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# UNIT 6 HINDUISM : SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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In 19<sup>th</sup> century, India came under the British rule. Due to the spread of modern education and growing public activities, there developed social awakening in India. The religion of Hindus was very harshly criticized by the Christian missionaries and the British historians but at the same time, researches carried out by the Orientalist scholars revealed to the world, the glorious tradition of the Hindu religion. The Hindus responded to this by initiating reforms in their religion and by establishing new public associations to spread their ideas of reform and social development among the people. They wanted to give new birth to Hinduism.

The process of renaissance of Hinduism started with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and it was further developed by the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanand, the Prarthana Samaj and the Satyashodhak Samaj of Jotiba Phule. Sri Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, played a key role in renaissance and reformation of Hindu society. There was a new

interpretation of Vedanta philosophy and Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh were two major interpreters of Neo-Vedanta philosophy. They were of the opinion that Neo-Vedanta philosophy would increase cultural strength of Hinduism and pave the way for the growth of nationalism in modern India. They interpreted Indian nationalism in the context of reformation and rejuvenation of Hinduism.

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## 6.2 RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM AND THE ROLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

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RamaKrishna Mission played a key role in the renaissance of Hinduism. It was established by Swami Vivekananda. It was named after his teacher Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Ramakrishna (1836-86) was a son of soil and never lost his rustic simplicity, He was a mystic who preached self-less devotion of God and ultimate absorption in him. He personified the rebirth of **ancient** tradition in the midst of growing westernisation. He preached the people to follow the path of self-less devotion and claimed that service of man was service of God. He asked his disciples to live pure life, free of passions, desires, hatred and pride. He condemned no one and saw good in all. It was his firm belief that the religions of the world were not contradictory but were various phases of one eternal religion.

His disciple Swami Vivekananda established the **Ramakrishna Mission** to serve the people. He wanted to find a new path of progress for Hinduism because he was **not** happy with the **reform** movements as they were imitations of the western methods. He had three alternatives before him. First, to follow the path shown by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and join **Brahmo Samaj**. Secondly, to follow the path of total renunciation and go to Himalayas to **attain** the goal of liberation. Thirdly, to follow the path of **service** to the society and to create social awakening in the minds of the people about resuscitation of the **Indian** society. Vivekananda chose the third path and told the Indians to see Narayana in the form of a poor beggar dying of starvation. Thus, for Vivekananda the Ramakrishna Mission should stand for selfless service of the people, **ceaseless** efforts to find truth and thereby for reawakening of the spirit of India. During Vivekananda's life time and after his death, Sri Ramakrishna Mission played a key role in the renaissance of Hinduism.

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## 6.3 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF NEO-VEDANTA

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Vedanta philosophy was one of the most important ancient philosophies of India which believed that God alone was real and the visible world was **unreal** and the absorption of **individual** soul in the one supreme soul was the goal of every human being. That was called liberation and it could be achieved with the help of true **knowledge**. Raja Ram Mohan **Roy** was a supporter of non-dualistic monism. He expounded the concept of fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But Vivekananda followed the Vedanta preached by his teacher which was rooted in the traditional Indian wisdom of Bhakti tradition, He did not believe in the path of renunciation and asked people to perform their duties in the spirit of selflessness. There were three important principles of Neo-Vedanta philosophy of Vivekananda. They were as follows:

- Vedanta believed in the oneness between God and man and the solidarity of Universe.
- It did not stand for a life of renunciation but stood for self-less action in the services of humanity. Hence, service of man should be considered as service of God.

It propagated the principle of universal tolerance and believed that different religious faiths were different paths to reach the goal of liberation.

Thus; for Swami Vivekananda, Neo-Vedanta philosophy stood for service, sacrifice and freedom. He did not want the Neo-Vedantists to remain inactive but to work for the awakening of the masses. He wanted young Indians to dedicate themselves in the cause of resurgence of India.

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## 6.4 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON NATIONALISM

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Swami Vivekananda is considered as one of the prophets of the Indian nationalism because he tried to awaken Indian people who were lying in deep slumber. He wanted to see the emergence of a strong and self-confident India which would give the message of the Vedanta to the world. He maintained that the Indians should be proud of their history, culture and religion and should try their level best to reform them – in the light of the demands of time. The awakening of the spirit of India was the goal for young people. Hence, he asked them to "arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Vivekananda was highly critical of the British rule in India because he held that due to their rule, Indians lost confidence, famines engulfed the land, farmers and artisans were reduced to poverty and penury. The British were exploiting Indians in all the spheres of economic activity. They had let loose the reign of terror and struck fear in the minds of the people. Due to exploitative economic policies of the British government, Indians could not develop their natural resources and their productive potential was sapped. It was imperative that Indians should know the evil effects of the British rule in India.

Vivekananda was of the opinion that the national regeneration of India would begin when people became fearless and started demanding their rights. Also, he asked the Indians to develop solidarity and oneness of the spirit by the eradication of social evils, superstitions and caste-arrogance. He was of the opinion that caste system divided the Indian society into classes and created the feeling of inferiority and superiority among them.

He held that though there was a variety of races, languages, religions and cultures in India, there existed a common ground between Indian people. There was a common religious tradition which could be depended upon to build national spirit. According to Europe, the basis of national unity was political ideas but in Asia, religion formed the basis of it. It was not necessarily a particular religion as such, but all religions would help us develop the national integration. For the Indians, religion was a unifying force as the spirituality was blood in the life of India. All differences melted in it. Indians preserved their faith in the most difficult conditions.

It was the duty of the educated Indians to make its knowledge available to the people in their oneness and solidarity. He exhorted Indians not to get involved in the divisive issues of race and language and imbibe the spirit of unity. He said that Hindus should not blame Muslims

for their numerous invasions because the Muslim conquest came as a salvation to the downtrodden masses in India. One fifth of India did not become Muslim because of sword but because of their egalitarian message. Therefore, national **unity** could not be fostered by caste conflict but it would be secured by raising the lower to the level of higher classes and not by bringing the upper to the lower level. The privileges of classes should cease and it was the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave and the sooner it did so the better. The more it delayed, the more it would fester and die a worse death. India should be of one **mind** and of one resolve. Hence, we must revive the whole of India. India must conquer the **world** not with the help of gun, but with the help of spirituality.

For the growth of national spirit in India, independence of mind was necessary. India should expose herself to the outside world but she should not get scared of any one because her **freedom** would come through heroism and bravery. Indians should be proud of their country and declare that all Indians, despite their different castes and religions, are brothers. Thus in Vivekananda's theory of nationalism, there were four important components which were **as** follows:

- There was unity and oneness of the Indian people despite their outward diversity.
- It was necessary to remove caste differences to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity.
- There was similarity in the teachings of **different** religions and India consisted of **all** religious communities.
- National spirit in India could be developed by young people by devoting their life to social service and national awakening.

#### **6.4.1 Swami Vivekananda on Democracy**

Vivekananda was a great advocate of democracy and he wanted to awaken the young people to establish free and democratic government in India. For him, the principle of liberty was important because he held that there could not be growth in society as well as that of **an** individual without liberty. He said that every one should have liberty of thought, discussion, food, marriage and dress. He wanted to democratise the Indian society by abolishing caste privileges, by opposing cunning of priest craft and social tyranny.

Vivekananda was a supporter of equality of all **men** and pleaded for the abolition of caste and class privileges. He thought that the spirit of equality in India could be inculcated through the spread of knowledge and education. Caste system was a hindrance to the development of India into a strong nation. He held that in democracy, power rested with the people. He was of the view that for the democratisation of the country, the western thinkers tried to perfect the political and social order but the **Eastern** thinkers laid more stress on perfection of individual. For, sound social and political institutions **were** ultimately rooted in the goodness of individuals. For him, religious tolerance was crucial for the growth of **democracy** because that alone could promote the cause of liberty, equality and fraternity.

#### **6.4.2 Swami Vivekananda on Social Change**

Vivekananda wanted an overall development of India and the eradication of poverty and

degeneration of the people. He was an opponent of aristocracy and feudalism. He pleaded for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. For that purpose, he wanted to awaken the toiling masses of the country. He was of the view that in future, the Shudras or those who were toiling hard would become the rulers of the country. The socialist and anarchist movements in the Western countries indicated this. Vivekananda developed his own theory of social change to explain this.

Vivekananda's theory of social change was based on the Indian concept of history. It was a theory of political cycle that visualised periodic and circular change in the regimes on the basis of law of change, with the help of historical evidences from the history of Greece, Rome and India. He held that in every individual, there prevailed three qualities of Sattva (Knowledge) Rajas (Valour) and Tamas (ignorance) and in every society and in every civilisation, there existed four classes of the people. All societies which had developed division of labour had four classes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. According to Swami Vivekananda, on the basis of historical examples and law of nature, each of this class in every society governed the country, one after another in succession.

Vivekananda was of the opinion that in the first stage of human development, in almost all ancient civilisations of the world, the power was in the hands of the Brahmin or a priest. He ruled with the help of magic. His power was overthrown by the Kshatriyas or warriors who formed monarchical or oligarchic governments. But the power of this class was overthrown by the Vaishyas or traders. In most of the modern nations, such as England, the power of controlling society was in the hands of Vaishyas, who amassed wealth by carrying out commerce and trade. They became powerful only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many a kingly crown had to kiss the ground due to the growing power of commercial classes. Now, the Vaishyas had enormous power in their hands. Therefore, the conquest of India was not the conquest by Christianity but it was a conquest by the commercial classes, whose flag was a factory chimney, whose warriors were merchant men and whose battlefields were the market places of the world. It was the opinion of Vivekananda that the power of the Vaishyas would be overthrown by the Shudras.

According to Vivekananda, as per the law of nature, wherever there was an awakening of new and stronger life, there it tried to conquer and take the place of the old and the decaying. Nature favoured the dying of the unfit and the survival of the fittest. The power of the Kshatriyas was brought down because of its dictatorship. He maintained that the real power of the society rested with the Shudras who produced wealth with the help of their labour power. But they were treated harshly by the ruling classes. But they would gather strength and overthrow the rule of commercial classes. The Shudras would become great not by acquiring the qualities of Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas, but by retaining their own qualities as producers of wealth. In the Western world, we had seen that the ranks of the Shudras were growing and with the increase in their awakening, they would capture power. The last phase of social change was the victory of Shudras and the capture of political power by them. The rise of Socialist and anarchist movements in Europe substantiated this.

Thus, in the political theory of Vivekananda, the awakening and freedom of India was synchronised with the rise of Shudras and workers and peasants to political power. He was a supporter of nationalism and provided the basis of Neo-Vedanta to it. He used religion and culture in the cause of nationalism.

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## 6.5 TRANSITION OF HINDUISM: FROM VIVEKANANDA TO SRI AUROBINDO

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In the social and political ideas of Swami Vivekananda, we had seen the rise of Hinduism and Indian nationalism. New Hinduism **became** the tool of national consciousness in India. But this consciousness was broad enough to include Muslim, **Parsee**, Christian and other minorities in India. In the political ideas of Vivekananda, we could see the rudimentary elements of nationalism. But with the growth of national consciousness, Bengal produced another great nationalist thinker in whose political ideas we could see the development and growth of Indian nationalism. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism **became** more aggressive and anti-colonial. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was instrumental in giving radical content to nationalism in India.

The Political career of Aurobindo Ghosh began in the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century as he spent 13 years of his life in England to get the best English education. **He** returned to India and studied history and philosophy. In the process, he became one of the authentic exponents of Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. He joined the extremist group in the Congress and took a leading role in the anti partition movement in Bengal. During this **period**, he mobilised **people** through speeches and writings. He was a leading member of the radical group in the Congress party. The British government tried to suppress the Swadeshi movement. **Tilak** and Aurobindo were arrested, **Lala Lajpat Rai** was deported and **many** were put behind **the** bars, Along with Aurobindo, his **revolutionary** brother Barinder was arrested on the charges of sedition. In the trial, **Aurobindo** was acquitted but Barinder was sent to gallows. In the jail, he had certain spiritual and mystical experiences and as a result, he decided to leave politics and concentrate on the life of philosophy and Yoga. In a brief political career, **Aurobindo** carried forward the process of the renaissance of Hinduism on the basis of Vedanta and deepened the concept of spiritual nationalism.

Sri Aurobindo's political ideas could be divided into two phases. In the first phase, he expounded the concept of Indian nationalism and developed the theory of passive resistance. In the second phase, as a great sage of India, he wrote extensively on the ideal of **human** unity and the essential characteristics of Indian model of state building. **Thus**, in the first phase, he was a militant nationalist eager to liberate his motherland from the bondage. In the second phase, he was a great sage who sought to give message **to the world** in the ideals of the human unity and nationalism to achieve the goal.

### 6.5.1 Sri Aurobindo on Renaissance of Hinduism

As we have seen, Sri Aurobindo was a prominent figure in the renaissance of Hinduism and he wanted to complete the task left incomplete by Swami Vivekananda and **Bankimchandra Chatterjee**. Aurobindo carried forward the development of **Neo-Vedanta** and declared that the true message of Vedanta was selfless action or Karma **Yoga**. In the theory of Karma Yoga, a person was enjoined to perform his duties without aspiring for the fruits thereof, The **Geeta** taught us to fight against injustice because life is a series of **struggles**.

Aurobindo was of the **opinion** that there was a need of the renaissance of Hinduism which called for the awakening of the Indian soul which was in deep **slumber**. It could achieve its:

glory through the philosophy of Vedanta which gave more importance to spirituality than to science. The West glorified science but science is a light within a limited room and not the sun that which illumines the world. The spirit of every human heart had to be awakened to revive the glory of Hinduism. Hinduism should change the rags of the past so that its beauty might be restored. It must alter its bodily appearance so that her soul might be newly expressed. According to Sri Aurobindo, the goal of new Hinduism was to pave the way for emergence of Indian nationalism and to harmonise the world and the spirit. He held that the genius of the Hindu was not for pure action but for thought and aspiration realised in action.

### **6.5.2 Sri Aurobindo on Evil Effects of British Rule**

Aurobindo was a harsh critic of the British rule in India. He did not agree with the opinion of the moderates that it was a divine dispensation. He said that it was a curse for the majority of the Indian people because the foreign rule in India sapped moral and mental energies of the Indian people. The British rule ruined the economy of India and did not allow the latter to develop as an independent nation. It disorganised the Indians into a crowd, with no centre of strength or means of resistance. Her industries and trade were ruined and agriculture devastated. The British government in India was the worst type of bureaucratic despotism motivated by plunder and domination. India was held in subjection for the benefit of the British ruling classes. The British claim of a good government was false and a good and efficient government was no substitute for self-government and freedom.

It was the contention of Aurobindo that the spirit of India could be freed only by securing complete independence of the country. Freedom from foreign rule was an inalienable right of the people. The evil effects of the British rule could be eradicated only by overthrowing it. Its continuance would further worsen the situation in India.

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## **6.6 SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL MODERATES IN INDIA**

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When Aurobindo Ghosh entered Indian politics, it was dominated by the moderate leaders who were of the view that British rule in India was a divine dispensation. Aurobindo was highly critical of their approach to politics. Hence, he wrote a series of articles in the 'Indu Prakash' of Pune under the title 'New Lamps for Old' and severely criticised the politics of petitions and prayers of the moderate leaders. He said that the Congress leaders had very narrow and limited ideals. The Congress was selfishly frigid of social development and awakening of the masses and organically infirm. It was unaware of deeper facts; therefore, it did not articulate the popular opinion of the entire Indian people. It lacked the spirit of sincerity, whole heartedness, right type of methods and right type of leaders because when the blind led the blind both were bound to fall in a ditch,

Aurobindo argued that during Ram Mohan Roy's period, politics of prayers and petition was the only possible policy, but it was wrong to continue it even in the later years. He pleaded for the adoption of new and strong methods. He wrote that the ideas that governed the country were purely western; hence, they could not seize the attention of the people. The Indians should realise that both the liberals and the conservatives were supporters of the continuance of the British rule in India; therefore, the Congress should not expect much from

John Morley – the liberal leader – because he was an ardent supporter of imperialism.

He called for a complete change in the policy of the Congress party because under the moderate leadership, the Congress confused sufferance with freedom and favour of foreign despotism with the right of citizenship. If the Congress did not understand it, it would remain unfit for freedom and the standing hindrance to the country's freedom. He pleaded for the adoption of new policies and programmes to replace the politics of supplication carried out by the moderates.

### 6.6.1 Sri Aurobindo on the Essence of Politics

After the partition of Bengal, there was a tremendous upheaval in the country and a large number of the people joined the Swadeshi movement led by the radical group of the Congress party. Aurobindo joined Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai to popularise the programme of the party. He was a philosopher of new party. He wanted the Congress to be with people, speak in their language, identify itself with the wishes and aspirations of the people and Indianise the movement in the true sense of the term.

Aurobindo said that **Swaraj**, Swadeshi, national education and boycott were four methods of the new party. For him, 'Swaraj' meant complete independence because he argued that a political agitation was not launched to secure a few seats in bureaucracy and in assembly but to secure right of self-government to the people. Swadeshi meant using the products that were manufactured in our country only and national education stood for imparting education to Indians that suited to their temperament, needs and culture. Boycott meant not using the products manufactured in England. All these four methods were necessary to train the people in national spirit and to be architects of liberty. Thus, for Aurobindo, new politics stood for self-development and self-help. He hoped that it would inculcate the spirit of nationalism in people.

### 6.6.2 Sri Aurobindo on Nationalism

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was considered as a prophet of the Indian nationalism. Along with Bankimchandra, Tilak and Dayanand, he developed the theory of nationalism in India. Through their self-less work, the forces of nationalism were released.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of nationalism was based on Vedanta philosophy which saw unity and oneness in man and God. There was an essential unity in India despite the existence of the outward differences because the spirit of unity and oneness pervaded it. For her rejuvenation, India needed 'Shakti' or the power that was physical, moral, material and spiritual. The power or strength of a nation depended on the unity of her nation. Taking a clue from Bankimchandra, he declared that India was **infact** Mother **India** which represented united power and Shakti of millions of her children. Mother India represented infinite energy of her people: He identified **Mother** India with God and maintained that it was God's divine mission to set India free. Also, it was divine work to serve 300 million **Indian** people. There was a deep divine purpose in India's freedom because India's freedom movement represented time spirit that **would** liberate resurgent Asia and all the subject people in the world.

Aurobindo was critical of those people who claimed that due to cultural, racial and linguistic

diversity and divisions in the Indian society, India could never become a nation. He pointed out that if we carefully studied the history of Europe and England of the last two centuries, we would realise that their condition was no way different from India. But now England and many other countries of Europe had emerged as nations. India would also succeed to form as a nation because it was a law of history. He held that without political freedom, true advancement of the country was not possible. He was of the opinion that education played a key role in the development of national consciousness in the country,

Aurobindo pointed out that there were certain essential elements in the formation of nationality. These essential elements were geographical unity, common past, a powerful common interest impelling towards unity and certain favourable political conditions which enabled the impulse to realise itself in an organised government. Its goal was to establish a single and united existence. According to Sri Aurobindo, a common enthusiasm coalescing with a common interest was the most powerful promoter of nationality. He pointed out that there existed the necessary conditions for the growth of nationalism in India because Indians had been slowly realising the importance of national unity and offering united resistance to foreign rule.

Aurobindo recognised the importance of villages in the Indian life and pointed out that unlike in the West, where the city was the Centre of all political action, in India village was the backbone of national persistence. Indian villages were democratic, autonomous and self-governing. Therefore, regeneration of the village was important for the regeneration of India. He said that village should retain its autonomy and self-government but at the same time, 'should seek to promote national cohesion. Hence, he held that the days of independent village had gone and must not be revived. National unity could only be achieved when the rural population was developed into a mighty, single and compact democratic nationality. The ideal of national Swaraj must be modelled on the old village community which was self-sufficient, autonomous and self-governing.

Aurobindo's concept of nationalism was based on the philosophy of Vedanta which stood for unity between God and man. He used Hindu religious ideas and symbols. He realised that the ideal of Indian nationalism was largely Hindu in character but he pointed out that this nationalism was wide enough to include the Muslim, his culture and traditions. He said that the Hindu should win Swaraj for himself as well as for the Muslim. A large part of his theory of nationalism was based on awakening the dormant spirit of nationalism that was latent in the soul of India. The struggle against the foreign rule would enable it to achieve self-realisation.

### **6.6.3 Sri Aurobindo on Passive Resistance**

The new party of the radicals wanted to use new methods against the government to secure political rights for the Indian people. Aurobindo thought that the method of passive resistance, which was used by the Irish nationalists, would be ideal for India. Hence, he developed theory of passive resistance in a series of articles published in the weekly called 'Bande Mataram'.

### **6.6.4 Theory of Passive Resistance**

According to Sri Aurobindo, for a subject country, the attainment of political independence

was its highest goal. But there were different means to attain that goal. In India, for Indian patriots, three alternative means were available to win Swaraj and they were as follows.

I) the method of prayers and petitions.

II) the method of armed revolt.

III) the method of self-development and passive resistance.

In the Indian context, Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the adoption of method of prayers and petitions was out of question because its futility was proved. Again, in the Indian context, the method of armed revolt or resistance was not possible or desirable. Hence, Indians had no alternative but to take recourse to self-development which was expressed in the methods of Swadeshi and boycott. Pursuit of both the methods strengthened the cause of self-help. The programme of self help and self-development would be opposed by bureaucracy and government because it challenged their authority. In such a situation, the people should adopt passive resistance to the government. Passive resistance meant the resistance to authority of the government in an organised manner and through peaceful means. The use of arms was not allowed in passive resistance.

According to Sri Aurobindo, in India, attainment of political freedom was the goal of passive resistance. Freedom in India was necessary to stop the drain of wealth and to carry out social reforms. The programme of Swadeshi, national education, boycott and establishment of arbitration courts was the programme of self-development. But this programme, on its own, would not be in a position to secure political freedom for India. Political freedom could only be secured by organised passive resistance carried out on a large scale. This policy was followed by Parnell in Ireland. Its **main** object was to paralyse the functioning of the government by withdrawing support and co-operation to the government.

### **6.6.5 Methods of Passive Resistance**

The essence of passive resistance was to challenge the authority of the state by following non-violent means because under the present circumstances armed conflict or a violent aggressive resistance in the form of sabotage, assassinations and terrorism was not possible and desirable. He said that "ultimately our methods depended upon the type of opposition we met and the type of response they gave to our **agitation**." Those who were agitating for noble cause should be ready for sufferings and sacrifices because passive resistance required more universal endurance. One of the **major** benefits of passive resistance was that through this method, we would be in a position to involve people and let them learn methods of struggle and sufferings. It would train the Indians in heroic actions and boost their morale. It would bring pressure on the government to keep the promises it **had** made to people.

According to Aurobindo, passive resistance worked on two levels. At the first level, it encouraged the people to pursue the methods of self-development **such** as Swadeshi, and national education and at the second level, it sought to exert pressure on the government to concede the demands of **the** people. According to him, in the passive resistance, the following ineasures would be undertaken to achieve success:

- Refusal to assist the government.

- Refusal to pay taxes to the government.
- Boycotting the products manufactured in the foreign countries.
- Boycotting the government schools, colleges and law courts.
- Starting our own schools, colleges and arbitration courts to train people in the method of self help and national independence.

Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that to pursue the policy of passive resistance effectively, we should develop a well-knit political organisation, linking province to province and district to district. This organisation would represent the national will of the people.

Though the method of passive resistance was as legal as the method of prayers and petitions, keeping the struggle within the bounds of law was not its pre-condition. Occasionally, the passive resistance had to break the unjust and oppressive laws which required a high degree of truthfulness and courage. Because, if the movement succeeded in getting the support of the people, the repression by the government would increase. The main purpose of passive resistance was to make law unworkable by a general and organised disobedience. It was his opinion that conflict was the heart of passive resistance and it brooked no meek submission to authority. Passive resistance method could be changed if the situation so demanded. He held that the norms of general ethics should not be applied to him because he was a Kshatriya and a fighter and not a saint. Aurobindo pointed out that if the government did not consider the legitimate demands of the people, the people would go underground and take recourse to sabotage and terrorism. Terrorism might perish of inanition; coercion was its food.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of passive resistance was influenced by the Irish home rule movement against the British rule. It is to be noted that Aurobindo's ideas on resistance could be considered as precursor to the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha. He was of the opinion that with the development of passive resistance movement, the aspirations of the people would grow and they would acquire the capacity to actualise national self-consciousness and national will in their day to day activities.

## **6.7 SRI AUROBINDO ON THE INDIAN THEORY OF STATE**

Sri Aurobindo renounced active politics in 1910 and left for Pondicherry to pursue his spiritual goals. All attempts to bring him back to national politics did not succeed. In the second phase of his life, Aurobindo emerged as a great sage and a philosopher and received worldwide respect. He became the authentic representative of Indian wisdom. He wrote in 1947, a book explaining the spirit and form of the Indian polity.

According to Aurobindo, ancient Indian thinkers developed an Indian model of state building which was democratic in character in the sense that it allowed communal freedom and self-government and autonomy to the village and the community. It was a synthesis of communal autonomies of village, town, caste, guild and family. The state was a means of holding together and synthesised free and living organic systems and autonomies into free and living organisms. Indians successfully struck the right balance between stability and change. It was

an organic totality of social existence. Ancient Indian system had a capacity to renew itself. According to Aurobindo, the Indians did not want to establish a mechanical state that laid exaggerated dependence on legislation, administration and force. The Western idea of state was artificial and the state in the West was imposed upon the people. The Indian system was flexible and was built up from within. The Western state was based on a rigid uniformity but in the Indian system, new elements were harmonised without destroying the original elements and existing institutions. It was a creation of practical reason and the common experience of communal self-government.

Aurobindo was of the opinion that a rich and creative thought was necessary to create a transmitting medium between the spirit and the external world. The Indians did not develop creative thought, hence, they had lost independence. He said that Indians should not imitate the West and reproduce the ideals and forms of West because it was not creative. Instead of blindly following the West, they should recover their ancient creative power and in the light of principle of Dharma, retrieve the spirit and form of Indian polity.

### **6.7.1 Political Ideas of Sri Aurobindo – A Critical Study**

Sri Aurobindo can be considered as one of the greatest political thinkers in modern India. He added almost a religious fervour to nationalism by identifying mother India with 'Shakti' or power of the Indian people. He defined the essence of religious nationalism in a manner which, for its sheer passion, had never been surpassed. He came to idealise his native land and faith and identified one with other. The fervour of his faith in 'India' helped his countrymen to transcend the differences of caste, language, custom which had hindered the development among them. Secondly, his ideas on passive resistance broke new grounds in the sense that in his theory, he had visualised most of Gandhian ideas and programmes though he had differed with him on the issue of primacy of truth and non-violence. Thirdly, in his theory of state, he sought to represent the authentic Indian tradition to the world and claimed that the Indian theory of state building was superior to the Western theory of state building.

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## **6.8 SUMMARY**

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In this unit, we have studied the political ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who were considered as the two great figures in the renaissance of Hinduism in modern-times. Both the **thinkers** identified renaissance of Hinduism with the emergence of nationalism in India and held that rejuvenation of Hinduism in the spirit of Vedanta philosophy was a precondition for it. Hence, they gave new interpretation of the Vedanta which declared that the service of man was service of God. Vivekananda's concern for the plight of the downtrodden sections was complimentary to it. Both Aurobindo and Vivekananda were of the opinion that religion and culture played a key role in the making of nationalism as they added rare fervour and passion to it. One of the notable features of **their** nationalism was that it was not based on the exclusion of any community and included all religious communities. Thus, their nationalism was all inclusive. They inspired thousands of young men in undertaking the patriotic causes. Swami Vivekananda's concept of social change and Sri Aurobindo's theory of passive resistance can be considered as significant contributions to the modern Indian political thought.

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## 6.9 EXERCISES

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1. Discuss Sri Aurobindo's theory of Nationalism.
2. Describe in brief the methods of passive resistance advocated by Aurobindo.
3. Discuss the salient features of Aurobindo's theory of state.
4. Discuss briefly the main features of renaissance of Hinduism.
5. Write a short note on the Neo-Vedanta philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.
6. Discuss briefly Swami Vivekananda's views on nationalism.
7. Briefly state the salient features of Swami Vivekananda's theory of social change.
8. What were Sri Aurobindo's views on the renaissance of Hinduism?
9. What were the evil effects of the British rule, according to Aurobindo?