

Introduction to Modern Indian Political Thought
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Lecture – 08
Aurobindo Ghosh: Self

Hello and welcome everyone for this lecture on Aurobindo Ghosh. And through Aurobindo we will try to understand his ideas on self and also his views on community and religion. In this lecture we are going to discuss Aurobindo's thought and situating him in his larger historical political context and also the transformation or evolution in his life as well as in his thinking.

So, we will discuss that and finally, we will engage seriously with one of the key themes in Aurobindo Ghosh and his political thought, that his idea of self, we are going to discuss. And I would also like to summarize whatever we have done so far in this course. So, Aurobindo Ghosh is third thinker and we have done Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Rabindranath Tagors. So, I will request you all to watch that video and send us your comments, suggestion, feedbacks and queries and we will try to respond to those as soon as possible or most certainly within 24 hours.

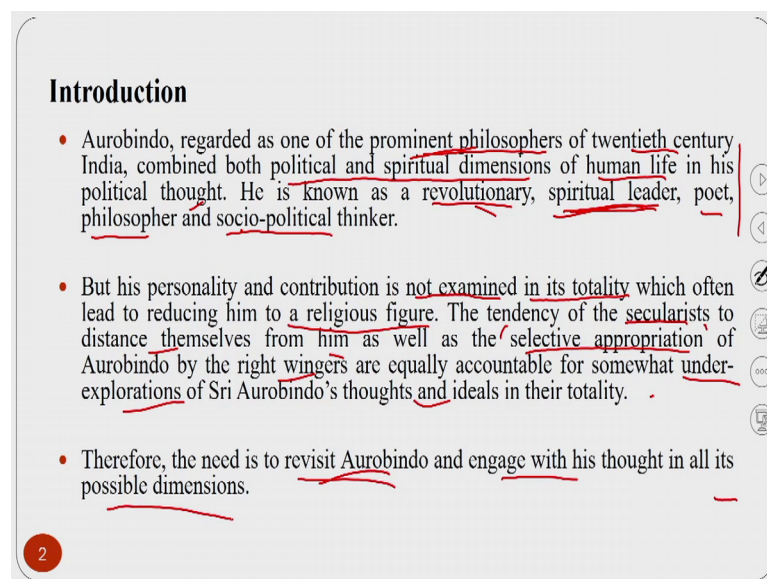
So, I invite you all to send your comments, feedbacks and suggestion on the lectures we have done so far. So, today we are going to discuss Aurobindo Ghosh and Aurobindo Ghosh in a way share some of the thought or idioms or vocabulary with the thinkers we have done. And they also share some of the ideas about how to transform society, how to imagine or envision a new individual, a new self and what is the role of that self in his or her community and also in the larger community of the humanity as such.

So, all these thinkers do share such ideals. But Aurobindo Ghosh is uniquely positioned in these among these thinkers and he was someone who was in initial years completely cut off from his land; that is, his native Bengal, the language Bengali. And he remained aloof or kept aloof from whatever political or social happenings was happening in his native land in Bengal and also in India. See he was educated and remained cut off from the happenings that was going on or unfolding in India.

So, intellectually or in initial years he remains somewhat aloof and cut off from the native land. When he came back then he began to seriously engage with his native language Bengali. In fact, he started from the beginning from the scratch. And dwelt deeper and deeper into Indian intellectual tradition Vedas, Upanishad and many other texts and he translated a lot of them. He engaged very actively in the radical politics of his time for a brief period. And then completely retired from the politics and get involved in more yogic discipline or intellectual engagement in terms of writing and all.

So, Aurobindo Ghosh remains somewhat a mystic figure and yet very significant in terms of his contribution in different areas including active politics and also some of the contemplative philosophical exercise. So, we are going to discuss Aurobindo Ghosh in that sense and there is some challenges while doing it. But also there are some significance of engaging with his thought and ideas.

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Introduction

- Aurobindo, regarded as one of the prominent philosophers of twentieth century India, combined both political and spiritual dimensions of human life in his political thought. He is known as a revolutionary, spiritual leader, poet, philosopher and socio-political thinker.
- But his personality and contribution is not examined in its totality which often lead to reducing him to a religious figure. The tendency of the secularists to distance themselves from him as well as the 'selective appropriation' of Aurobindo by the right wingers are equally accountable for somewhat under-explorations of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and ideals in their totality.
- Therefore, the need is to revisit Aurobindo and engage with his thought in all its possible dimensions.

So, what we find is Aurobindo Ghosh who is regarded as one of the prominent philosopher of twentieth century India, he combined both political and a spiritual dimensions of human life in his political thought.

Now, this remains somewhat deeply intertwined in his thought and action; where he did not separate politics from a spirituality and spirituality from politics. For him, this human life or human condition is in a process of evolution and there this shift or not really the shift evolution from a political to the spiritual realization is something in a continuum

not a kind of break or kind of 2 separate dimension. So, in his all political thought the combination of political and spiritual dimension of human life is very central. And as we have just said that he is regarded as the more one of the prominent philosophers of twentieth century India. And he is also known as a revolutionary, a spiritual leader, poet, philosopher and socio political thinker.

So, his interest is quite varied in terms of his engagement, his personal involvement with the social political upheaval of his time. His sensitivity towards the larger challenges before the humanity as a poet as a philosopher or place of India in the larger world, his motherhood or the nation the way he defined. He was very radical in his approach to politics and he was put in jail because of his involvement in the revolutionary activities in Bengal for a year. And then he transformed himself and in his own words realized the spiritual need of realization of true self or true being which he called (Refer Time: 07:03) and after realizing that he retired from the politics and became a spiritual leader.

Aurobindo Ghosh combined all these different strands of activities and thought, in his own life in his own personality and that makes him more complex somewhat mysterious and uniquely positioned among the modern Indian political thinkers. The challenge for then us to examine and understand Aurobindo Ghosh and his thought is for a very long time his personality and contribution is not examined in it is totality which often led to reducing him merely as a religious figure or a mystic figure or a spiritual leader. Not having practical, pragmatic application in resolving day to day political or other challenges. The tendency of secularist, so called secularists who wanted to separate their ideas their thought from anything that is closer to religion or something which is embedded in religion.

So, the tendency of the secular is to distance themselves from him as well as the selective appropriation of Aurobindo by the right wingers. So, called right wingers say in India are equally accountable for somewhat under exploration of Sri Aurobindo's thought and ideas in their totality. So, this uniqueness in his life and in his thought and ideals, those who call themselves secularists tend to distance themselves from the so called religious thought of Aurobindo reducing him merely as a religious spiritual guru. And on the other hand you have many right wing trying to selectively appropriate Aurobindo certainly his idea of nation as a mother or his religious definition of nationalism.

So, one of the thinker like Karan Singh, he consider him as a prophet of Indian nationalism. So, there is this kind of challenges on the part of both secularist or the right wingers in their engagement with the Aurobindo and his thought. And that is perhaps the reason why there is a kind of lacking in engaging with his thought and ideas in it is totality, not selectively, or not by reducing him to merely as a religious and a spiritual thinker.

So, therefore, the need is to revisit Aurobindo and engage with his thought in all possible dimension, not merely through a spiritual or religious lands but in all possible dimensions which we will discuss as we move on in this course and now there is a new kind of reading or engagement with Aurobindo and his thought in contemporary times, most recent is Peter his edited work on Aurobindo Ghosh.

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- When Aurobindo was tried under famous *Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case* along with others, Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das appealed to the magistrate in these words expressing the significance of life and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. "My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil and agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Thereafter I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History".
- His life and thought exemplify a living dialogue between 'Eastern' and 'Western' philosophy. Professor Robert McDermott states that the "complementarity of politics and spirituality typifies Sri Aurobindo's ability to draw diverse streams into a rich and dynamic synthesis: as he combined politics and Yoga, he also combined Western and Indian values".
- The Ashram Aurobindo established in the city of Auroville continue to practice most of these ideals.

So, now to understand the significance of Aurobindo, it is appropriate perhaps to quote Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, when he was defending Aurobindo Ghosh in famous Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case and because of that he was put in the Alipore jail. So, he was being tried with many other revolutionaries and this one Chittaranjan Das was defending Aurobindo Ghosh. And he appealed to the magistrate using these words which clearly signifies the life and teachings of Sri Aurobindo. And he writes I quote my appeal to you is this; that long after the controversy will be hustled in silence, this controversy surrounding Alipore bomb conspiracy.

That long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil and agitation will leave will have ceased, the turmoil in the political arena or agitation that was happening, when long after such turmoil and agitation will have ceased, long after his day and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity.

So, this is the unique combination of Aurobindo Ghosh in the words of this Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, where he considered him not just as the poet of patriotism or the prophet of nationalism, but also as someone who was deeply in love with the humanity and focusing more towards the unity with others and we will discuss when we will discuss his idea himself. So and then he goes on that long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Thereafter, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this code, but before the bar of High Court of History.

So, that certainly signifies the life and ideals of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and his intellectual transformation in terms of political happenings and positioning himself or his response to such happenings. Further on his life and thought exemplify a living dialogue between what is called Eastern and what is Western philosophy. So, one Professor Robert McDermott states that the complementarity of politics and a spirituality typifies Sri Aurobindo's ability to draw drivers streams into a rich and dynamic synthesis.

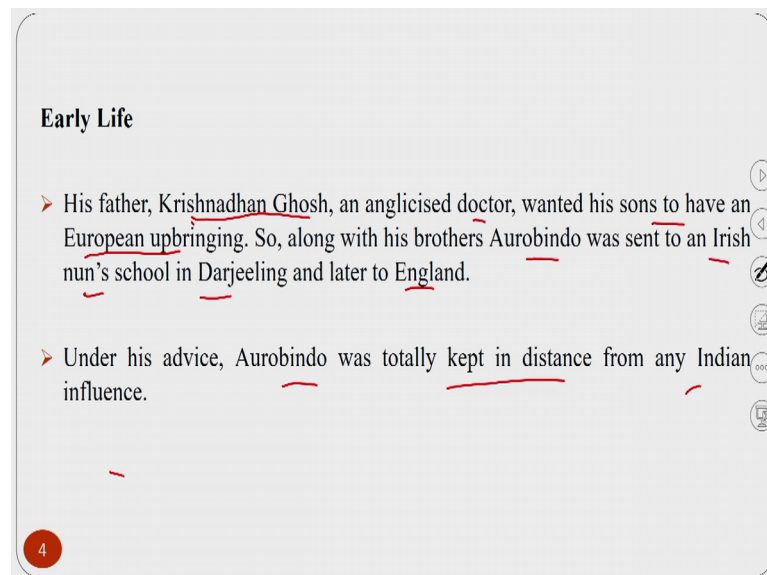
So, he is also considered a kind of syncretic thinker which accommodates, which unites with who synthesize different strands of thought within a culture or across the culture. As he combined politics and Yoga on the one hand, he also combined Western and Indian values. So, in his own life these combination of politics with yoga or spirituality on the one hand or values in different cultural or intellectual tradition on the other.

So, he was more a kind of synthesizing force in terms of articulating his ideas on many social political issues and the Ashram that Aurobindo established in the city of Auroville, even today continue to practice most of these ideals through their day to day social and collective activity; which transcends the limitation of a national boundary or a nation state. So, therefore, as we have seen Aurobindo Ghosh remain somewhat a mystic figure, because of his engagement, his evolution in his activity personal life and also in his

philosophy; where he tries to combine both the politics and spiritually together and this combination is not just limited to Aurobindo.

As we have seen before Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore and when we will discuss Vivekananda or Mohandas Gandhi, or even Iqbal, we will see this occurrence of relationship between religion on the other hand, politics on the other. But the way Aurobindo theorized his ideals of nation nationalism India's role in the world is deeply connected with his understanding of this relationship between political and the spiritual.

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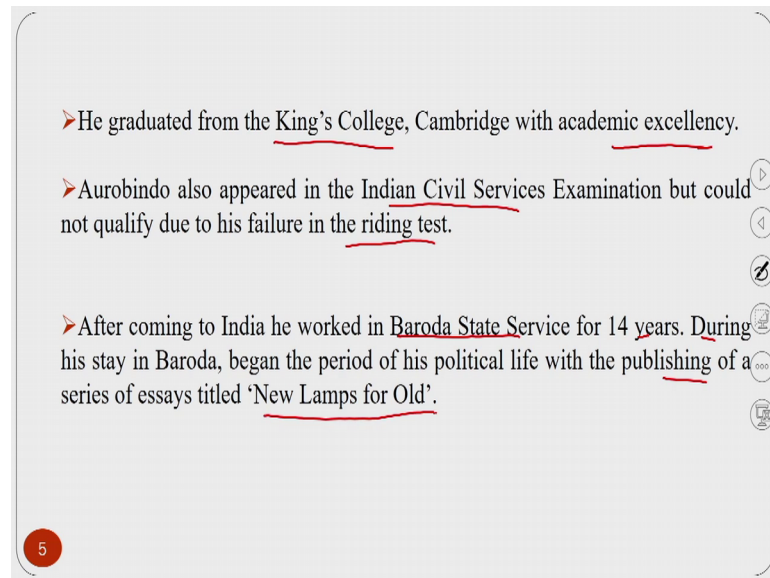
Early Life

- His father, Krishnadhan Ghosh, an anglicised doctor, wanted his sons to have an European upbringing. So, along with his brothers Aurobindo was sent to an Irish nun's school in Darjeeling and later to England.
- Under his advice, Aurobindo was totally kept in distance from any Indian influence.

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So, now to briefly discuss him his early life, his personal life; his father Krishnadhan Ghosh, who was a doctor and he was deeply influenced by modern western lifestyle or value system and wanted his children to be reared in this same tradition. So, he wanted their son should have European upbringing. So, along with his brothers Aurobindo was sent to an Irish nun's school in Darjeeling and later to England with this clear instruction that Aurobindo should be totally kept in distance from any Indian influence. So, for a very long period as I was saying in the beginning, he was completely kept aloof from any think that is related to India or Indian matters.

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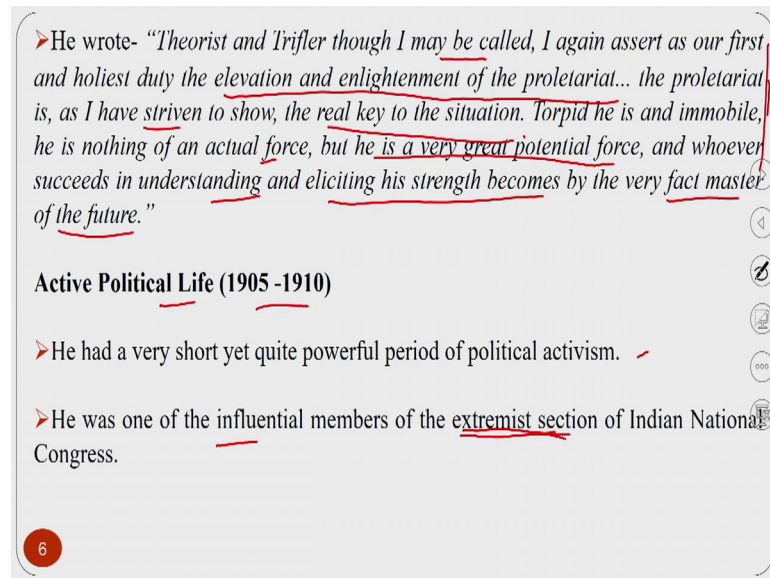


- He graduated from the King's College, Cambridge with academic excellency.
- Aurobindo also appeared in the Indian Civil Services Examination but could not qualify due to his failure in the riding test.
- After coming to India he worked in Baroda State Service for 14 years. During his stay in Baroda, began the period of his political life with the publishing of a series of essays titled 'New Lamps for Old'.

There in England, he graduated from King's College with academic excellence and he also appeared in Indian Civil Service Examination which he could not qualify because he failed in the riding test.

So, after getting the education and having achieved excellence achieved success in his academy carrier, he came to India and work in Baroda states for 14 years. And this is the period when he seriously engaged with his own native mother tongue or many Indian text or treatises or ancient Upanishad and other text and also engaged with the political activities in India. So, this began with the publication of New Lamps for Old. So, this intellectual response to the necessities or requirements of India, when he returned and joined the Baroda state.

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➤ He wrote- *“Theorist and Trifler though I may be called, I again assert as our first and holiest duty the elevation and enlightenment of the proletariat... the proletariat is, as I have striven to show, the real key to the situation. Torpid he is and immobile, he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great potential force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength becomes by the very fact master of the future.”*

Active Political Life (1905 -1910)

➤ He had a very short yet quite powerful period of political activism.

➤ He was one of the influential members of the extremist section of Indian National Congress.

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He wrote that theorist and trifler though I may be called, I again assert as our first and holiest duty elevation and enlightenment of the proletariat. The proletariat is as I have striven to show, the real key to the situation. Torpid he is and immobile, he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great force and whoever succeeds in understanding become by the very fact master of the future.

Now, this is something he was writing before there is any revolution, before Gandhi emerged on the scene, before Indian struggle for freedom took the character of a mass movement. But he was the one who realized the force of the masses or the proletariat in social or political transformation. And he in fact, somewhat for see the emergence of a leader who can unite this force, mobilize this force which is at present is immobile or aloof or indifferent to the political situations and the political happenings.

Or in other words this historically speaking the Indian National Congress dominated by the moderates, believing in the constitutional method for social political reforms, could not really energize these proletariat and which is the basis for true social political transformation. And then we move on to his active political life which is for a very brief period from 1905 to 1910, he actively engaged in the politics and who was connected or familiar with the revolutionaries activities in Bengal.

So, what you find is Aurobindo Ghosh is not just giving the intellectual response to the situations and unfolding of events in the political life of India, but also himself was

involved in many activities. And in this very brief period he emerged as a prominent leader of Indian National Movement and he was invited not just by many natives in his native province of Bengal, but also in Maharashtra or in Punjab or in other parts.

So, he became a force to reckon with. Even the Britishers feared his active involvement in the political activities. So, within Indian National Congress, he was the very influential members of the extremist section. So, as I saying that during the time he was engaging with them with the politics, congress was by and large divided into 2 groups, extremists and the modernist.

In the extremists, you have Bal Gangadhar Tilak, C R Das along with Aurobindo Ghosh. And the moderate faction of congress was represented by Firoz Shah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale among many others. So, Aurobindo join them extremist groups within the congress.

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- He actively participated in the national movement of India for around five years (1905-1910). In companionship with Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak he vehemently protested against the partition of Bengal and also criticised the moderates and their methods within the Congress.
- In this period, he continuously wrote in Bande Mataram, the journal edited by Bipin Chandra Pal and he too started Karmayogin which remained a powerful political commentary of that time.
- Treating the native land as motherland and believing and worshipping it as divine remains central to his political philosophy.

He actively participated in the national movement of India for around 5 years. And in companionship with Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak he vehemently protested against the partition of Bengal and also criticized the moderates and their methods within the congress.

So, his immediate involvement was during the Swadeshi movement and as a response to the partition of Bengal by the British rule. And he saw the nation as a mother. And

therefore, his engagement with the struggle for freedom political freedom of the motherland is a more kind of religious duty. And therefore, he conceptualized individual sacrifice for the creation or for the attainment of freedom for the motherland. And therefore, he also was very critical of the methods that was being applied by the moderates. And he also gradually realized this servile or dishonesty on the parts of and the British rule.

And he realized that it cannot be trusted to allow the Indians to acquire the capability to represent themselves. In other words, he seriously dotted not just the methods of the moderates, but also the intention of the Britishers. And therefore, became an enemy or the greatest enemy for the British and many (Refer Time: 22:21) recommended that Aurobindo Ghosh is the first to reckon with for the British empire in India. And he acquires immediately the position of prominent that is reflected in 1907 when congress was there was a clear divide between's extremists and the moderates. And for the next 10 years such divide was there.

So, Aurobindo Ghosh was the chairman of the informal meeting of the extremist groups in the 1907 Surat congress. So, it is his deep engagement or involvement with the national politics. At this point it is also perhaps appropriate to understand the method he was contemplating for the political movement in India.

So, like Gandhi he was talking about the passive resistance as the method for political reforms or political movements in India. But what should be the method of such passive resistance? Should be it be always unconditionally nonviolent as Gandhi was arguing? Or there should be a scope of violence? Aurobindo Ghosh has a very innovative or unique response to such question where he believes, that the nature of response will depend on the nature of repression from the oppressors.

So, if there is a time for arguing, articulating, mobilizing, peacefully within the limits of the law or constitution then one should have nonviolent passive resistance. But if oppressive oppressor is to (Refer Time: 24:20), then the violence or use of violence on the part of resistor cannot be completely ignored or should not be criticized. So, the nature of response or the use of violence or non-violence depend on the condition. And Aurobindo Ghosh was very unique and different from Gandhian position on the passive resistance.

So, in this period what we also find is he continuously wrote in Bande Mataram, a journal which was edited by Bipin Chandra Pal. And he himself started another journal called Karmayogin which remained a powerful political commentary of that time. So, many leaders certainly like Jawaharlal Nehru who writes in the foreword to Karan Singh book on Aurobindo Ghosh and his thought; that he himself was when he was in England during that time he was to read the commentaries or essay written by Aurobindo Ghosh in Bande Mataram to understand many of the political situation in India.

As I was saying that in Aurobindo Ghosh his treatment of native land or country as motherland nation as mother and believing and worshipping it as divine remains central to his political philosophy. For him the struggle for nation and nation hood is not just kind of objective instrumental approach to attain freedom. But for him it is a more kind of religious a spiritual activity to connect or to understand or realize the nation as a mother, and through that the attainment of a spiritual a spiritual life or a spiritual meaning of self and the other.

So, his engagement with swadeshi or the political activities of that time was guided by this this philosophy of understanding nation as a mother and believing and worshipping it as a divine. So, he has a very religious or a spiritual or understanding of nation or national freedom.

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➤ Convicted of the Alipore bomb case, he was jailed for one year after which he put an end to his active political career and through the later part of his life limited his activities to the spiritual domain.

Spiritual Life (1910 - 1950)

➤ After retiring from active politics, he founded one Ashram in Pondicherry which formally came into being in 1926 where he continued to stay till the end of his life, engaging himself in writing and meditation.

➤ He considers the mystic experience of those days in Alipore jail as the factor leading to his transformation.

➤ This was a transition from the nationalist and anti-colonial Aurobindo Ghosh to the international and cosmopolitan Sri Aurobindo.

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When he was convicted of the Alipore bomb case, he was jailed for one year after which he was he put an end to his political career. And through the later part of his life limited his activities to a spiritual domain. Perhaps this is this was also the time in the words of Aurobindo he realized his objective or the goal of life that is in a spiritual domain. And he retired from the active politics after that that incarnation, and take when 2 went to French occupied Pondicherry and that time called Chandra Nagar close to Madras. And from then on from 1910 to 1950's involved himself in the a spiritual activity.

After this retirement he founded one ashram in Pondicherry which formerly came into being in 1910 to 26 where he continued to estate till his till the end of his life in 1950's, and mainly he was engaged in writing and meditation. He considers the mystic experience of those days in Alipore jail as the factor leading to this transformation in his political a spiritual life. And this was a transition from the nationalist, anti-colonial revolutionary Aurobindo Ghosh to the international and cosmopolitan Sri Aurobindo.

That is the kind of evolutionary understanding of self and the other or society, that was there in Aurobindos thought deeply embedded in his political philosophy; is also exemplified in his own personal life, where he began as someone completely aloof from the Indian happenings; who deeply engaged with the activities in the political arena was familiar with the radical or the revolutionary groups in Bengal. And then gradually transformed himself as a complete a spiritual person. And this transformation of Aurobindo Ghosh to Sri Aurobindo also established or established his focus on the international and the cosmopolitan ideals of distinction.

So, what we find in Aurobindo Ghosh and his major idea is, the scientist is of eastern and western values, while taking the western from in philosophy he kept Indian it is substance.

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Major Ideas

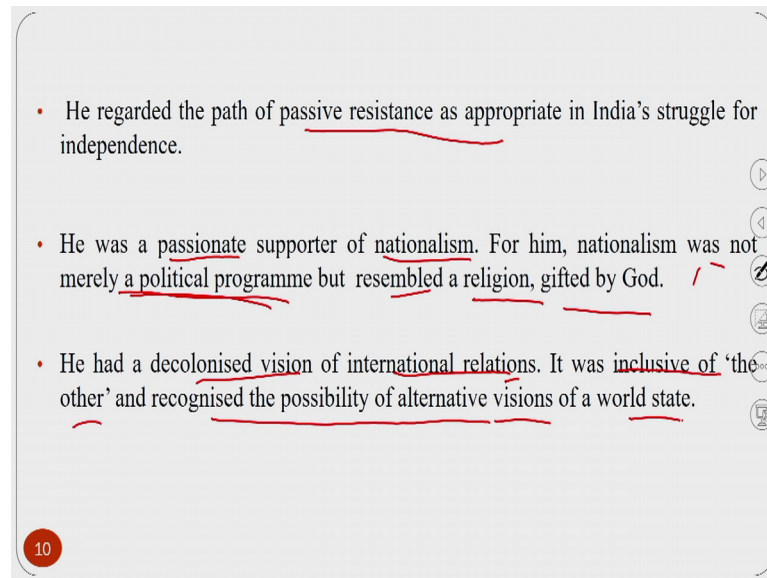
- He is known for his synthesis of eastern and western values. While taking the Western form in philosophy, he kept it Indian in its substance.
- He believed in the “objectification of spirit” that is the expression of the universal in individual life. In his opinion “it is the spirit alone that saves and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become politically great and free”.
- He was deeply influenced by European thinkers like Karl Lamprecht and August Comte. He borrowed the idea of distinct psychological stages that society passes through from Lamprecht (symbolic, conventional, individualist and subjective).

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So, he was someone a commodity of different cultures different intellectual tradition, and linking them together combining them together to give his own unique synthetic kind of philosophy and ideas. And he believed in the objectification of his spirit, that is the expression of the universal in the individual life. And this relationship between individual or the social or the universal is something which is deeply embedded or forms the basis of Aurobindo Ghose political and a spiritual ideas. In his opinion, it is the a spirit alone that saves and only by becoming great and free in hurt can we become politically great and free.

So, for him the political freedom or Swaraj is not just or to achieve political independence merely. But until and unless we also realize or internalize this freedom or greatness in hurt in the spirit that we are part of the whole, we are part of the universal; we are part of the social. We cannot be politically free or great; so, for him political freedom is some something which enables the individual to realize this freedom and greatness in his or her heart. And only then innocent can become politically great and free. And in his thought he was deeply envious by European thinkers like Karl Lamprecht and August Comte. And he borrowed the idea of distinct psychological stages that society passes through from Lamprecht, which is symbolic conventional individualistic. And so, that we will come to this when we will discuss his views on self.

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- He regarded the path of passive resistance as appropriate in India's struggle for independence.
- He was a passionate supporter of nationalism. For him, nationalism was not merely a political programme but resembled a religion, gifted by God.
- He had a decolonised vision of international relations. It was inclusive of 'the other' and recognised the possibility of alternative visions of a world state.

As I have discussed that he regarded the path of passive resistance as appropriate in India's struggle for independence, but what should be the method of such passive resistance depends on the oppressors. The method that oppressors apply to tackle the resistance and he was a passionate more emotional psychological supporter of Indian nationalism. And therefore, Karan Singh rightly pointed out and many others including as we have seen Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, profit of Indian nationalism.

And for him nationalism was not merely a political program. Unlike many others many of his contemporaries the nation or nationalism for him was not a merely a political program, but resembled a religion which is gifted by god. And all Indian should sacrifice for the attainment of such spiritual or religious idea of nation as motherhood; the way he defined it. And there he differs a lot from many pragmatic thinkers of his time. And he also had a decolonized vision of international relation.

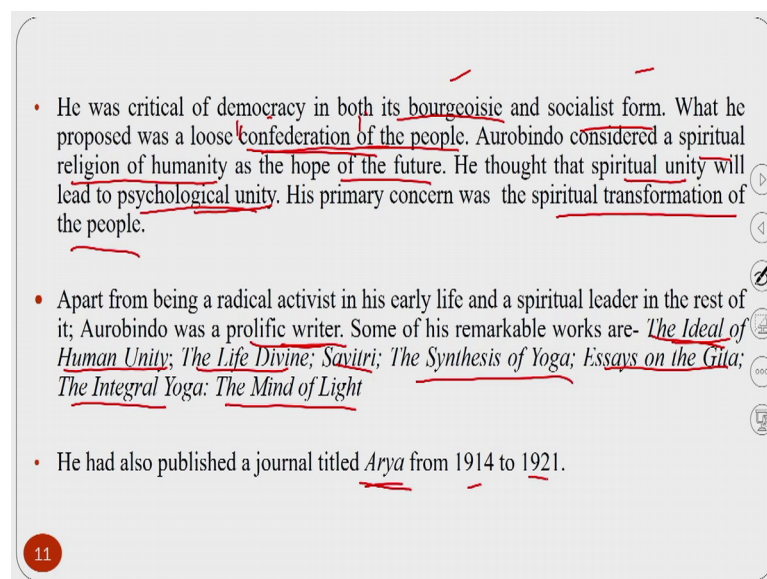
And many argue like (Refer Time: 32:16) and many others their significance of Aurobindo to understand the global cooperation, global relationship between and among the nation initiative also. And this decolonized vision of international relation is inclusive of the other, and recognized the possibility of alter divisions of a world state. And that is some something which remains under explored in Aurobindo Ghosh Aurobindo Ghosh and his political thought. As I was saying in the beginning, because there is a serious reservation on the part of secularist to reduce him merely as a religious or a spiritual

thinker and on the part of right wingers to selectively appropriate him and understand him merely as a prophet of nationalism.

But in Aurobindo's thought, there is the possibility of understanding or decolonizing the vision of international relation as well as many thinkers have argued.

So, what we also find is that he was critical of democracy in both its bourgeois and socialist form.

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- He was critical of democracy in both its bourgeois and socialist form. What he proposed was a loose confederation of the people. Aurobindo considered a spiritual religion of humanity as the hope of the future. He thought that spiritual unity will lead to psychological unity. His primary concern was the spiritual transformation of the people.
- Apart from being a radical activist in his early life and a spiritual leader in the rest of it; Aurobindo was a prolific writer. Some of his remarkable works are- The Ideal of Human Unity; The Life Divine; Savitri; The Synthesis of Yoga; Essays on the Gita; The Integral Yoga; The Mind of Light
- He had also published a journal titled Arya from 1914 to 1921.

So, there was the growing assertion of bourgeois form of liberal democracy on the other hand or socialist form of democracy on the other hand. And Aurobindo was critical of both these forms, and what he proposed was a loose confederation of the people. He believes in this idea of confederation rather than a kind of organized instrumental of system of governance.

So, he considered a spiritual religion of humanity as the hope of the future. He thought that the spiritual unity we will lead to psychological unity. And his primary concern was the a spiritual transformation of the people rather than material, political or economic transformation merely. And to attain that a spiritual unity he was arguing for a loose confederation of people rather than a well-organized form of governance meet liberal or a socialist form of democracy. His converse was too broad to reduce it merely as a religious or a spiritual thinker.

So, apart from being a radical activist in his early life and in the rest of it Aurobindo was a prolific writer. And some of his remarkable works are, *The Ideal of Human Unity* which remains his lifelong ideals. And he continued to practice such ideals in his ashram in Pondicherry and that ashram in Orville, he continued to practice I mean most of such ideals. So, his focus was on *The Ideal of Humanity*, *The Life Divine*, *Savitri*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Integral Yoga*, *The Mind of Light*. So, Aurobindo remain deeply engaged intellectually with many issues through his writings besides a spiritual oars or a spiritual practice or discipline in the most part of his life, but also as a revolutionary radical activist in early life. And he also published a journal which he titles *Arya* from 1914 to 1921.

Now, to discuss his ideas on self, it is perhaps appropriate to begin with his understanding of human being or his or her ego and what is the role of such ego and how one can transcend such ego from this quotation which he wrote in true and false subjectivism from *The Human Cycle*.

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Aurobindo's Idea on Self

- “The ego is not the self; there is one self of all and the soul is a portion of that universal Divinity. The fulfillment of the individual is not the utmost development of his egoistic intellect, vital force, physical well-being and the utmost satisfaction of his mental, emotional, physical cravings, but the flowering of the divine in him to its utmost capacity of wisdom, power, love and universality and through this flowering his utmost realisation of all the possible beauty and delight of existence.” (Aurobindo, “True and False Subjectivism”, *The Human Cycle*)

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For Aurobindo the ego is not the self, there is oneself of all, and the soul is a portion of that universal divinity. The fulfillment of the individual is not the utmost development of his egoistic intellect. Vital force, physical well-being and the utmost satisfaction of his mental emotional physical cravings, but the flowering of the divine in him to it is a

utmost capacity of wisdom, power, love and universality and through this flowering his utmost realization of all the possible beauty and delight of existence.

So, for Aurobindo Ghosh most certainly and we will see how he differs from liberal and the utilitarian conception of self and purpose in life. The ego that is there in this all being is not the self. For him there is only one self; which is there in all. And the soul in the self is the portion of that universal divinity which he also called virat purusa or Supreme Being.

Now the fulfillment of the individual life is not the utmost development of his egoistic intellect or vital force or physical will being or the utmost satisfaction of his mental emotional physical cravings. But the flowering of divine in him this realization that his is part of something bigger, which is in all self. That realization leads to utmost wisdom, power, love and universality. And through this flowering one realizes all that possible beauty and delight of existence.

So, this understanding in Aurobindo Ghosh is more evolutionary, rather than esthetic, rather than rigid or given. So, individual as he his or her life unfolds, one realizes this purpose of life which is not about you know fulfillment of the individual or his egoistic intellect or his personal individual biological needs, but the realization of this divine in him. And through that then one realized the possible beauty and delight of human existence and that is how he defines the individual and his self.

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The Individual and the Eternal Self

- Unlike the Christian theology, duality in the natural and supernatural is not perceived in Indian philosophy. It views the natural and supernatural as the manifestation of the same energy.
- Aurobindo, too, making the connection between the individual and the universal argues that the eternal is the self of all other selves. It is the origin of all energy and support in nature.
- For him, the Eternal or the Supreme Self is the supreme Purusha; individual selves are manifestations of it.

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So, this is then comes the connection between individual and the eternal self. Eternal self is something which is bigger which is always there, which is Omni present in everyone. So, unlike Christian theology duality natural and the supernatural is not perceived in Indian philosophy, which is one way of differentiating between Indian philosophy or Indian philosophy of nature or self on the one hand, and the Christian or western philosophy on the other. So, this duality of natural or supernatural is not perceived in him in philosophy. And it views the natural and supernatural as the manifestation of the same energy. So, there is no kind of duality between nature or the supernatural.

So, Aurobindo to making the connection between the individual and the universal argues that the eternal is the self of all other selves. So, what is eternal what is universal is something which is there in every one in all selves. And it is the origin of all energy and support in nature. So, that is the vital force, this eternal self is always there, and it too is manifested in individual self.

And this manifestation is not just in one self or a group of cell, but in all self in all human being. And the task then for the human being is to realize that existence of divine in him. And that is something connected with the Tagore ideals of self as we have discussed in previous lectures. So, for him the eternal or the supreme self is the supreme purusha or the virat purusa. And individual selves are the manifestation of that virat purusha or the supreme self.

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The True Self

- In the individual self; Aurobindo talks about the true individual self and deputy selves. These deputy selves are-i) the physical self, ii) the vital self, iii) the mental self, iv) the supramental self and v) the blissful selves.
- For him, the true self is not the body, the vital ego or the rational mind. The spiritual individual resembles the true self.
- He has evolutionary understanding of human collective self: - From symbolic, to conventional, to individualist; and to finally subjective.

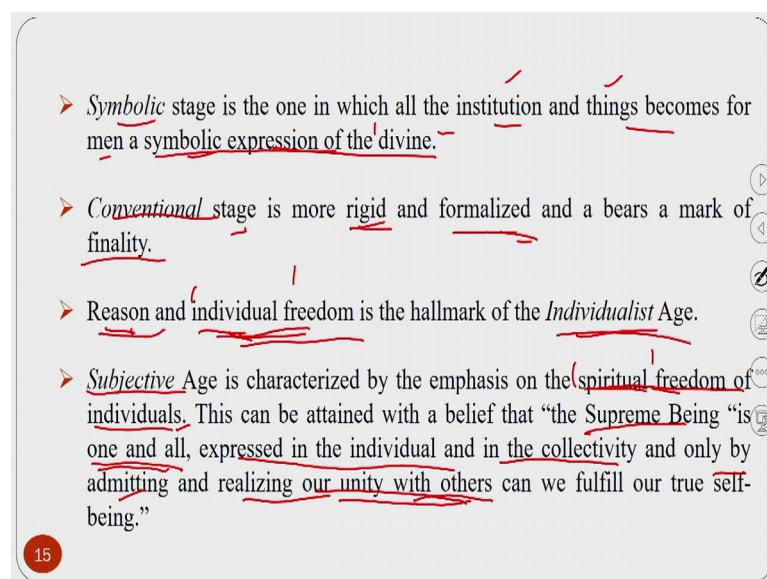
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Now, what is true self then? In the individual Aurobindo talks about true individual self and deputy selves. These deputy selves are the physical self, the vital self, the mental self, the supra mental self and the blissful selves. So, these are the different layers or different aspects of individual self like physical, vital, mental or supramental and the final is the blissful self. For him the true self is not the body, the vital ego or the rational mind.

The a spiritual individual resembles the true self. So, for him the true self is not the ego of the individual or his vital ego or rational mind. But the spiritual individual who is the a spiritual individual one who realizes the existence of divine in him, or existence of virat purusha or supreme being in him resembles the true self. To understand this, we can think about his evolutionary understanding of human collective self from symbolic to conventional to individualist, and then finally subject.

So, these are different stages of realization of collective human self.

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- Symbolic stage is the one in which all the institution and things becomes for men a symbolic expression of the divine.
- Conventional stage is more rigid and formalized and a bears a mark of finality.
- Reason and individual freedom is the hallmark of the Individualist Age.
- Subjective Age is characterized by the emphasis on the spiritual freedom of individuals. This can be attained with a belief that “the Supreme Being “is one and all, expressed in the individual and in the collectivity and only by admitting and realizing our unity with others can we fulfill our true self-being.”

So, first stage he called symbolic stage is the one in which all the institutions and things become for men a symbolic expression of the divine. That is the very primitive beginning of understanding the divine, which is more in terms of attributing some faculty to some institution, some form and using it as a symbolic expression of the divine. So, that is the symbolic stage of collective self. That is followed by the conventional stage which is more rigid and formalized. So, in all religion or especially organized religion,

this stage is more towards fixing the meaning, fixed or fixing or finality defines the conventional stage, which is that every religion in it is fundamentalist kind of interpretation claims monopoly over absolute truth. And what it claims is considered as final.

So, that is the conventional a stage of collective selves when there is a kind of rigid and formalized structure of divine self or divine understanding. Now this kind of understanding is followed by the resistance of reason and individual freedom which he calls the individualist is. So, the resistance to this fix recede formalized religion through reason or individual freedom that is the beginning of enlightenment or modern liberal understanding of self or the individual; is that the reason and the individual is the true guide to understand the self and the other. And that is the hallmark of individual stage.

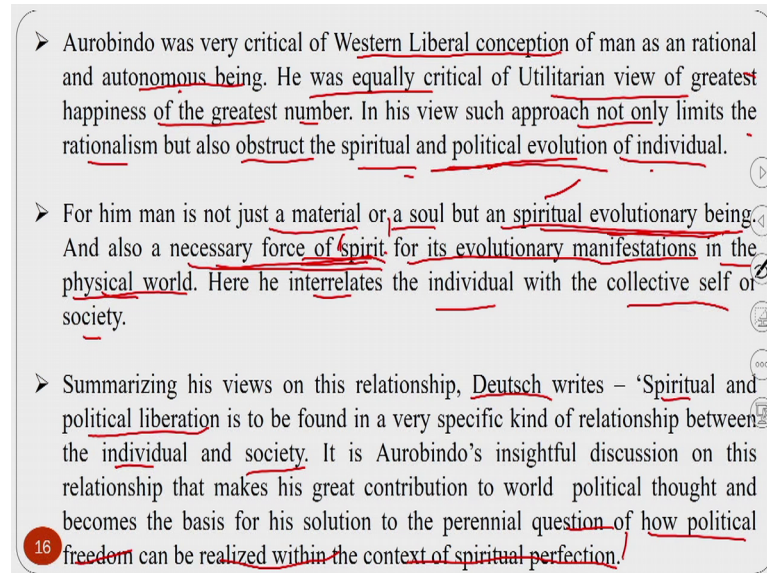
Now, Aurobindo Ghosh is arguing for realization of this subjective age. And this subjective age is characterized by the emphasis on the a spiritual freedom of individual. Not merely the use of regional rational faculty or the autonomy of the individual, but understanding the a spiritual freedom. And this spiritual freedom again is the unity of self with the other, one human being with the rest of the human beings. And understanding that in all human beings there is the manifestation of same divine, same Supreme Being which he also called virat purusa. And that is how he wanted to organize a confederacy of people and not really a kind of organized instrumental relations in or among the nation states.

So, for him this objective is or this a spiritual freedom of individuals can be attained once individual internalized this belief, and this belief is about the existence of same force of divine or the virat purusa in him. And then when that individual after internalizing that belief also believed that the supreme being is one and all expressed in the individual and in the collectivity, and only by admitting and realizing our unity with others can we fulfill our true self being.

So, for him the realization of true self being requires or prerequisites this belief in the existence of Supreme Being which is one and all and expressed in the individual and in the collectivity, and only by admitting and realizing our unity with others. So, the existence of individual human being is not in isolation. Not an autonomous self-defining kind of subject, but in realizing this relationship or the intimate relationship with the

others. Because of this similar manifestation of divine in others also, only then he believes we can fulfill our true self being or true self being.

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- Aurobindo was very critical of Western Liberal conception of man as an rational and autonomous being. He was equally critical of Utilitarian view of greatest happiness of the greatest number. In his view such approach not only limits the rationalism but also obstruct the spiritual and political evolution of individual.
 - For him man is not just a material or a soul but an spiritual evolutionary being. And also a necessary force of spirit for its evolutionary manifestations in the physical world. Here he interrelates the individual with the collective self of society.
 - Summarizing his views on this relationship, Deutsch writes – ‘Spiritual and political liberation is to be found in a very specific kind of relationship between the individual and society. It is Aurobindo’s insightful discussion on this relationship that makes his great contribution to world political thought and becomes the basis for his solution to the perennial question of how political freedom can be realized within the context of spiritual perfection.’

So, what we find in Aurobindo and his ideas on self? Yet he is very critical of western liberal conception of men as a rational and autonomous being, or merely as a rational and autonomous being or self-defining subject. He was also critical of utilitarian view of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. That kind of utilitarian understanding of human being or human life was deeply problematic for Aurobindo. Because in his views such approach not only limits the rationalism, the meaning of rationality or rationalism for the individual, but also obstruct the a spiritual and the political evolution of individual. That is something is the constant evolutionary a stages in human or collectives social life that Aurobindo focuses.

So, this understanding of individual or men and merely as a rational and autonomous being or also the philosophy of greatest good of the abilities number for Aurobindo actually obstruct this realization of a spiritual and political evolution in men. So, for him man is not just a material or expression of material or a soul, but an a spiritual evolutionary being. And this man is also a necessary force of a spirit for it is evolutionary manifestation or progressive manifestation in the physical world.

The point he is trying to make here is, that the men are individual and as we have discussed within in Tagore, the transcendence, imminent and the transcendence,

something similar is here. And it is perhaps more clear; that is, that understanding of man is not merely as a manifestation of metal or a soul. But a spiritual evolutionary being and this individual as in a spiritual being is a necessary force of a spirit. And this spirit is something which is universal. So, something which is universal, something which is Omni present, and something which is in all of us.

Now, this a spirit, this universal spirit or universal being, manifest itself or manifest it is progressive and evolutionary stages in the physical world, in our material world through this man which is a spiritual human being. So, there is a kind of complementarity between the universal spirit on the one hand and men on the other hand. So, man in a way individual in a way represent the universal spirit through his or her life, and through his activities and his life his purpose is to expend such a realization and construct a relationship which is more based on love, harmony, cooperation and transcending all kind of limitations and narrowness.

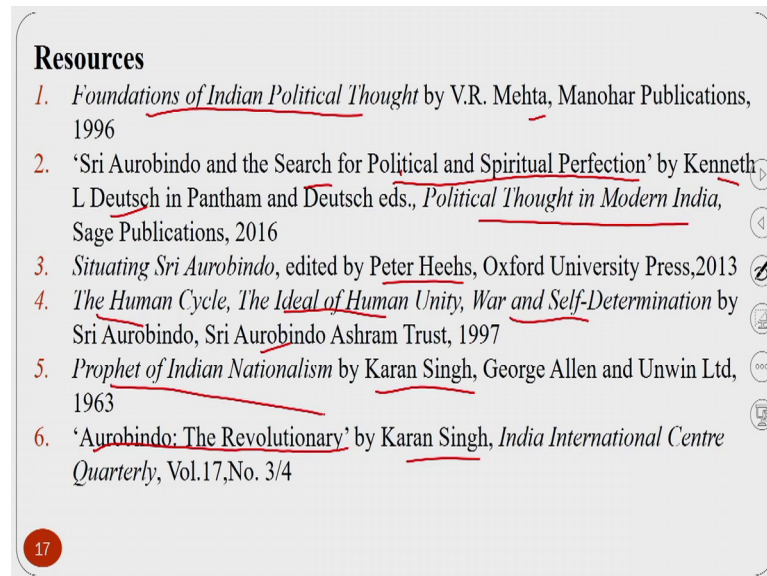
So, what we also find, he interrelates the individual with the collective self or this society. Now how he interrelates the individual with the other? And is saying that in connection with the others in realization with others the existence of divine the human being realizes the true meaning of his self and in a way represent the universal a spirit in the physical world.

So, through men universal spirit manifest itself in the physical world. Now this relationship between individual and the other or society it is best summarized by Deutsch when he writes that a spiritual and political liberation is to be found in a very specific kind of relationship between the individual and society. It is Aurobindos insightful discussion on this relationship that makes his great contribution to the world political thought. And becomes the basis for his solution to the perennial question of how political freedom can be realized within the context of a spiritual perfection.

So, for him political freedom cannot be realized unless there is also a spiritual perfection, a spiritual a spiritual realization. So, in this relationship between man and society what we find in Aurobindo is this recognition that how political freedom or the condition which enables the individual realize his a spiritual nature or a spiritual existence is something, which can be attained collectively in a society. And therefore, political freedom is necessary. But political freedom is incomplete or inadequate without the

spiritual perfection. And that is the basis for his idea of nation, nationalism or even though world relationship or the confederacy of people that he was arguing about. So, that is what is there in Aurobindos political thought, and his ideas on men his personal engagement with the politics or the spiritual search in the men. And so, whatever we have discussed today?

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You can look at some of these takes. The foundation of Indian Political Thought by V R Mehta, and also Sri Aurobindo and the search of Political and Spiritual Perfection by Kenneth L Deutsch and Pantham from their book on Political Thought in Modern India. The states remain the key text for our course.

So, from this text there is one chapter by Kenneth L Deutsch on Sri Aurobindo which you can look at. Also from Peter Heehs edited situating Sri Aurobindo. And then from Aurobindo himself you can find his essays on The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity War and Self-determination and certainly Karan Singh; especially his essay on Aurobindo the revolutionary and also profit of internationalism you can look at. So, please go through the readings, watch the lectures and let us know what you think about the lecture and what your queries and comments.

Thank you.