficiency of emotion and enthusiasm for the Swadeshi and Boycott campaign, which subsequently diminished Aurobindo's motivation over time. This is the conclusion of his political career. In 1914, he established a magazine titled *Arjya*. His notable works include *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Life Divine*, and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. In the *Bande Mataram* newspaper, he states:

Nationalism is simply the passionate aspiration for the realization of the Divine Unity in the nation, a unity in which all the component individuals, however, varies and apparently unequal their function as political, social or economic factors, are yet really and fundamentally one and equal.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Rajvir Singh
Professor Dept. of English,
BMU, Rohtak, Haryana, India

In the ideal of Nationalism which India will set before the world, there will be an essential equality between man and man, between caste and caste, between class and class. (29). Aurobindo occupies a pivotal role in the history of Indian political theory as a precursor to Indian nationalism. The early Aurobindo is commemorated as a fervent, confrontational, and resolute revolutionary figure who asserted his commitment to the welfare of India and its populace. Aurobindo never explicitly endorsed revolutionary action throughout his political career for evident reasons. Even so, some of his writings from that time show he wasn't afraid to use force to get his political ideas across. Aurobindo articulated in a September 1893 essay published in a Bombay newspaper that "The work done by revolutionaries in France in 'five short years' had more lasting effects on 'the political and social exterior' of 'that fortunate country' than seven centuries of parliamentary development in England".

Before becoming the editor of "Bande Mataram" in 1906, he had not openly expressed his views on Indian politics, keeping those ideas private. However, he did share his renowned series of papers titled "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance" in this magazine. Notably, in the third volume, he even acknowledged that he had not always opposed the use of violent measures. He asserted:

The circumstances of its servitude best determine the means by which a subject nation will exercise its right to liberty. Passive resistance appears to be our most appropriate and natural weapon in the current Indian situation. We would never be persuaded to draw this judgement on any criticism of alternative approaches, which are always unlawful and unethical. (97).

Aurobindo elucidated his stance on this issue in a message from the 1940s, which was included posthumously in the collection *On Himself*. Aurobindo asserted that he consistently believed 'a nation is justified in achieving its freedom through violence' in reply to the implication that he had preceded Gandhi in advocating non-violence. The choice to go for aggressive actions or hold back was more about what was easiest to do, rather than what was right. Aurobindo asserted that there were 'three sides to his political concepts and endeavours' in a memo from the 1940s. The foremost in significance and order was a clandestine revolutionary propaganda and organisation aimed primarily at orchestrating an armed uprising.

The second and third aspects were 'a public campaign aimed at converting the entire nation to the concept of independence' and the mobilisation of the populace to sustain collective opposition and undermine foreign control by escalating non-cooperation and passive resistance. Aurobindo articulated just the initials of these three 'aspects' between 1900 and 1906. While he refrained from extensively discussing his affiliation with the revolutionary organisation that arose during this period in his later years, he did affirm his initiation and support for a "revolutionary movement" in interviews conducted in 1918 and 1926, as well as in private correspondence from the 1930s and 1940s. The subsequent statement is the most unequivocal of these assertions, "I have engaged in politics, including ghoram karma, the bloodiest form of revolutionary politics" (129). The term 'revolutionary movement' is regrettably slightly undistinguishable. His personal objective was to prepare for a revolutionary arising supported by foreign assistance and characterised by guerrilla warfare alongside widespread

resistance and rebellion. However, throughout his involvement with them, the groups he helped establish primarily participated in little acts of terrorism rather than guerrilla warfare.

Aurobindo concentrated exclusively on the first political aspect from 1900 to 1906. After relocating to Bengal in August of that year, he concentrated most of his efforts on the second and third. The primary reason behind this strategic move was the significant change in the political landscape of Bengal following the partition of 1905. Aurobindo noted intense engagement in the anti-partition movement, contrasting with his prior experience of 'apathy and despair' prevalent around him, 'Men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope'. The partition issue had invigorated the Indian National Congress, which Aurobindo had consistently regarded as an ineffective organization. The proposal to unite individuals with exceptional intellectual abilities into a political party capable of ultimately gaining control of Congress and transforming it into a conduit for revolutionary action was supported by the prohibit resolution adopted at the Benares Congress in 1905. Aurobindo used the *Bande Mataram* periodical as a platform for his public advocacy. Bipin Chandra Pal and colleagues established this organization as the party's official publication, which would soon be designated as the Extremists. Shortly after the establishment of *Bande Mataram* on August 6, 1906, Aurobindo began writing for the publication. He compiled his ideas into a collection of columns, which some have labeled his "political philosophy." These ideas were presented as a pragmatic agenda rather than a theoretical framework.

The main goals were to boycott British goods to make a political statement, use local products, strive for swaraj—meaning complete independence, not just self-governance like in Australia or Canada—and create a national education system. Two more facets of the proposal that received less attention were 'the establishment of volunteer forces that would serve as the core of an insurrectionary army' and employing panchayat-style arbitration to circumvent British courts. Aurobindo did not explicitly endorse revolution or articulate the role he anticipated for the volunteers. His subsequent assertion that he united *Bande Mataram* because 'he perceived an opportunity to initiate the public propaganda essential for his revolutionary objectives' elucidated his intentions.

Aurobindo began to assert his position as a principal leader of the Extremist party in October and November of 1906 upon assuming the role of controlling editor of *Bande Mataram*. Since that time, he has been excessively occupied engaging actively in the endeavours of the revolutionary societies, which concurrently commenced arming themselves and conspiring terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, as demonstrated, Aurobindo did engage in discussions regarding the terrorist organization's activities with his brother, Barin, over the eighteen months preceding his arrest in May 1908. So, during this time, Aurobindo was really working on all three fronts of his political revolution at once! After he was cleared in the Alipore Bomb Trial in 1909, he wasn't too happy about terrorism. He felt that no matter who's to blame—whether it's us or the government—it's now clear that having a group of people organized or fighting with weapons in Indian politics is a big deal. We have witnessed a significant collapse, and the remnants of our efforts and toil astonish us. During those

ruins, harsh, fierce, and unforgiving towards itself and others, Revolution emerges, repeating the words of past rebels, holding onto the weapons brought by the Slav and the Celt, and fostering a pointless hope that today's situation is different.

Aurobindo began to assert his position as a principal leader of the Extremist party in October and November of 1906 upon assuming the role of controlling editor of *Bande Mataram*. Since that time, he has been excessively occupied engaging actively in the endeavours of the revolutionary societies, which concurrently commenced arming themselves and conspiring terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, as demonstrated, Aurobindo did engage in discussions regarding the terrorist organization's activities with his brother, Barin, over the eighteen months preceding his arrest in May 1908. Thus, all three aspects of his political revolutionary existence were simultaneously operational throughout this period. Aurobindo expressed disapproval of terrorism after his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Trial in 1909, stating that irrespective of culpability—whether it lies with us or the government—the existence of an organised faction or armed insurrection in Indian politics is now recognised as a significant factor. We have witnessed a significant collapse, and the remnants of our efforts and toil astonish us. In the midst of those ruins, harsh, fierce, and unforgiving towards itself and others, Revolution emerges, repeating the words of past rebels, holding onto the weapons brought by the Slav and the Celt, and fostering a pointless hope that today's situation is different.

It is important to recognize that the unequivocal condemnation of terrorism should not be taken literally. It was composed in response to the assassination of CID inspector Shamsul Alam, whose accomplice informed Aurobindo of the event on the night of the assassination. At that time, Aurobindo had not yet reached the stage where he felt compelled to oppose terrorism. Nevertheless, he appears to have been more cognizant that “contemporary conditions”—including advancements in weaponry—were rendering terrorism an impractical option. “Mazzini's strategy of a succession of minor, localised, and inevitably futile uprisings appears to the average pragmatic individual as the epitome of irrationality and political folly,” he remarked about the Italian national movement a few months earlier. He continued, ‘It seems almost as futile as the notion of certain erratic minds that the freedom of this country can be justified through arbitrary assassinations. At this juncture, Aurobindo's position on terrorism was distinctly conflicted, alternating between condemnation and acquiescence. Condemnation ensued when he left Bengal.

In a letter dated 1911 to a friend, he asserted that terrorism was ‘our only enemy’. He derided ‘here juvenile conspiracies, these foolish plans to confront a contemporary army with a mere half dozen firearms and a few hundred sticks.’ After stepping out of politics, Aurobindo maintained contact with active terrorists like Motilal Roy. For several years, he made no attempts to dissuade them. Nonetheless, a discernible change in his demeanour occurred. Aurobindo often conveyed compassion for the injured Viceroy in his diary following the near-fatal attack on Lord Hardinge by Motilal-associated terrorists in 1912.

During his initial political involvement, he underscored the imperative of seeking total independence from the British government. He clandestinely communicated with rebel groups in Bengal and Madhya Pradesh while employed by

the Baroda administration and authored articles for “Indu Prakash”. Following the announcement of Bengal's split in 1906, he subsequently moved to Kolkata. Aurobindo clandestinely engaged in revolutionary activities, contributing to the radical atmosphere in the country, even though he publicly advocated for non-cooperation and passive resistance against British rule. He encountered and impacted subsequent revolutionaries in Bengal, such as Surendranath Tagore, Jatin Banerjee, and Bagha Jatin.

Moreover, he was instrumental in founding Anushilan Samiti and various other youth organisations. Dadabhai Naoroji chaired the 1906 annual session of the Indian National Congress, in which he participated. He played a crucial role in advancing the four principal objectives of the national movement: national education, boycott, Swaraj, and Swadesh. In 1907, he established *Bande Mataram*, a daily publication. The congress disbanded in 1907 due to a clash between radicals and moderates. Aurobindo supported Bal Gangadhar Tilak and associated himself with extremists. He thereafter undertook numerous journeys to Bombay, Baroda, and Pune to disseminate knowledge and garner support for the national movement.

The British apprehended him in May 1908 regarding the Alipore Bomb Case. After a year of solitary incarceration, he was subsequently released. After his release in 1909, he initiated two new publications: *Dharma* (Bengali) and *Karmayogin* (English). He embarked on a new journey of spiritual awareness during his incarceration in Alipore, having gradually come to the realisation that he was not destined to lead the freedom fight, and thereafter adopted a mystical and philosophical lifestyle. Aurobindo Ghosh clandestinely departed for Pondicherry, a French colony at the time, in April 1910 to commence a new life.

Sri Aurobindo began a path of spiritual advancement at Pondicherry through four years of solitary practice, which he named “Integral Yoga.” He suggested that spiritual practices are essential for an individual's evolution into a divine entity.

He was incarcerated at Alipore Jail in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. During this period, he underwent spiritual awakenings and experiences that completely transformed his outlook on life. Aurobindo claimed to have heard Vivekananda's voice speaking to him nonstop during his nearly two weeks of confinement. Thereafter, he commenced a new spiritual journey. He dedicated himself to his spiritual and intellectual pursuits upon his relocation to Pondicherry. He established the monthly philosophical journal “*Arya*” in 1914. Sri Aurobindo steadily attracted disciples, leading to the establishment of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926.

Alongside yoga and spirituality, he authored works such as *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Secret of the Veda*, and *The Human Cycle*, which examined Indian culture, *The Vedas*, and societal dynamics. Upon his initial settlement in England, Sri Aurobindo exhibited a proclivity for poetry. In the 1930s, his artistic inclinations returned, culminating in the creation of *Savitri*, a 24,000-line poem solely rooted in spirituality. In recognition of his profound contributions to poetry, spiritualism, and philosophical literature, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1943 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950.

Aurobindo Ghosh believed that the most effective means for India to achieve independence at the turn of the century was via a violent revolution. Although he acknowledged the

possibility of using alternative, peaceful methods, his initial focus was on clandestine revolutionary propaganda and organisation. He played a pivotal role in initiating Bengal's revolutionary movement in 1902. We can conclude that his educational concepts are comprehensive, very relevant, modern, and psychological in nature, and that his spiritual activities are crucial for an individual's metamorphosis into a divine entity. He significantly contributed to the advancement of the national movement.

References

1. Bose S. The spirit and form of an ethical polity: a meditation on Aurobindo's thought. *Mod Intellect Hist.* 2007;4(1):129–44.
2. Brodov V. Indian philosophy in modern times. Moscow: Progress Publishers; 1984.
3. Das M. Sri Aurobindo. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; 1972.
4. Ghose A. Bande Mataram: early political writings. 1997.
5. Ghose A. Sri Aurobindo on himself and on the Mother. Sri Aurobindo Ashram eBooks; 1953.
6. Ghose A. The essential Aurobindo. Steiner Books; 2001.
7. Ghose A. The ideal of the Karmayogin. 2006.
8. Gokak VK. Sri Aurobindo: seer and poet. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications; 1973.
9. Heehs P. The lives of Sri Aurobindo. New York: Columbia University Press; 2008.
10. Mukherjee H, Mukherjee U. Sri Aurobindo's political thought (1893-1908). 1958.
11. Singh MP, Roy H. Indian political thought: themes and thinkers. 2011.
12. Tripathi A. Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiya Congress (1885-1947). 1990.
13. Varma VP. Modern Indian political thought. 1961.
14. Varma VP. The political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; 1990.
15. Verma KD. The social and political vision of Sri Aurobindo. *World Lit Written Engl.* 1990;30(1):56-71.