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...because truth has many faces

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Editor

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standing humiliations and deprivations. It is now entrenched as a force to be counted in Indian politics. It is rather more assertive than its feminist counterpart. The dalit euphoria is high: its ambition is boundless. But P.N.Singh (Dalit Assertion ...) dispassionately analyses the fallacies and the limits of the dalit resurgence. He prescribes the change it needs in its self-perception in order to be a meaningful force in nation building.

This year being the centenary year of Jaiprakash Narain, the inaugural issue of Either - Or concludes with an article on the great leader ('The Democratic Sensibility'). in this article Sadanand Shahi reminds us that JP's empathy for women's suffering and respect for his wife's rights were rare virtues with him. They reveal the democratic core of his heart. Together they make him a thoroughgoing liberal whether in his public or private life.

Lastly, let me reiterate that all these articles uphold a common faith in a more humane and just culture, their apparent variety notwithstanding. May the writers and the readers of this issue join hands in this endeavour.

I therefore submit this issue of Either - Or with this sublime wish.

स्वस्ति पंथामनुचरेम (Together we may tread the path of goodness)

Shubha Rao

P.S.

We shall be publishing book reviews also in our forthcoming issues. suggestions and articles for our readers are welcome.

S.R.

Aurobindo's life as a tale of painful inauthenticity in the fractured modern world of Ashish Nandy's 'The Intimate Enemy'

By
Savita Singh

"So long as we live encapsulated within one tradition our own, and in the language that embodies it, we can think and move and have our being only within the horizon of reality opened by it. we are free within it, for it is of essence of a tradition, its enabling power...but we are also enclosed by it, prevented from seeing what other tracks "so long of vision may have brought to light. This is what the great German poet Holderlin meant by his profoundly perceptive remark to his friend Voehlendroff, 'that the free use of what is our very own is hardest to learn'. J L Mehta, Philosophy And Religion: Essays In Interpretation.

Modernity arrived in the west by setting aside the old world of Europe, heralding itself as a new time encapsulating within it a novel sensibility of freedom, rationalism, progress and a promise of abundant material prosperity. The world had suddenly come in touch with its own materiality and everything was up for a fresh understanding and evaluation. Nature as the ultimate mystery of the universe, was seen as the unconcealed fortune of the whole humanity given to exploration and exploitation in the interest of man. Modernity impressed its advocates and apologists and filled them with an arrogance of rationality. It faced only feeble contests from its detractors in Europe, but in India, it could not enter easily

even as a theory of progress. In India modernity had to find its own language to be, to subsist, and to prevail.

It is not surprising that the discourse of modernity has had a troubled history in India and it is still an open question. There is a sense in which modernity is felt as of a grief emanating from our colonial experience of being denigrated and inferiorised suffering in the process a split deep within, which could be even described as a split within the Indian self. In this sense colonialism is understood as constituting the context of Indian modernity. In a way, the language of the colonial discourse is equated with that of the language of modernity itself here. Our traditionalist-neo-conservative protagonists of the discourse of modernity in India, like Ashish Nandy¹, Sudhir Chandra² and Somraj Gupta³ characterize it in the colonialist framework only. Nandy in particular, sees Indian modernity as an extensive project of the western enlightenment, indeed, as the project of the European self- understanding which entered Indian tradition, tampering and altering the self definition of the Indian self and culture inflicting deep wounds on its psyche.

The argument is that some people within the tradition themselves got bewitched by the lightness and ebullient spirit of the Western modernity and inaugurated a process of revision in the existing self- understanding of this tradition. If the nineteenth- century reformists, like Rammohan Roy, Bamkin Chandra Chatterjee and later Swami Vivekanand and Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in their own ways had argued the West in "as a more valued aspect of their own culture," making possible the signature of Western modernity on its unselfconscious self-consciousness, the modernists of the liberal-Marxist-nationalists persuasions accepted the replication and duplication of western modernity as a valid project of human liberation. With this the power of Western modernity to dichotomize and dissolve Indian tradition into some material of knowledge in the warehouse of antiquity had become a reality. Nandy argues that the West not only produced colonial modernity, it also informed most of its interpretations. It even colored the interpretations of its interpretation. Modernity as colonialism, colo-

nized the language of its own discourse and took over all forms of self- definitions attempted in this language.

Nandy's reading of Aurobindo's life as a narrative of inauthenticity is attempted in the light of above understanding of the Indian modernity. The power and legitimacy of his position, no doubt, ensues as much from his powerful theory of Indian modernity as a tale of self- division and self- loss, as from the unique perspective he brings to his reading of Indian modernity, that is, from the side of pain, indignity and remorse, arising out of the fractured world of a self- sufficient tradition. Perhaps in this sense alone he asks his readers not to treat his text as a historical tract, but to read it as a cautionary tale of modernity's dark intentions.

In this paper I try to articulate and critically assess Nandy's position on Indian modernity which he posits through a very interesting reading of Aurobindo's life. As an interpreter invariably does while understanding the truth, I too do not presume that the entire truth lies in the text itself. For after the truth has been communicated to the readers, and some clarity has been brought to the text compared to its previous reading, the truth still remains a remainder. In the light of this position on interpretation, I examine and contest Ashis Nandy's reading of Indian modernity constructed through a narrative of Aurobindo's life as a tale of painful inauthenticity. It is more than clear that for someone who understands modernity from the side of pain, it is not told as a tale of self-discovery and self-actualization. Nandy, thus, contests the nationalist language of Indian modernity within which Aurobindo's life has been read, mostly, as one which grappled with the experience of India's struggle for national freedom in all its uniqueness- a life in its complete drama of establishing the spiritual superiority of Indian tradition over the materialist, colonizing West. Nandy in contrast offers a less triumphant and a more painful narrative of Aurobindo's life, peculiarly shaped by the experience of western modernity.

To start with, one could argue that there is not just one language. the colonial, neo-conservative, within which the experience

of Indian modernity has been understood. At least there is another one, which could be termed as an interpretative language, within which the major portion of our experience as modern Indians has been articulated. In this language, modernity is understood not simply as a colonizing and subverting pack of ideas arising out of seventeenth century West, but a much more culturally nuanced and contextualised product arrived at by a fruitful interpretation, or a series of interpretations, of both the Indian tradition and Western modernity. Obviously there is not one modernity then, the Western, which goes on subverting other cultures, rather there are modernities which are the dialogical consequences of arduous interpretations one has gone through of ones own tradition and of Western modernity. In this sense, an interpretive reading of Aurobindo's life could be attempted and, perhaps, a far more interesting narrative of his life could emerge, which would not revel in suggesting only the dichotomizing experience of modernity- its capability to send its 'Other' into the throes of pain.

Aurobindo's Tale

As argued above, Nandy sees modernity as spawning a unique context of self-loss and its inauthentic reconstitution in various languages of Indian modernity. As an illustration of it, he constructs a narrative of Aurobindo's life, shaped completely by the Western modernity (just the way it shaped the entire culture), filling his life with the events of mental depression, exile, deaths, hysteria, political extremism and finally a spiritual quest to find himself, which Nandy thinks, terminated in the loss of that quest itself as the West caught up with him by its own presence even there.

Nandy chooses the right beginning for the narrative of his subject as there could not be any other beginning for a modern subject like that of Aurobindo submitted to modernity so convincingly and single-mindedly by his own father. After mentioning briefly that it is impossible to read Aurobindo's life without sensing the inner pain which went with imperialism in India, he continues to write that "much of the pain was inflicted and much of the

destruction of his cultural self was undertaken within the confines of his family"⁴. Nandy gives us the sordid yet pathetic details of his parent's life and the unsuspecting inclination of Aurobindo's father towards the western culture and its modernity. He begins to write Aurobindo's story by first narrating his father's story, a story within a story woven to decipher the pattern's of modernity's own weaving of the story of inauthenticity of the modern Indian self. Nandy writes:

"The Ghoshes were urban Brahmo's from near Calcutta and fully exposed to the new currents of social change in India, father Krishnadhan, a doctor trained in England, was in government service. He was well known among his friends and relatives for his aggressively anglicised ways. He forbade his children to learn or speak Bengali; even at home they had to converse in English. Their dress and food, too were English. In addition, Krishnadhan was an atheist and he tried to protect his children from the ill effects of Hinduism; for some reason, young Aurobindo was the favoured object of his father's zealous social engineering. Krishnadhan took the greatest care that nothing Indian should touch this son of his."⁵

Nandy continues to give us an even more sordid picture of the inner story of Indian modernity by way of giving us the haunting details of Aurobindo's mother's life, without which his Aurobindo's story as quintessentially an Indian tale would be a deficient one. After all, it was not only Aurobindo whose life fell to fractious ways of modernity but even of Swarnlata's- his mother's, who literally convalesced into madness of a common kind starting from infrequent fits of hysteria to an incomprehensible violence towards her own, very own children, and then death. Nandy writes:

"Mother Swarnlata, about whom official biographer seems reticent, was the daughter of Rajnarayan Bose, a renowned scholar, religious leader, social reformer and a nationalist. She herself was known mainly for her beauty. Though coming from a reformist family and married to a highly westernized man, Swarnlata was an orthodox Hindu and it is almost certain that she did not fully relish the western manners of her husband. Nor must have she enjoyed the charade of communicating through English in the family, how-

ever, what disturbed human relations in the family more than oppression of language was the illness Swarnlata fell prey to early in Aurobindo's life called hysteria by her contemporaries, it was obviously an early stage of something more serious."⁶

To be trained in modernity, to become a modern man, Aurobindo was sent in his early childhood to Darjeeling to study where English was the sole medium of instruction and the only means of communication outside school hours. 'The resulting sense of exile found expression even at that age, in a third person' figures Nandy. As a result of this alienness the imposed sense of life led by Aurobindo got transformed into numerous psychological emotions of not being one self, of being filled with 'a heavy palpable darkness speedily descending on to earth and entering him'. This is how a real life story begins in modern time India, and becomes identified with the story of its culture.

Aurobindo was sent from Darjeeling to England for even more rigorous westernization. This time his other two brothers were also sent to England to study and become not merely westernized Indians but to be as western as the English. So they learned the English ways, studied Latin, Greek, French and, Aurobindo in particular, excelled in all of this. But, as Nandy writes, a sense of loneliness, which had engulfed Aurobindo's inner self, persisted and just did not leave him. "The result was an inward depression which in his middle age Aurobindo was to mention casually"⁷

Aurobindo tried to find alternative ways of handling this sense of loss of the self, resulting in monologous inner depression. Nandy writes about it in his analysis perceptively, for at last according to him, Aurobindo began to look for alternative ways of handling the occidental ways and to defy the model of success associated with the anglicism of his father. Thus he did not take the degree of the first part of the classical trio and even disqualified himself in the civil services exam by not taking the exam. He got involved with the nationalist politics and delivered some fiery speeches at Indian Majlis, an incipient secret society pursuing the cause of Indian independence. But then Aurobindo came back to India to find his

father dead in the hands of his own aspirations and expectations. The tragic part, however, was that he died after getting wrong information about the ship having sunk in which Aurobindo was sailing to India. Aurobindo also came to know that his mother was in the advanced stage of insanity and could hardly recognize him. In spite of these hurtful events, Aurobindo felt relatively better by just being in India and not in exile any more. He continued to be interested in the nationalist politics, of behaving as an 'other' to imperialism. His politics was becoming more and more articulate along the extreme lines of nationalism. Due to his politics he was imprisoned and then another journey, closely his own it seems, the spiritual journey, the quest to find his own self, one that was constantly interfered by the forces of modernity, began.

The backdrop of this arduous self search and attempts to gain it was constituted by another fact of Aurobindo's life, that was his marriage to Mrinalimi Devi, which reads like yet another intervention modernity makes in his life resulting in a very painful experience for both Mrinalimi and Aurobindo. The marriage never really worked. A normal feel of intimacy that a conjugal relationship brings about and builds an expectation of life of togetherness, turned out in this case, as one of mere waiting, unconsummated. It seems Aurobindo himself was not in touch with his own self to recognize the normalcy and the need of forming an intimate relationship with the other person in marriage. He was a traumatized self in need of self - realization. His longings had changed along with the texture of his self in this journey of modernity. In this tale Nandy adds a smaller story of another victim of modernity, the story of Aurobindo's wife who waits innocently for the recovery of her husband and his return to her 'self'. Nandy puts forward her case in the following way :

"Mrinalini died childless, lonely, heart-broken and perhaps unlamented in 1918, some years after Aurobindo renounced the world. By that time she had suffered from Aurobindo's long absence from home and from expectations that he would come back and take her into his new life. Till the end, she was innocently to try to become acceptable to him through her religious activities, relying on his

vague hints that he might return to her. He never did"⁸

Ultimately Aurobindo retired from politics and moved to Pondicherry in the hope that he may realize his 'self' here. And so he devoted most of his time now in the care of his 'self'. But then he was joined by another person from the West (France), one Mira Paul Richard, later known as Ma, in this inner journey of the Self. Slowly and gradually it was not Mrinalini but the mother force of Ma, which became the force of Aurobindo's inner life and, also of the physical surrounding of the ashram set up by Aurobindo. Her presence now dominated both the inner and the outer realms of Aurobindo's spiritual life. She was present both inside and outside of Aurobindo, just as the west was and is in the discourses of modernity in India. Nandy describes,

"With the acceptance of Mira as his sakti in 1926, Aurobindo withdrew further into silence and seclusion; only Mira and a few disciples had close contact with him and met him regularly. This seclusion allowed mother's control to become tighter and, after Aurobindo's death, absolute, much of the open endedness and imagination of Aurobindo's mysticism was slowly but surely removed by her. The ashram itself became under her powerful presence an efficient guidance, highly status conscious, politically conservative and a means of oppressing people around...increasingly and inevitably, it acquired the trappings of a well organized modern cult and of church-as-corporation"⁹

Nandy concludes Aurobindo's story rather somberly as in his reading after so much pain Aurobindo's bid for self-recovery still remains an imperspicuous gain; in place of authenticity he seems to have attained a compromise between the East and the indispensable West. Nandy continues to refine his articulation by noting, "Thus for Swarnlata and Krishndhan's quiet, unprotestingly long suffering son, the depth of his relationship with the powerful, committed women from Europe had an altogether different meaning, for him, the freed East had at last met the non-oppressive West symbolized by the mother. And henceforth his East was incomplete without mother's West and his West was partial without her East. The West once separated him from nearness, love and na-

ture. Now a part of the West had returned to put him in touch with them"¹⁰ For Aurobindo, discovering the East-in-the west became a transcendent goal and a practical possibility. The last stage of perfection became complete surrender writes Nandy and quotes Aurobindo most effectively to drive home the last message of modernity to its victims. Nandy quotes Aurobindo thus, "When you are completely identified with the Divine mother you feel yourself to be no longer a separate being, instrument, servant or worker but truly a child and eternal portion of her consciousness and force."¹¹

Nandy does not end his story of Aurobindo's encounter with modernity and its intervention in his life here. He still has a far more depressing ending, which he simply adds to the story as a closing note. He writes "it was the organizational edge Mira Richard brought to his spiritualism which turned the language of spirit into a modern technology of salvation and Aurobindo into India's first modern guru. It was in that guise that Aurobindo spoke of 'intervention in the world forces the way his co-professionals today speak of alliances with natural laws'. At this plane Aurobindo was defeated by the West"¹²

Ashis Nandy's study of Indian modernity may be a fascinating account of the colonial ideology but his effort to crystallize this ideology around the themes of the Enlightenment rationalism does not necessarily have to be presented as the discourse of modernity itself. As I have argued elsewhere¹³ Indian modernity was also articulated in a languages other than the colonialist-neo-traditionalist, employed by Nandy. A far more complex view of Indian modernity finds expression in the nationalist and the hermeneutical languages. In these two languages the rationalist formulations of modernity are not treated with the uneasiness of a priori skepticism. In my view, the Indian response to the Western modernity authentically lies between its blatant replication to its outright rejection and the interpretive language, the protagonists of the hermeneutical language of the discourse of modernity in India, strives to understand it from within their own tradition by reinterpreting both modernity and the Indian tradition. It is my conten-

tion that as a consequence of the interpretive approach of understanding the significant encounter between Indian tradition and the Western modernity, modernity instead of dichotomizing Indian tradition, came to subsist within it as its own interpretation. Instead of fracturing the Indian self, modernity placed Indians in an interesting hermeneutical situation of self -interpreting themselves and their tradition. Thus relating meaningfully their tradition to its contemporary context of encounters, challenges, temptations and contestations presented by the new ideas of modernity and its new power structures.

More than this, it was the necessity of renewing their commitment to 'being' by understanding it in its contemporary significance, that came as a promise of modernity, revealing the meaning of 'freedom as understanding' to the protagonist of the Indian discourse of modernity.¹⁴ In understanding, one understands oneself in relation to one's own situation, one is not merely turned into an object devoid of any significance for others, that is, without participating in this understanding as a self interpretive subject. Describing the intellectual process of interaction of Indian tradition with the Western modernity, Wilhelm Halbfass, a noted and keen interpreter of Indian modernity, gives a rather different view of what went on in the self- constitution of Indian modernity, and the roles played by such individuals as shri Aurobindo in it. He argues that Aurobindo as an interpreter of both the Vedanta and the Western rationalism, appears far from being a loser in the game. Rather he has to be recognized as more of an asserter of his identity as a modern Indian than anything else. Enriching the hermeneutical language of Indian modernity, Halbfass writes :

"Indians took a more and more active part in the European enterprise of exploring India's past, and they began presenting themselves to the world in a new fashion. They tried to disengage themselves from the status of mere objects of instruments of Western curiosity, and they took more initiative to reinterpret themselves against them.... They responded to the universalistic claims of Western thought with the universalism of their own. They opened, even exposed themselves to the West. But this very openness ap-

peared as confirmation and consummation of their own tradition, its potential of universality and inclusiveness."¹⁵

In line with the same understanding, Halbfass, far from seeing Aurobindo's life unfolding as a pathetic tale of inauthenticity of Indian modernity, sees him as someone who by participating both in the Western and Eastern experience of being, carves out an authentic mode of existing in modern time India. He further writes,

"In his attempt to establish the identity of Hinduism and its importance for the modern world, Aurobindo does not advocate a return to earlier phases of its history, nor does he merely assert its timeless validity: Instead, he tries to provide it with a new sense of vitality and change, with a new or at least revived, openness for questions and experiments. If this is a restoration or return, then it is according to Aurobindo, return to the sources of experience themselves, from which Hinduism won its former creative power and autonomy and which alone can open its new perspectives for the future. Nor only should this potential of experience be asserted, it should be manifested and activated in the practice of inner experimentation, i.e. the Exploratron of the dynamic of awareness, and thus become a part of the actuality of the modern world."¹⁶

It is arguable on the basis of above understanding of our relation to modernity and Aurobindo's contribution to its formation, that to read his story as a narrative is an incalculable loss of the Indian self. Most certainly, there is another way of reading Aurobindo's life. It could be quite enlightening to bring in such a reading here offered by another significant hermeneutical thinker of India, Prof. J.L Mehta¹⁷, who takes Aurobindo's own statements about his life as an authentic rendering of its truth. He treats them as more meaningful beginnings of his life's story. Mehta attaches a lot of importance to two of Aurobindo's quotations mentioned as Aurobindo's own statements about himself in the Volume "On Himself" compiled by K.R Srinivas Iynger.¹⁸ In this text Aurobindo is saying to a keen biographer of his life, "But why write my biography at all. Is it really necessary? In my view a man's value does not depend on what he learns, or his position or fame, or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes"¹⁹ He further adds a

closing note to this statement to the persuer, "You, nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life. It has not been on the surface for men to see."²⁰

Mehta as a keen hermeneutician quickly gathered that such a life as of Aurobindo's could not be interrogated, laid bare, but could only be understood through interpretations. In the flow of this kind of reasoning, Mehta re-understood what Aurobindo had already said: "what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he said or what he was outside to the view of men of the time but what he was within." What Aurobindo was hinting at was the mystery of human life led in touch with its ontological depth, no matter in which time or which nation—modern time India or Europe. The modern curiosity of mind to lay bare everything clearly is not an adequate approach to human life, its consciousness and goal. Some things would always remain to be known and said after everything has been said at one point of time. At least in his case, it was hard for others to know his true life. Thus, knowing the pain and the loss, the unsuccessful struggle of Aurobindo to gain his self, is out of reach for an analyzer to make any authentic story of it; only interpretations of such lives are possible. Moreover, from the hints dropped by Aurobindo himself, the region of spiritual existing to which he had crossed over, the very meaning of pain, loss and questions of authenticity of such pain and loss did not hold the same significance; it must have changed as the self had come to know itself differently. Here the happiness, sorrows, pain, ecstasy and remorse, all acquired a posture of equanimity- of a bhav called sambhav.

As an excellent example of an interpretive work, Mehta in his reading of Aurobind's life and work, reflects on his subject from within the textual imbeddedness and does not venture into the interior realm of Aurobindo's self. This zone, Mehta understood, was not open for the clear sighting and visioning by a merely interested social scientist. Mehta thus opts for the glimpsing of whatever there was concealed in signs. This is the closest one could get to that region. On this reading what Nandy considers as being lost,

that is, Aurobindo having lost to the West, Mehta considers it as a mere adventuring of the self to the Other, experiencing it in all its otherness as its own part. For indeed, Mehta works with a hermeneutical insight as far as human understanding is concerned. He writes, 'so long as we live encapsulated within one tradition, our own, and in the language that embodies it, we can think and move and have our being only within the horizon of reality opened by it. We are free within it, for it is of essence of tradition.... But we are also limited by it, prevented from seeing what other tracks of vision may have brought to life. We are hence unfree" and that, even ones own must be learned "after voyaging for into what is the other".²¹

Depicting the complexity of a hermeneutical life as that of Sri Aurobindo, in which he arrives at an understanding of himself and that of the West as part of each other, Mehta locates this understanding as emanating from the Vedantic as much as from Heideggerian sources. He brings in Heidegger to illustrate the interesting relationship the self has with its other, a position which Aurobindo made by living out the kind of existence he did. Aurobindo's life came with a certain kind of depth where any stark differences between the self and the other simply got dissolved. Mehta quotes Heidegger to make the point, "The voyage of self discovery and self- becoming is the dialectic of the questionable and question worthy, is not an irresponsible adventure but homecoming. In case of a creative thinker, no doubt, such home coming is hard, intense and a protracted labour, but homecoming it indeed is."²² Instead of being lost to the other, on this reading, Aurobindo landed not very far, but close home.

Also, it is perhaps appropriate to reflect on the question of modernity itself, which is such an issue for Nandy. We have noted earlier that there is not one language of modernity constituting its discourse in India, rather there is, at least, another one. Here, however, I wish to show the point of western modernity with all its constitutive elements of rationalism, secularism and progressivism, from the side of the West itself. There is something quintes-

sentient about modernity- it addresses the dignity of human life like never before; self- derivative, self -constituted its subjects are primarily autonomous. I am reminded here of a pithy point Michael Ignatief made about his modernity, that is Western, (apart from all the great literature on Western modernity) which had begun to look exhausted. He describes it as something quite unique in the history of mankind, as it changed the notion and locus of Western man's belonging to his time. Writing from within the Western context, Ignatief comes almost close to describing our situatedness vis a vis modernity, disclosing nicely how one belongs to it without losing oneself to it. He writes,

"...it is just possible that our need is taking a new form, finding a new object...our task is to find a language for our need of belonging which is not just a way of expressing nostalgia, fear and estrangement from modernity. Our political images of civic belonging remain haunted by the classical Polis, by Athens, Rome, and Florence. Is there a language of belonging adequately to Los Angeles? Put like that the answer could be only no. Yet we should remember the nineteenth Century City and the richness of its inventions of new forms and its possibilities of belonging. These great cities, Manchester, New York, Paris were as strange to those who came to live in them for the first time as our may seem to us. Yet we look at them, now as a time of civic invention—the boulevard, the public park, the museum, the café, the trolley car, street lighting, the subway, the apartment house. Each of these humble institutions created new possibilities for fraternity among strangers in public places."²³

Modernity did create its own version of the new possibilities in India. Among the most contemporary writings one needs to read Partha Chatterjee, Sumit Sarkar and Neera Chandhoke²⁴ to get a fresh view of the density the discourse of modernity in India has acquired.²⁵ It suffices here, however, to note towards the end of this paper, that experiencing modernity in India has been no less intense than in the West. The fear of domination was solidly present in our experience, and modernity has been grasped very much in its paradoxical complexity - as a project both of freedom and domination. The interesting thing about our experience of modernity is

that it has never been taken as a simple theory of domination except very recently, the desire and interest of experiencing freedom generated by it for its European subjects was hardly discounted or depreciated by its Indian subjects. One important way for us to relate to this freedom has been to reinterpret our tradition; not so much suffering humiliating self- division as suggested by Nandy. Rather an arduous self- interpretation has been attempted by the best minds of modern India to understand its meaning in its contemporary setting. In short, to be self-interpretive has also been an authentic way of being free in modern India. Aurobindo's life in this sense, remains for a person like me, authentic in so far as it is interpretive.

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Youth and Politics : The Pursuit of Significance

By

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Youth is a hurrah-word of our times and youthfulness is a distinction by itself. Yet, sociologists are rather skeptical about its true condition. One modern sociologist¹ says that youth is "a time of alternating between estrangement and omnipotentiality." The estrangement grows out of the psychological sense of incongruence between self and interpersonal, social and phenomenological world, while omnipotentiality is the feeling that one is capable of totally transforming anything and everything. Modern youth's propensity for experimentation for its own sake is tremendous. Apart from being a novel phenomenon in the history of civilizations, this propensity to experiment in the realm of ideas as well as life-styles is essentially at the root of a large number of youth movements that kept cropping up in the last century. Driven by individualistic world view, these protests, movements and experiments bring forth modern youth's conviction that ideas and institution are disposable commodities, contemporaneity is better guide than eternity, and the youth are well within their rights to tailor the world according to their dreams and designs. However, when complexity and obduracy of the world prove overwhelming and their Spartan spirits are not able to cope with the enormity of situations and problems, the young call the world mad and world calls them rebels and cranks. Youth has never been and is not devoid of idealism, but the idealism of modern youth is too soft and too sure.