



Aurobindo Ghosh and Revolutionary Nationalism:

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Abstract: Aurobindo Ghosh was the far most revolutionary freedom fighter of Bengal in the India's independence struggle. He was a great inspiration not only the revolutionaries but also the other Indian nationalists. According to him, it is not by prayer and petition but by "purification by blood and fire" that a nation's freedom could be achieved. It was due to his efforts, many revolutionary secret societies in Bengal came into the existence. His written articles on different newspapers and periodicals developed a revolutionary spirit among the youths. This paper also highlights Aurobindo Ghosh's role towards the boycott of British goods, courts, and institutions. He frequently asked the people to prepare themselves for the passive resistance.

Key Words Aurobindo Ghosh, Revolution nationalism and freedom struggle.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Aurobindo Ghosh was a prominent nationalist leader in the first decade of the 20th century. He pioneered the revolutionary movement in Bengal. He was born on 15 August 1872 in Calcutta. His father name was Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghosh, who worked as the District Surgeon in Rangapur and his mother was Swarnalata Devi. In 1879, His father Krishna Dhan Ghosh sent him with his two elder brothers to England for the study. After long period of fourteen years, he came back to India in 1893. Soon, he started working in journalism at Bombay. In his serious of articles on the periodical "Indu Prakash", Aurobindo Ghosh criticized to the Indian National Congress, and stated that the aims of congress were faulty¹ and the spirit in which congress proceeded towards accomplishing goals was not the spirit of sincerity and wholeheartedness. Furthermore, the methods adopted by congress were not the right methods, and the leaders in whom people it had trust were not the correct men. While working at Baroda, Aurobindo Ghosh sent Jatindra Nath Banerjee to Bengal in 1901 to take up the revolutionary activities and Jatindra Nath Banerjee immediately founded a Gymnastic club for physical and cultural trainings. He also sent his younger brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh to Bengal for the same purpose in 1902. Barindra Kumar Ghosh was also largely successful in this mission.² Aurobindo Ghosh directed the Bengal revolutionaries during the Swadishi- Vanda Matram movement of 1905.³ Meanwhile, he wrote a famous political pamphlet "Bhawani Mandir" and this pamphlet outlined the ideals and methods of the revolutionary work under religious grab.⁴ Soon, he became chief editor of an English language newspaper "Banda Matram", started by Bipan Chandra Pal and preached an extreme anti- British ideas on it.⁵ He became immersed in the revolutionary freedom struggle movement till his arrest in the Alipora Bomb conspiracy case of 1908. Aurobindo Ghosh retired from active politics after being released. Soon, took up the spiritual path and became a yogi till his death.⁶

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Peter Heehs: Nationalism, Terrorism, Communalism (1998). In this book, Peter Heehs interpreted Aurobindo Ghosh's role in the revolutionary nationalism and his contacts with other revolutionaries of India. Apart from it, Peter Heehs also highlighted the British government reaction towards Aurobindo Ghosh.



K.G. Rajesh: Sarfarosh: A Naadi Exposition of the Lives of Indian Revolutionaries (2015). In this book, K.C. Rajesh interpreted the life of Aurobindo Ghosh and his critical role for the revolutionary nationalism. Here, K. C. Rajesh also illustrated the Aurobindo Ghosh's contribution in the making of several youth clubs in Bengal and British attitude towards him.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- To discuss the revolutionary role of Aurobindo Ghosh in the India's freedom struggle.
- To study the British reaction towards the Aurobindo Ghosh.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The methodology adopted for this research study is the secondary research methodology. The data for this paper is taken from books, magazine article (Orissa Review), and online sources.

5. ROLE OF AUROBINDO GHOSH:

Aurobindo Ghosh was the founding father of revolutionary movement in Bengal and was the important figure of the Indian freedom struggle. Moreover, he was a profound thinker and scholar. When he was only 8 years old, his father sent him to England along with his two elder brothers for the studies. They continued their studies in England with the help of Krishna Dhan Ghosh's friends. Although all three brothers prepared for Indian Civil Service as per their father's wish, only Aurobindo Ghosh passed the examination in 1890. At the end of two years of probation, Aurobindo Ghosh failed to present himself in the riding examination and was disqualified for the service.⁷ Despite being young in England, Aurobindo Ghosh dreamed of freeing his motherland from the British rule. In October 1890, he got enrolled at King's college, Cambridge as a student in humanities stream. During his stay at Cambridge, he gave many revolutionary speeches. While in England, he came in touch with a revolutionary society known as the "Indian Majlis". Later on, he joined one more secret society called "Lotus and Dagger".⁸

After completing his studies in Cambridge, he came back to India in February 1893. His father Krishna Dhan Ghosh, who was waiting to receive a son after fourteen years, was misinformed from his agents that the ship in which Aurobindo Ghosh was travelling had drowned off the coast of Portugal. Krishna Dhan Ghosh died upon hearing this incident. Shortly after his return to India, Aurobindo Ghosh started working in journalism at Bombay and in his serious articles on "Indu Prakash, he criticized Congress's methods of working. He also criticized the petitioning policy of congress. Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekward III of Baroda persuaded Aurobindo Ghosh to join in his princely state. He met Maharaja and immediately got appointed in the Baroda government. In Baroda, he first worked in the survey department and then worked to the revenue department. 1900, he was appointed as a professor of English in the Baroda Collage and finally, became Vice- Principal of this collage.

Meanwhile, he became aware of the prevailing political situations in the country and began participating in the freedom struggle- but secretly, because of the constraints his position in the Baroda government imposed on him. By frequently travelling to the different parts of Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, Aurobindo Ghosh established links with the revolutionaries of these places. He also had contacts with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sister Nivedita. In 1899, he met with Jatindra Nath Banerjee and arranged the military training for him in the Baroda army. In 1901, Aurobindo Ghosh sent him to Bengal from Baroda to start revolutionary society. Jatindra Nath Banerjee immediately started a Gymnastic club for physical and cultural trainings to the youths.⁹ In 1902, he also sent his younger brother Barindra Kumar Ghosh to Bengal from Baroda for the same purpose. In the same year, Aurobindo Ghosh joined the revolutionary secret society of western India headed by the Rajput noble named Thakur Saheb. He brought about a sort of contact between the Thakur Saheb's secret society and Pramathanath Mitra's revolutionary group of Bengal. It bears enough testimony to the organizing skill of Aurobindo Ghosh, who even before entering into politics, was accepted as the intellectual leader in the Bengal revolutionary movement.¹⁰

With the help of Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Aurobindo Ghosh established contacts with a number of Bengal revolutionaries such as Bagha Jatin, Jatindra Nath Banerjee and Surendranath Tagore and founded a various number of youth clubs in Bengal with the objective of giving martial and spiritual training to the youth of Bengal. He played a curial role for the foundation of Calcutta Anushilan Samiti in 1902. When the partition of Bengal was declared the then British government in 1905, it caused turmoil throughout the India. In response to this; the protest movement was



started by Bengal nationalists. Aurobindo Ghosh noticed that the time of public propaganda had come. Meanwhile, he published the pamphlet “Bhawani Mandir” in which he set forth the aims and doctrines of revolutionaries under religious garb. This pamphlet also showed the ideals and methods of revolutionary work. After the partition of Bengal, Aurobindo Ghosh decided to take part directly in the India’s freedom struggle. In 1906, he left the Baroda state and shifted to Calcutta. Here, he was appointed as a principle to the National collage of Education, established by Subodh Chandra Mullik.¹¹ What was at first a protest movement against the partition soon developed into the broader movement of “Swadeshi and Swaraj” by his encouragement. The aim of this policy included the boycott of British goods and intuitions, the purchase home-made goods, development of swadeshi industries, collages etc.¹² In August 1906, Bipan Chandra Pal started the English language newspaper “Banda Matram”. It preached the ideals of Swadeshi, Swaraj and self-sacrifice and set complete and absolute independence as the goal of the country. Soon, Aurobindo Ghosh became its chief editor.¹³ He wrote most of its leading articles on the extreme lines. Aurobindo Ghosh also contributed articles for Juganter newspaper and Indu-Prakash periodical.¹⁴ Charging him with seditions, the government imprisoned him for some months and then acquitted him. This event increased Aurobindo Ghosh’s popularity and he became one of prominent revolutionary leaders.

He was first among Indian political leaders who use the term “independence” instead of Swaraj. In the Surat session of 1907, Congress split into two factions. Both Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh became the leaders of the extremist faction. Between 1907 and 1908, he travelled extensively in Puna, Baroda and Bombay, giving speeches and meetings with the revolutionaries of these places, and also making the people aware of the intensity of freedom struggle movement.¹⁵ After the murder attempt on Douglas Kingsford (district judge of Muzaffarpur) in 30 April 1908 by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, the police intensified their searches. As a result, the large quantity of bombs and arms were seized and also arrested a number of revolutionaries including both Aurobindo Ghosh and Barindra Kumar Ghosh. British government charged them with conspiracy and waging war against the British Empire. This is called Alipora bomb conspiracy case. Barindra Kumar Ghosh and many others were found guilty and varied sentences were given to the accused persons. The trail lasted almost one year and the case against Aurobindo Ghosh collapsed after Narendra Gosain, who had turned crown witness, was shot dead by two co-accused Satyendranath Bose and Kanailal Dutta in Alipora prison.¹⁶ Finally, Aurobindo Ghosh was released due to the brilliant advocacy of C.R.Das. After his release, he started two newspapers- Karmayogin in English and Dharma in Bengali to expound the doctrines of revolution by violence under the guise of religion. Thus, continuing the policy of the Juganter newspaper. British government continued to harass him because of his extreme writings in these papers. In 4 April 1910, he left the active politics and entered to Pondicherry where he lived as a yogi till his death. He died on 5th December 1950 at the age of 79.¹⁷

6. CONCLUSION:

Aurobindo Ghosh played an impressive role in the freedom struggle of India and developed patriotism and revolutionary spirit among the youth of Bengal. His articles on different newspapers criticized Congress and British administration. Moreover, it was due to his efforts, the Nationalist movement in Bengal had gained momentum.

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