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Sri Aurobondo's Vision of the Evolution of Spiritual Consciousness in English Poetry

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Sri Aurobindo was a mystic poet who besides having a scientific and artistic bent of mind was also a great Yogi. His poetry proves to be a blissful blend of Science and Poetry on the one hand and yoga and poetry on the other. He shows the way to the poetic world the possibility of bringing about a spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness to its spiritual planes where the Mantra lives. Such an evolution of consciousness he finds to be 'the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence'. He says:

"A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in matter in a constant developing self- formation till the form can reveal the indwelling Spirit, is then the key-note, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence."

Sri Aurobindo visualizes consciousness at different levels above and below human mental consciousness. Below human consciousness are the decreasing levels of consciousness of the animal, the sub-animal, the plant, the sub-plant consciousness and at the lowest level is the nescience of Matter. Above human consciousness, there

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opens the vision of an infinity, the vision of an eternal presence, an infinity of consciousness, a boundless self, a boundless light of several layers. The nature of these heights is not known or clearly discerned by the mental consciousness, but some consequences of their descent are felt. By degrees there ensues the dawning of knowledge and experience of those superior planes. Human knowledge of the material world is apparently dependent upon human senses which need stimuli from without. But this is only a partial account of the fact as given by science. As a matter of fact, the sensations which our minds get from outside and which our mind records as our own individual experience or knowledge, would be simply blind and barren without the prior experiencing of an eternal impersonal knowledge which pre-descends from above overmental regions in intuitional flashes, - the overmental which is the Summit of the spiritual consciousness on the plane of mind as Sri Aurobindo finds. All Scientific and artistic knowledge have this intuition as their nucleus. Above human mind, says Sri Aurobindo, there are the overmind and supermind planes of existence, too mighty to be bound by thought; there is a life, too boundless to have its play in the space of the world. There is a soul without borders, and unbound by time. It is a world where nication has no place; all is consciousness and made of the stuff of the Infinite and Eternity.

Human consciousness, however, stands at the cross road where the forces of involution from above and the forces of evolution from below meet. In this world as such all is true and yet all is false; here could be found animality in the same measure as godliness, the former aspiring to exceed itself and the latter degenerating.

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An individual who can develop the mental faculty of standing at the aforesaid cross-road and can witness dispassionately both the upward and downward forces in simultaneously operating individually in his own mind and universally in things outside his mind, operating in all states of consciousness whether awake or sleeping, can do the same even while in the dying state of consciousness, and thereby attain the state of immortality consciousness. Such an individual standing at the cross-road with the 'witness attitude' observes that two contraries are needed for all the great and small world tasks, two poles are necessary for the running of the electric current in the physical world as well as in the world of mind or knowledge. Such a 'witness attitude' on the part of the individual reveals to him that there is one supramental consciousness brooding above the world with equal wings, beginning less and without end. This Supramental while transcending both and entering the Absolute or the Supreme Consciousness, is at the same time lodged in the relative world of time and suffers births and deaths also. The witness self of the individual sees that a Supreme truth has brought the world into existence, nay, the truth has shrouded itself in matter wearing the mask of Death and Ignorance.

The supramental consciousness, says Sri Aurobindo, has differentiated itself into the positive supramental and the negative supramental, the farmer keeping touch with the supreme consciousness beyond time and space and the latter involving itself into the several rungs of lower consciousness in time and space, ultimately involved in matter as if in the somnambulist state of consciousness. The diffused supramental, as stated above, can thus be visualized as stationed

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between the supreme consciousness and the positive-negative supramental consciousness reminding the following lines from TS Eliot's poem Burnt Norton :

"At the still point of the turning world neither

Flesh nor fleshless

Neither from nor towards at the still point,

there the dance is,

But neither arrest or movement

And do not call it fixity

Where past and future are gathered.

Neither movement

From nor towards,

Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point

still point

There would be no dance, there is only the dance

I can only say, there we have been, but I cannot say where

And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place in time."2

This supramental consciousness, as such, could be treated as the summit of evolution of consciousness and forming the bridge between timeless and the time bound, between the specialist and the space bound, aspects of reality. This is not a centralized consciousness at one

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point of a space, the rest of the points playing the role of the reflected reflector only. This is rather at once, the reflector of God's glory as

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well as the reflected playing both the roles in simultaneity. Generation of poets in their own subjective Re, and the scientists in their own objective way have been seeking to analyze and find the relation between the two roles, but have not succeeded so far. This is the point where the subjective and objective poetry could meet; the reflection and the reflected both could be equally conscious, and could participate in the great cosmic game of radiating God's glory from within. However, this is not a fixed state like the other states, but a different consciousness-force coexisting with all the states of consciousness. This epic poem Savitri by Sri Aurobindo is entirely based upon this supramental aspect of reality. The epic story is a legend, a classical mythology taken from the Mahabharata. Sri Aurobindo enables us in this epic to travel through strange overmental psychic worlds, and discover the occult part of man's individuality, opening the gate to the forces which integrate and widen the split personality of modern humanity. The occult part which was so long buried in humanity's subconscious or the collective unconscious now comes to the front and releases a force radiating boundless spiritual ecstasy which, If brought to flow into human body and mind would tend to bring about transformation of even the material contents of the individual mind and body leading them to the same spiritual ecstasy of the Supramental consciousness.

Likewise, cosmically too, when the aforesaid positive supplemental consciousness, symbolized by Savitri, reunites with negative supramental consciousness symbolized by

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Satyavan i.e. the somnambulist state of matter, the first breeze of animated joy blows over the whole creation - individual and universal.

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A secret spirit draws its mighty breath, contracting and expanding this huge world. Its living radiance bursts into the conscious light of stars, and in solid matter a sap of life is felt. The life of beasts and men emerging from the heaving matter is seen and there bursts forth from the heart of all the song of oneness and everlasting bliss. The mute regions stirred with the throb of a soul, darkness yearned towards the eternal light ,and love that lay brooding within the dim abyss of the material atoms now anxiously waits for the answer of the human heart, and death hurriedly climbs to immortality. The life that slumbered in the stone and the sun, the subliminal Mind in the mindless life, and the higher consciousness in the lower ones, all are now waking and have begun to sing the glory and marvel of the God-head So long veiled in their inner recesses.

Now all the world's possibilities that were waiting in man to manifest, are waiting for further growth as the tree waits in its seed. There is the figure of the supramental will; the god we really are, waiting and gazing with a young unaging look on the deathless things.

"Our larger being sits behind cryptic walls,

There are greatnesses hidden in our unseen parts,

That wait there hour to step into life's front;

We feel an aid from deep indwelling Gods."3

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Aurobindonian poetry while providing the cosmic and the transcendent consciousness of the Supramental to English poetry in particular, provides it with a perspective in which it could be possible for it to have a reoriented view of the past centuries of English Poetry and discloses several of the poet cliffs which heretofore lay befogged in the midst of restricted respective. The epic poem also shows how the supramental consciousness, an inalienable power of the supreme consciousness, got differentiated from the latter and placed itself at two modes of consciousness, the positive and the negative. The positive one keeps itself in the nearest touch with the supreme consciousness while the negative one constitutes the phenomenal worlds extending from the overmental world down to the world of matter. All these words are conscious energy vibrations at different frequencies. They are in unison with the primal soundless sound, as it may be called here, born out of the very stir or stress accompanying the aforesaid differentiation into its two modes, the positive and the negative.

So the first stir, a soundless sound (soundless to the human or lower-level ears) travels from the differentiated supramental of the positive end, the negative supramental culminating in matter. Thus the soundless energy descends to the mental level appearing as sound energy to the ear, light energy to the eyes, smell energy to the nose, and as touch energy to the skin. The same vibrations with different frequencies run down to still lower states of consciousness constituting our entities on individual and cosmic levels having different frequencies.

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The role that the primal-conscious but soundless energy vibrations then play as the formative substance of the cosmology in space and time repeats itself simultaneously in the formation of letters and words that constitute the human language including those used in poetry. The rhythmic words of poetry, as such, though being as much in a negative somnambulist state as other things of the cosmology are more susceptible of being impregnated with direct vibrations from the positive supramental. So, these poetic words handled by poets whose consciousness aspires for the positive supramental plane, possessed as they are of the secret knowledge of the origin of the constituents of cosmology get suffused with the vibrations of the soundless primal energy. As a result these words convey not only transcendental experiences of existence, consciousness and bliss blended as one ecstatic experiencing but also changes in the consciousness of other things of space and time. These poetic experiences would be akin to, what Sri Aurobindo calls, *mantric poetry* in the primitive pattern, the vibrations whereof could attract the primal soundless sound and the supramental vibrations to the lower regions of consciousness so that, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, earth's great dull barrier is removed and the inconscient seals from all eyes are lifted. A joyful anguish trembles in all limbs, a dream of beauty dances through each heart and all which could not become symbols of the supreme consciousness as yet, now become so to all intents and purposes.

Now all life is experienced as joined in one union by subtle links so that the whole creation is a single chain. None is left alone in a closed scheme driven by the

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inconsistent force of evolution, rather all feel in their immense dynamic core a cry for the descent and the realization of the ineffable beyond ignorance and death. All hear the word to which their hearts were deaf, and their immortal eyes pursue the spirit of beauty on the roads of line and hue to its home. Here, on the Earth descends the fourth dimension of aesthetic sense where all is in each and each in all.

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