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Spiritual Philosophy in the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo

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Abstract

The present paper titled “Spiritual Philosophy in the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo” is a modest attempt to elucidate the tropes of spiritual philosophy in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo has set his place and principles with his acute writing and exploration of spiritual philosophy. Aurobindo was a preacher of spiritual philosophy. He was an instructor, a radiant scholar, a lyricist, a political leader of his time, a commentator and journalist, a highly philosopher and thinker, a playwright, a literary critic, a reader, translator and true forecaster and interpreter of the Vedas, the Gita and the Upanishads. His writings and works present a new and pioneering way to follow for the entire humanity. The present paper reveals that the poetry of Sri Aurobindo is experimentation of his spiritual journey. It is an experiment with life to discover its wonders and mysteries. It is a spiritual journey to self-discovery, that is to say, freedom from the limitation brought about by ego-sense and discovery of one’s true identity. As a result of this spiritual adventure, the poet comes into possession of a luminous poetic vision that adds beauty and authenticity to his poetic expression.

Keywords: Spirituality, Philosophy, Internal Yoga, Upanishads, Hinduism.

Sri Aurobindo was educated in London and Cambridge; he was sternly a patriotic right from his student life. In his school life, he had studied the great European thinkers of the 18th to 19th centuries. He was powerfully affected by Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna and had overvalued the mysticism of India in all his writings and works. His early life, his view on history, politics, vision for India and other nations of the world, and most significant writings all these contributions which make him glowing personality in literary celestial of his age. Sri Aurobindo is widely known for his works: *The Life Divine* (1939), *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1940), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1876), *Essays on the Gita* (1922), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919), *The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development* (1949), *Human Cycle, Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self Determination* (1949), *The Upanishads* (1945), *Secret of the Veda* (1949), *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (1934), *The Mother* (1928), *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1923), *The Future Poetry* (1953), *Lights on Yoga* (1930), and *Letters on Yoga* (1930). He was a prolific writer, produces a large number of works. His works were critically acclaimed worldwide. He joined the Indian movement for independence from British rule, for a while was one of its influential leaders, and then became a spiritual reformer, introducing his visions on human progress and spiritual and philosophical progression. He was nominated two times for the Nobel Prize in 1943 for Literature and in 1950 for Peace. He has a great contribution to the Indian literary Renaissance, and Indian Writing in English. Thus,

he is a world-renowned personality known all over the world for his spiritual poetry and philosophy.

The present paper also explores a critical survey of the author's career and his literary acquaintance along with providing a brief outline of Sri Aurobindo's early life, education, various philosophies, and a brief appraisal of his major literary works. The major part of Sri Aurobindo's life is his discipline for Internal Yoga, doing and practice of Yoga; Aurobindo spent almost his entire life, so it is essential to acknowledge Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy and practice of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo has enormous contribution in the field of literature and he has given his supreme excellence in writing. His range of writing covers almost the entire world of literature with his highly philosophical and spiritual sense. The theme of love and spirituality has always been the first choice of poets of all ages. The poets of significant value in the field of Indo-English poetry have composed many poems on the themes of love and spirituality. Some men of letters like Manmohan Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Kamala Das, etc. have composed many love poems. In the same way, Sri Aurobindo Ghose has also an interest in the treatment of love, spirituality, and philosophy in his writing. His poetical works deal with both kinds of love- physical love and spiritual love.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose is the poet of love and spirituality. He touches on the notion of metaphysical poetry of John Donne and his contemporaries. His poetry is the symbol of passion, power, and spirituality. There are so many difficulties and hindrances on the way of love but finally, love wins. The concept of "Soul and Oversoul" is used in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo in the light of spiritual philosophy. The term "Over-soul" has more recently come to be used by Eastern philosophers such as Meher Baba and others as the closest English language equivalent of the Vedic concept of Paramatman. In Sanskrit, the word param means "supreme" and atman means "soul"; thus Paramatman means "Supreme-Soul". The term is used commonly in the discussion of Eastern metaphysics and has also entered the Western vernacular. In this context, the term "Over-soul" is understood as the collective indivisible Soul, of which all individual souls or identities are included. The experience of this underlying reality of the indivisible "I am" state of the Over-soul is said to be veiled from the human mind by sanskaras, or impressions, acquired throughout evolution and reincarnation. Such past impressions form a kind of cover between the Over-soul and its true identity, as they give rise to the tendency of identification with the gross differentiated body. Thus, the world, as apperceived through the impressions of the past appears plural, while reality experienced in the present, unencumbered by past impressions- the unconditioned or liberated mind, perceives itself as the one indivisible totality, that is the Over-soul.

Sri Aurobindo describes three essentials that make poetry a mantra, the Mantra, poetic expression of the highest spiritual reality, is only possible when the three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, the highest intensity of rhythmic movement, the highest intensity of interwoven verbal form and thought-substance, of style, and the highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. Rhythm is an essential element of poetry. It is commonly understood as metrical work of art or rhyming. However, all metrical compositions are not necessarily true poetry. The rhythm at its highest corresponds to the rhythm in the Universe, for it has a harmonious rhythm. Similarly, poetry that catches the universal rhythm can prolong for ages. It is this rhythm that is at once realized by the soul within. Metrical compositions that plead only to the ear or intellect are short-lived. Sri Aurobindo, a great philosopher, poet, dramatist, and social reformer composed milestone symbolical poetry and wrote theoretical essays. He has presented symbolic poetry in a new phase with legend poetry and poetry on social-economic

conditions. He gave a new philosophical dimension to English poetry. He was also Yoga Guru and launched a study center in Pondicherry. He presented English poetry in a new philosophical and symbolical form. He uses Indian themes, Indian sentiments, Indian mythology, and Indian imagery.

The symbolism of Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a blend of Eastern and Western thoughts, however, it must be said that it is dominated by a unique Indian touch. Before beginning on a study of the dominant and recurrent symbols in Sri Aurobindo's poetry— that is, excluding his major epic Savitri, the symbolism of which demands an independent study—one should first take note of the quality and profundity of Sri Aurobindo's symbols. As has been stated already, the symbolist expression that we find in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is not the result of conscious effort on the part of the poet. If his knowledge of Indian mythology has given rise to such symbols as Savitri, Urvashie, and the like, his knowledge of the Vedas has given him such symbols as Ahana, Fire, Bird, Ocean, Flower, and Light and Darkness.

Sri Aurobindo's symbols illustrate their origin strength and power. Sri Aurobindo believed that the secret of Veda is of a psychological order. Sri Aurobindo has successfully achieved this understanding and hence his symbols from the Vedas are pregnant with deep spirituality. It is the same understanding which has enabled him to adopt these Vedic and mythological symbols successfully and make them his own. His understanding of the Vedas and the epics have given rise to a distinctly Aurobindonean interpretation and the symbols that he adopted from the traditional classical thought, bear this distinctive touch.

Thus, after a discussion of his writings, I found the journey of inner consciousness, spiritual essence, and the endeavor of every humankind in this world. Throughout his writing, he seems, standing on the half-opened and half-closed door for the higher knowledge, advancement, and achievement of the level of 'Supermind' and 'Superman' with his cosmic knowledge and self-experienced philosophy of spirituality, for all living person on earth. This door is the door for human liberation and individual to find out his or her real identity and make free themselves from this material worldly, temporary life, pain, suffering and enjoy their real identity which is peaceful, supreme, free, powerful, in short, it is about to achieve a heavenly place of man on this world. He gives his supporters whatever he read, felt, experienced from his inner part. He spent all his life in the upliftment of entire humanity and betterment of their place on this world which one can be found in all his writings and letters.

This is an unreasonable fact that spiritual philosopher like Sri Aurobindo has not been explored much till now. He had performed many interesting, giant philosophical works such as *The Life Divine* which contains above one thousand pages and is divided into two books and almost fifty-seven chapters, it is full of spiritual awareness and philosophical essays. In the same way, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, etc. contains around seven hundred pages. There is a lot of works and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo which offer intelligent examination and pure research task when we compare him with other contemporary persons of his age. Luckily, here I got that chance and examined his spiritual evolution philosophy through examining his several writing and his views on India during the time Renaissance in the world.

Sri Aurobindo presents a convincing argument concerning the potential of the human being as well as the chance of its realization, backed up by his personal experiences and example. Humans have a choice in their evolution. He has presented us with in-depth details regarding knowledge about ourselves, concerning numerous and important; different types of consciousness that humans either do or can possess. The subtleties of the consciousness that we already have are delved into and both expanded and

expounded on. Sri Aurobindo has, both implicitly and explicitly, presented evidence of how he views intelligence.

Considerably, a large number of Sri Aurobindo's poems are based on narratives from ancient times, legends, or myths. The stories, legends, and myths have been repeatedly brought before us through various literary genres in the course of our literary history. But every single story, legend, or myth used by Sri Aurobindo in his works bears the mark of his special treatment and refashioning. Sri Aurobindo's poems stand on a philosophical base without which they would provide little meaning. The second question is a complex one. The previous discussion on Nature in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo highlights three aspects of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The first is his use of essentials of material nature that he received as abiding influences from his reading of the Romantic and Victorian poets during his stay in England. However, a study of his poems explores his treatment of material nature led to critical positions on issues such as love and separation, life and death, meaning and purpose of existence on earth.

His early poems do not offer solutions, but the uneasiness they reflect hints at and anticipate Sri Aurobindo's examination of the philosophical basis of life and nature that becomes almost the norm in his poetic career at Baroda and later at Pondicherry. It was possibly natural that a poet who suffered much at the contemplation of death, decay, and separation as is apparent in his early works, would evolve into a philosopher who offered solutions to them. The second aspect of Sri Aurobindo's nature poetry highlights something perhaps more unique than the first. Much of his reading of man and Nature as is apparent in his poems from the second decade of the twentieth century are manifestations of his realization as a yogi. As such these poems, irrespective of their types, have a definite mystical aura around them. The third aspect, more like a privilege for the readers of his poetry, is that the philosophical content of his poems finds significant convergence in the import of his prose tracts. This convergence makes consistent interpretations of many of Sri Aurobindo's poems easier.

This study highlighted numerous instances where many of the poems of Sri Aurobindo come into view as effective illustrations of aspects of his philosophical thesis. A comprehensive examination of this critical issue would involve an extensive study of his biography regarding his spiritual pursuits which were outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, this issue might be explored as interdisciplinary studies on Sri Aurobindo become more popular among researchers than at present. It has been shown that the task before Sri Aurobindo in his poetic exploration of philosophical issues was a difficult one. This difficulty is because of the perpetual challenge to interrelate the abstract with the concrete since no poetic composition would be possible without images, usually concrete.

The methodology chosen was to associate Sri Aurobindo's spiritual and philosophical writings on Nature and the treatment of Nature in his poems. It is apparent from this study that there is a consistency of approach in Sri Aurobindo which makes an integral study of his poetry and philosophy possible. It may also be stated that his poems are effective illustrations of his thesis of evolutionary Spiritual Philosophy. In Sri Aurobindo's poetry, no action is useless, no character exists without justification and no image is extraneous to feel the grand design of Spiritual Philosophy. Significantly, a poet who begins his career with a lamentation of death writes an extensive final epic dealing with the defeat of Death and the divinization of earth-Nature. Judged in this framework Sri Aurobindo's poems appear to be exercised in the evolution of his realization and, interestingly, his evolution as a yogi match significantly with the various stages of Spiritual Philosophy depicted in his poems.

A poet dealing with Spiritual Philosophy in his poems essentially discusses a balance between two nearly contrary approaches to nature. The first approach defines the natural world as the purest expression of the creative spirit in the cosmos, and the oversight lies in seeking to understand its workings. The other approach interprets Nature as a symbol waiting to be understood and affirmed through words in harmony. This thesis argues that Sri Aurobindo's poetry becomes a platform where the two attitudes are integrated. With Savitri, the divine 'script' ceases to be 'wondrous' as the final destiny of evolving Spiritual Philosophy is attained. Sri Aurobindo's poems are examples of the integration of the two attitudes to life. The 'definite forms' are never transcended but taken along as the higher levels of temperament are reached and the divine 'script' ceases to be 'wondrous' once the workings of the evolutionary temperament and its final fortune are unraveled.

Sri Aurobindo's masterstroke for the statement is spirituality in Indian people and their minds. He believed that such a mind is endless. With this sight, life cannot be attending and living through just its outer side. It is strongly noticed that Indian creativeness and genuineness are prolific. The final words on Sri Aurobindo's works that he comes at the concerning point of the possibility of all humankind and it is extremely important for the entire humanity. It is just the elevation of the various stages of consciousness and awareness of a person as a being towards religious studies and spirituality, and then them living, in the human body a divine life on earth. The revolution of the awareness and realization of man which Sri Aurobindo predicts is towards an awareness of a 'Supermind' or 'Superman'; it is superior to the ordinary human being as he is currently comprised.

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