

THE MATRUBHABAN

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Sri Aurobindo's work in Orissa is an enigma and so is Matrubhaban and everything else related to this great movement. When I say great it does not mean great in the sense all man-made movements - be they revolutions or reforms- are great. For in our times we have seen many such movements and we know how soon humanity having tasted its last fruit strides away in search of other experiments of the kind. The battle is fought and refought and man keeps on moving in the charmed circle.

Sri Aurobindo's message besides being revolutionary in content is also revolutionary in approach. His writings- most of it- are in English. He likes no propaganda of publicity and has kept himself away from public contact while through long spiritual endeavour developed his own line of action. Most of the people who have turned towards him have come to know him after he left his body. The vast body of knowledge- the literature he has left- is the visible source through which people can contact him. But he has spoken to the soul of humanity and an ever increasing number of aspirants is seen making a beeline to Pondicherry where his most unconventional Ashram is situated on the sea-shore of the town which was formerly the capital of French India.

Against such a background an extensive and powerful working of the spiritual force emanating out of the Ideal set forth by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is a visible enigma though it may not be so to the awakened vision of a spiritual person. Till 1950, when Sri Aurobindo left his body there were very few sadhaks from Orissa in the Ashram. Sri Ram Krishna Das was an outstanding personality devoted to his Sadhana. It was he who acted as the sole source of inspiration and pulled to the fold of the devotees. Prof. Kangali Charan Pati- later on known as Prapatti- acting in close collaboration with Sri Ram Krishna Das moved through the length and breadth of Orissa taking the message of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo to which the people turned with readiness and enthusiasm. The way people of Orissa responded to the message of Sri Aurobindo has been most surprising specially in view of the fact that the state of Orissa can not claim a high position in the scale of English Education or material prosperity. This gives lie to the objection of the people who label Sri Aurobindo as being inaccessible because of the language he uses and of the unconventional attitude of the Ashram which has been the sole creation of The Mother who was born in France. That spirituality like sunshine and air is universal and is available to those who aspire for it. Of this truth Orissa is a standing demonstration.

It was twenty-five years ago that Matrubhaban was founded. The plot on which it stands was donated by Sri U. N. Samantray. It has the suggestive figure of a boat in the middle of which a raised platform which enshrines the Relics of Sri Aurobindo. An extensive area around it provides the sitting arrangement for sadhaks who come to meditate around the samadhi. This covers a pool of water with fishes swimming in number and providing relief to the eye of the onlookers. Matrubhaban soon became a place of attraction for those who sought peace and solace in the atmosphere vibrating with the living Presence of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

In Orissa Sri Aurobindo's yoga initiated a many pronged movement in life. Education became one of its main fields Matrubhaban soon developed as one of the most prominent centres in the province. The school in Matrubhaban was started with the young kids admitted to the kindergaten class. But as natural to Sri Aurobindo's yoga the child became a medium to introduce a new discipline in the family. He became an open window that admitted a new light and air into family atmosphere. The movement gathered force and whole state came under the spell of the transforming movement of life Sri Aurobindo's Yoga proposes to man.

Matrubhaban, since it is established in Cuttack which with Bhubaneswar forms the centre of life of the state and houses the authority both political and financial, has been able to conduct itself as a veritable centre of inspiration. People from all corners of Orissa are in touch with this centre. The flame of sadhana has been kept burning through the sincere devotion of individuals receiving constant help and guidance from Sri Ramkrishna Dasji of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Shrine housing the Relics of Sri Aurobindo has kept the atmosphere vibrant with the living presence of the Masters. Even a short stay there of a brief contact with the atmosphere assuages the strained feeling of an afflicted person. Though visitors keep pouring all day long, every morning and evening they flock in larger number to meditate in the atmosphere which induces inwardness and peace. Beyond all formalities beyond all distinction of caste or creed or sex, people can come here with spontaneous ease like a child to its mother.

Matrubhaban is an example, a hope. It inspires love in the heart left lone and depressed. It is a window on the Next Future of mankind. Mother and Sri Aurobindo through their unique tapasya have built this Future for humanity. Matrubhaban is a flower symbol offered to this vision of the Master.