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Sri Aurobindo: A Postmodern Sublime Poet

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Among all the leading poets of the early twentieth century Indian English poets Sri Aurobindo is vibrant with the contemporary literary ethos—modernism vis-a-vis postmodernism. His modernism was not haunted by what T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound found during the First World War rather pressed by his inner urge of Sublime. Sri Aurobindo's Muse was drenched in the showers of Sublime. He had been a great Indian religious, philosophical and social thinker as well as postmodern sublime poet. The great spiritual master was born on 15 August 1872 in an aristocratic and anglicised family in Calcutta. Sri Krishnandan Ghose, his father, was among them who first went to England for his medical education and returned with anglophilic blood in his veins. Certainly, the early life of that mystic poet was moulded under the parasol of his father's anglicised habits, ideas and ideals. His father's anglophilic disposition induced him to keep his children away from the Indian ways of life. On the contrary Sri Aurobindo's mother Swarnlata Devi belonged to the clan of great Indian Renaissance man of the nineteenth century, Rishi Rajnarayan Bose. She was the adviser of the new composite culture of Indian soil. Dr. Krishnandan Ghose's inner temperament forced him to nurture him in English atmosphere and not from native ways and native language. As a result of that Sri Aurobindo along with his elder brothers Sri Manmohan Ghose and Sri Benoy Bhushan Ghose were admitted to Loreto Convent School at Darjeeling. Evidently, he was accustomed to use English language as his mother tongue. In 1879 they were sent to England to continue their study without acquainted with native language and customs. At the tender age of seven Sri Aurobindo got his early education under the care of Rev. William H. Drewett and Mrs. Drewett who trained him in English, Latin, French and History. In 1884, he got admission at St. Paul's School, London and studied there for six years. The excellence and talent of Sri Aurobindo caught the attention of Dr. Walker, the headmaster of the school. Showing classical languages and literature during school days enriched his creative genius and cultivated the soil to bear fruit. During his very

childhood he was conferred with the 'Bedford Prize' in history and 'Butterworth Prize' in literature. That legendary figure spent a tough life in England. Due to his father's extravagance, his resources were meagre. For many years he had to often survive on a frugal diet which made himself reliance and perfect. He won a scholarship that facilitated him to enrol in King's College, Cambridge where he obtained graduation degree with a first class in classical Tripos. At Cambridge, Oscar Browning was remarkably captivated by the wisdom and intelligence of Sri Aurobindo. He was well versed in European languages such as English Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian. Despite his full time involvement in spiritual solitude, meditating, contemplating and writing he was associated with other worldly life.

After attainment of realisation Sri Aurobindo administered his creative and spiritual work a new orientation. He was liberated from this world on 5th December, 1950 but considered as the finest flower of Indian Renaissance which began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and finally culminated in Indian Independence.

Sri Aurobindo plunged himself into inner and outer activities of India. In the early phase of his life he was a powerful nationalist which was not merely a Chauvinistic approach to anti-colonialism. In his opinion, nationalism is a 'yajna' and he worshipped his motherland as Goddess. He was a staunch advocate of the liberation of humanity from the colonial yoke, which moulded his mind as a postmodernist thinker. From 1905 to 1910, he emerged as a 'meteor' in the firmament of Indian Freedom Struggle. He became the spokesperson of the conscience and aspiration of the Indian masses. During his 'ashramvas' (imprisonment), he was spiritually enlightened with the philosophy of Upanishad:

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"Ishavasyamidam Sarvam yat Kincha jagatyam jagat¹ .

The entire universe is pervaded by the same spiritual power. He was deeply involved in spiritual quest. He propagated the philosophy of Integral whole - i.e. life cannot be compartmentalised into the intellectual, the emotional, the material, the psychological and the spiritual. He was aiming at the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. He was charged with extraordinary knowledge and wisdom. He produced a large number of great seminal works viz. – 'The Secret of Vedas',

'Essays on the Gita', 'Life Divine' and 'Savitri' etc. These divine creations placed him at the height of sublimity.

A realised spiritual French lady Mirra Alfasa popularly known as Mother came into contact with Sri Aurobindo. This was one of the greatest spiritual meetings of human history. It was mother who conceived the concept of Auroville. It has come up against a lot of problems, a lot of difficulties and conflicts. It finds the inner door and opens on to deeper consciousness in this hour of darkness, strife and unrest. It is reminiscent with Omar Khayyam:

There was a door to which I found no key,

There was veiled past which I could not see,

Some little talk a while of thee and me

There was, and then no more of me and thee².

Sri Aurobindo combined an intellect of the highest order with a rarely equalled spiritual force that transcended the limits of time and space. He had an unshakable faith in the future of this great country. His post modernistic view forced him to foresee a world union providing a fairer, brighter and noble life for all humankind. He advocated for dual or multicultural citizenship and interchange or fusion of different cultures. Thus, he was a global visionary, which is one of the ingredients of Postmodernism.

The postmodernism is a literary movement which developed from the trend of modernism or aestheticism. It is a literary movement exists in the penumbra of the umbra of modernism. It is not a departure of modernism. It makes man empirical. It is a movement based on liberal ethics. It champions the cause of depressed classes. It propagates the message to preserve Mother Earth or maintain balance in Eco-System. It believes in World Unity. It propagates the message of Universal brotherhood. It advocates about society free from narrow division. It tries to revive ancient philosophy with empirical mind. Postmodernists raise voice against the abuses of science and inhuman use of natural wealth. They worry about the fatal

condition of the world in near future. Postmodernism is just like a reawakening of diseased mind. It is a movement which has similarity with the movements developed during the age of satire. Postmodernists move forward to change the go of society.

Postmodernism is a medicine to cure the chronic diseases of society viz.- immorality, animal passion, lust, corruption, slavery of sense organs, pseudo-pride, terrorism, pollution, treachery, lack of nationalism, pseudo-power-consciousness, pseudo-rationality, or empiricism etc.

It is his creativity that forces him to highlight the geniuses of the greatest classicist of world literature. He also deals with the good qualities of Bengali literary artists. He adopted their qualities and characteristics for his mental richness. He tried to suggest people to follow footprints of these writers. His poems are inspirational in nature. These are the mantras of reformation and reawakening which stood him as a postmodern poet with sublime vision. Thus, his Early Poems also reflect his empirical view. His long narratives provide solution for post-modern unrest and dissatisfaction. His early poems are effusions in terms of sensuous and impassioned verse of a rich adolescent sensibility. After Yogic practice, he felt his inner power of lyrical vein. He attained perfection to project sublime, perfect and the maturest poetry. His early lyrics are expressions of his spiritual states and consciousness. Some of his early philosophical poems are projected from his vedantic ideas and ideals. They also provide solution for eradication of vices from society. It is Sri Aurobindo who propagated the message of peace, pleasure and solace which are the demands of the postmodern society. The poet has rendered his mystical experiences and spiritual consciousness in these poems.

Most of his sonnets present his philosophic concept. They are the reflections of delight of divine realizations. There are the poems of concentrated purity and the language of intuitive expressions. It comprehends dimensions that are cosmic and supracosmic. Its classical story deals with the victorious fight of love against death. The complete 'Savitri' is the fruit of almost twenty five years of Sri Aurobindo's mental exercise.

Thus, the canvas of Savitri is as wide as cosmos. It is the treasure house of mysticism, occultisms, philosophy, and history of evolution, history of man, empiricism, sublimity and seeds of post modernism. It is the outcome of the richest symbolic mind of Sri Aurobindo. It depicts the Vedic idea of strife between powers of Light and Powers of Darkness. The poem reflects man's unquenchable thirst for perfection and the thirst for immortality. It is based on these postmodern ideas of later twentieth century. The story attains its cosmic significance and the fate of Satyavan rings with the destiny of man. This story turns impossible into possible. Savitri very firmly challenges the rule of nature, which echoes the post modernistic view of the poet. Man is capable to change his destiny without the help of divine grace. Sri Aurobindo himself remarks:

It has been planned not on the scale of Lycidas or Camus or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative almost a mirror, though a very minor-Ramayana, it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world vision or world-interpretation that is the method. I have chosen in Savitri ³ .

The vastness of subject matter and treatment distinguishes "Savitri" from the other epics. The great classical poet Dante describes of Inferno, Hell through which the human spirit has to pass to arrive at purgatory to be purified of its dross to reach the vision Divine and the earth remains condemned as a 'vale of tears'. Milton also wants to 'justify the ways of God to Man'. However, they could not succeed in their mission. It is "Savitri" which refracts the 'hope and fulfilment' on earth. It weaves the conditions of man's highest fulfilment in its epic pattern. A. B. Purani has very aptly remarked that:

In raising this basic problem of elimination of the Inconscient, the cause of man's subjection to his imperfection, suffering and evil, Savitri is unique and goes deeper than other epics towards its solution. It calls out the Divine that is hidden at present in the human mould to deal direct

with the problem of man's emancipation and establishment of the Divine
Kingdom on Earth⁴.

"Savitri" was composed at the highest pitch of mental consciousness. It is the mixture of highest manner and poetic technique. It is a beautiful poem of sublime thought.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo in his poetry fused the concept of empiricism. From his Cambridge creation to Pondicherry creative workshop, he has shown sublimity vis-a-vis postmodernism. His poetry is just like a dormant seed of Post-modernism latent for centuries in the fertile soil, which ultimately takes its full shape during latter half of the twentieth century.

Sri Aurobindo is an evolutionist and gradualist who is always ready to transform the Universe. His concept of 'Internationalism' has been emerged out of his concept of 'Nationalism'. It is rightly observed that nation is essentially spiritual in its origin and character. In his metaphysical vein, he affirms that the nations of the world are different manifestations of an indivisible spiritual principle, the Virata Purusha, the Great Being. His emphasis for world union reflects his ambivalence of political sociology.

Broadly speaking his leading ideas are sociological in formulation despite metaphysical in origin. Sri Aurobindo is the advocate of middle path of Lord Buddha. He is in favour of avoiding extremes of this universe. That is just like a bondage or hindrance in the path of divine success. It is not wise to ignore empirical view. Really speaking he attained perfection to reach at the apex point of mental and spiritual consciousness. He projects his perfection, spirituality and sublimity in his writings. Despite his whimsical escapism, he established himself as the Sublime and Postmodern thinker of this world. To tell the truth Sri Aurobindo remains a perfect example of Hero as poet and Hero as a Man of Letters as propounded by Thomas Carlyle.

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