

Sri Aurobindo: A Mystic of Par Excellence

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Sri Aurobindo is an outstanding figure in Indo – Anglican literature. He has an international reputation as a mystical philosopher. He was born on 15 August, 1872. Besides being a philosopher, he was also a yogi, guru and a poet. He is a spiritual reformer. He spoke on human progress and spiritual evolution through his work of art. He developed a method of spiritual practice which is called Integral Yoga. He believed in a spiritual realization that not only liberated man but also transformed his nature, enabling a divine life on earth. His main literary works are 'The Life Divine'. It deals with theoretical aspects of Integral Yoga. His notable work is 'Synthesis of Yoga'. It is a practical guidance to Integral Yoga. 'Savitri' is an epic poem.

Between 1910 and 1914 Aurobindo published research on the Vedas, the Upanishads, linguistics and other subjects. He also wrote some finely crafted essays on spiritual and cultural subjects. This got published in 'Essays Divine and Human' and poems that are transcripts of spiritual experience on aspiration. 'Meditation of Mandavya' records the moods of Bhakti. The transformation of life Aurobindo speaks of must include a remodeling of human society. In 'The Human Cycle', Aurobindo traces the evolution of human cultures from the 'symbolic' stage to the age of rationalism and individualism.

Sri Aurobindo, a great sage of modern India, flooded the entire world with the shower of spiritual consciousness. He revolutionized the human thought and had tremendous impact on the people all over the world. As a poet, he is endowed with a poetic consciousness that is unobtrusively committed to achieving social betterment and spiritual consciousness. He shows a piercing and instantaneous insight into the heart of his subject. He mastered several poetic modes but then, he evolved a writing style of his own that would be in line with his spiritual thought.

Sri Aurobindo is a great mystic poet and philosopher. According to Sri Aurobindo poetry is the mantra. It is the words heard from the innermost soul of the seer poet. The seer poet gets visions, only when the mind is evolved and it merges with Sachidananda. His realization of the infinite makes him a mystic.

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Aurobindo possesses an insight into the things around him. He reveals the beauty and reality which cannot be seen from the ordinary men. To Aurobindo, the poet has been the 'child of divine'. Poetry overflows with full of living energy, and its creation will be ever fresh and new. We can find this specialty and freshness in his poems. His poems are powered with divine, spiritual and mystical elements. The poem, 'Trance of Waiting' is filled with a mystical glow. Here the poet goes to a state of trans. When this mood of trans is overpowering him, he is attaining a luminous sleep:

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,
Murmurs of silence that steep mind in a luminous sleep,
Whispers from things beyond thought in the Secrecy flame –white forever,
Unscanned heights that reply seek from the inconscient deep.
Distant below me the ocean of life with its passionate surges
Pale like a pool that is stired by the wings of a shadowy bird.
Thought has flown back from its wheelings and stoppings, the nerve – beat of living
Stiils; my spirit at peace bathes in a mighty release.

In this moment, the thought is disappearing totally, and supernal wisdom is occupying the mind. In some of the writings of Sri Aurobindo, this approach does exist with various symbols. Wisdom supernal looks down on me, Knowledge mind cannot measure;
Light that no vision can render garments the silence with splendor.
Filled with a rapturous Presence the crowded spaces of being
Tremble with the Fire that knows, thrill with the might of repose.
Earth is now girdled with trance and Heaven is put round her for vesture.
Wings that are brilliant with fate sleep at Eternity's gate.

The blissful experiences and the ecstasies of the soul are reflected through various images. The mystical images and symbols like these, add the beauty and everlasting effect to the poem. The true origin of mysticism is the soul and the true enjoyer of it is none other than the soul. Aurobindo opines that mystical element begins in eternity as well as end in eternity. The mystical elements, in Aurobindo's writings elevate us to the level of the super mind ultimately. Sri Aurobindo was a philosopher par excellence, a poet par excellence, and a rare and superb visionary Sri Aurobindo, a believer in Art for Art's sake and Art for Life's sake at the same time, believed that poetry is the highest form of art and he wished to keep it at the centre of human knowledge and action, as the captain of a rhythmic voyage of self discovery, a mystic fire carrying us forward on the long high road to timelessness.

Mysticism is a tough concept to explain. Aurobindo had quest for realizing the divine truth. He had experienced it. Mystics are those who get visions at the acme of spiritual revelation. He says that man should transcend the conscious level and realize the super conscious level through the medium of yoga. This can be attained by internal surrender or total dedication to the super mind of God.

"The Blue Bird" is a descriptive poem replete with images both literal and abstract. Sometimes both may appear in the same line as in the case: "My pinions soar beyond Time and Space into unfading Light." It is easy to visualize a bird spread its wings and fly but it is difficult to visualize anything beyond time and space. Sri Aurobindo's Blue Bird is a mystic who has witnessed all. His freedom is born of true knowledge, "Nothing is hid from my burning heart" and consequently he has a mind that is "shoeless and still". The integrality of the spiritual experience and aspiration of the poet can be seen here. In "The Blue Bird", Aurobindo says,

I rise like a fire from the mortal earth
Into a griefless sky
And drop in the suffering soil of his birth
Fire seeds of ecstasy.

What the poet means is the ascent of consciousness towards the Divine and a returning descent of the higher consciousness into the lower physical consciousness. The intergral participation of all the different parts of the nature in the realization has to be noted. There is reference to the mind, heart, will and the senses. The following lines reveal this:

I bring the bliss of the Eternal's face
And the boon of the Spirit's sight
I measure the worlds with my ruby eyes;
I have preached on Wisdom's tree
Thronged with the blossoms of Paradise
By the streams of Eternity.
Nothing is hid from my burning heart,
My mind is shoeless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My fight immortal will.

The poem 'Rose of God' unfolds mysticism about the secrets of the Divine Rose. The poet reflects on the five essences that fuse as the integral perfection of God – Bliss, Light, Power, Life and Love. Every word in 'Rose of God' is profound and leads to the revelation of spiritual reality. According to Sri Aurobindo, the rising of the sun in the sky at dawn produces the seven coloured spectrum. This spectrum stands for the seven levels of ecstasy defined in Yoga tenants like 'Yoga Vasishtha'. We get the picture of it in the following lines:

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
Rose of Bliss, fire –sweet, seven – tinged with the ecstasies seven!
Lead up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,
Passion – flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

The eagerness of God to come to man is powerfully underlined by the symbol of the sun rising in the sky. The Rose of God is addressed as Wisdom. The miracle is said to happen in the heart of man. The poem also discusses the transformation in the mind of man. Light represents unclouded knowledge. The poet calls the Sun a golden flower of mystery. It also comes down to man in time as an incarnation. This incarnation is what the poet calls the guest of the marvelous hour. The descent of the Super mind depends on the Grace of God. This can be read in these lines:

Rose of God, great wisdom – bloom on the summits of being,
Rose of light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!
Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,
Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

For the poet, the Sun is the image of Immortality. An image is finite, but what it represents is Infinite. In the short period of a man's life, if the life is divinized, it can have eternal significance.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,
Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Life is multifaceted and comparable to a flower with multi-layer petals. The colours run the whole gamut just as a lyre speaks all the octaves of music. The poet is referring to the Sahasrara, or the thousand petals lotus where Siva and Parvathi, the parents of the universe, are seated. According to Tantric lore, the kundaline that has risen up to the Sahasrara returns downwards by the grace of God. As a result the physical body is transformed into the finest form of divinity which the poet refers to as sweet rhyme. When the super mind descends, earth and heaven merge and mortal becomes immortal. Life becomes eternal. Aurobindo calls it "The Rose of Life".

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
Rose of life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!
Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;
Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire – passion of Grace!
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss:
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's kiss.

Much of Aurobindo's poetry was spiritual in inspiration. Aurobindo found poetry more suitable for the expression of inner experience.

"A God's Labor" is a beautiful poem. It is Indian in its theme. It brings out to an extent the secret path that yogis tread. In the poem "I" refers to the poet narrator and "you" refers to God. The poet describes the world as a mirage highlighting the materialistic aspects of life which can be an impediment for the spiritual life. Hence, the elements of purgation in the mystic journey can be noticed here:

I saw that a false hood was planted deep
At the very root of things.

The inner voice keeps the poet seer moving onwards and onwards. It is revealed thus:

Dig deeper, deeper yet

"A voiced cried; Go where none have gone !

Till thou reach the grim foundation stone

And knock at the keyless gate.

The poet magnificently describes his mystical and mysterious journey. He also reveals that it is only through hard efforts on the earth one can aspire for the liberation. The following lines reveal this:

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth

And the undying suns here burn.

The poet then goes on to tell that every man has a true divinity in himself. It has to be discovered through the stages of purgation, illumination, dark night of the soul and ultimately the union with God. Aurobindo feels that humanity can lead towards the divinized humanity.

There shall move on the earth embodied and fair

There are powerful imageries in the poem. The poem reveals the animalistic tendencies in the human life. Even the bad and the ugly part of existence attain a beautiful description in the hands of a great literary master.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,

The Light of lights they refuse;

To ignorant gods they lift their cry

Or a demon altar choose.

This is a metaphysical discovery. The poem reveals that it is not God, but mankind who has to strive to reach salvation. Each of us has a true, divine self. This thought of Aurobindo can be reflected in the following lines:

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,

For a raiment of gold and blue

There shall move on the earth embodied and fair

The living truth of you.

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