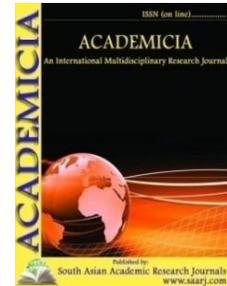


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**LIFE DIVINE: SPIRITUAL AIM BEHIND AUROBINDO'S POLITICS & EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Sri Aurobindo's main aim was to make the Life Divine for everybody. He never believed in individual salvation, rather in collective salvation. Individual life has many faults and we have to overcome it by achieving Mukti or Moksha. However Indian philosophical concept of Mukti is not admissible to him. In Indian philosophy, Mukti has to be gained by only individual, be it Jivan Mukti, Videha Mukti of the Samkhya philosophy or Sarupyo Mukti, Salokyo Mukti, Sajujyo Mukti of the Vedanta philosophy. But his notion of Mukti is the way to call the Supermind upon the Earthen level and to make the lives of other people the perfect instances of the Life Divine like that of the Yogi himself. In this present article I want to show how Sri Aurobindo showed the hidden touch of spirituality even behind his politics and educational theories.*

**KEYWORDS:** Sri Aurobindo, Life Divine, Mukti, Spirituality, Politics, Education.

**INTRODUCTION**

Sri Aurobindo's main aim of developing a social and political thesis is to make the Life Divine of the entire human folk. Collective Salvation is the motto of his dream about the divine life. His political life always set an example to young political aspirants and his yogic life make others spellbound by seeing the inherent charisma of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo is thought to be a magnificent personality with the mind of a Yogi and the brain of an established politician, even though his disciples always consider him a Yogi more than a Politician. Most of them consider

him as a great Yogi, profound Mystic as well as an exceptional philosopher. In this chapter I would like to focus on the inherent Spiritual Aim behind his entire Social and Political system.

In this above context let us first start with the concept of Philosophy of Religion as it seems quite complicated doctrine and very unusual to discover the relationship with this concept with that of Sri Aurobindo. Actually for touching the Spiritual background behind his Social-Political arena, the discussion about the Philosophy of religion seems mandatory in this respect. Whatever may be one's private opinion concerning religion or one's personal attitude to it, one cannot but admire that it is a most necessary and completely outstanding feature of human life. Whoever takes a comprehensive survey of human experience soon will find out the truth of religion – that it remained, remains and has to remain intact within every up-down of human life, history and culture, just as Comte mentioned, 'religion embraces the whole of existence, and the history of religion resumes the entire history of human development'<sup>1</sup>. We should not go far from Max Muller that the true history of man is the history of religion.

### **PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

Religion always implies an interpretation of the nature of reality: it involves an interpretation of the meaning of the whole universe in terms of its value for life. The religious consciousness does not merely 'accept the universe' as it is, but postulates even what is beneath this visible world i.e. the spiritual power deep-rooted available in everywhere of human life. Nevertheless, even the purely empirical study of religion proves to us that the religious consciousness itself points to a super-empirical reality as its ground and support, that therefore its essence is not to be understood empirically, that religion in its development strives for an ideal which derives its validity and authority from 'beyond the veil of sense' – i.e. 'from the beyond that is within', the world of spiritual values which transcends the empirical world of space, time, and events, and yet which is immanent within it as constituting its deeper meaning. Without this ground and support religion is nothing more than a baseless dream, a beautiful illusion with no foundation of objective reality. The inner dissolving of religion into a mere subjective illusion cannot be concealed by its supposed beneficial effects in practice. It can be beneficial in practice only to the extent that the religious consciousness believes that it has the universe behind it. Religion means to be true as well as effective, and effective because true. It contains a knowledge (as yet imperfect, but true as far as it goes) of Supra-sensible realities, a knowledge which is capable of being progressively purified and made more accurate and also adequate. Hence the Philosophy of Religion cannot shrink the task, difficult though it undoubtedly is, of furnishing rational ground for the World view implied in the Religious Consciousness. Now let us start enquiring into three different phenomena concerning the Philosophy of Religion, which are necessary to be studied for understanding its inherent features - 1. Philosophy of Religion has to study the phenomena of religious experience, perhaps for this above said reason; I want to call Sri Aurobindo's inherent Spiritual Aim hidden behind his Social and Political thesis as the prominent example of Philosophy of Religion. This department of our subject is sometimes known to be the Phenomenology of Religion. Now, these phenomena may be studied from two points of view –

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<sup>1</sup> Comte, Positive Policy, vol. ii, quoted by A.S. Pringle-Pattison in *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy* (1917), p. 137.

firstly, from the point of view of the inner or subjective experience of the religious consciousness (the psychological point of view) and secondly, from the standpoint of religious experience as externalized as rites, institutions, events, myths, creeds, theologies (the historical point of view). These two points of view cannot be kept absolutely apart from each other. 2. We also have seen that from the study of the phenomena of religion and of its nature, laws, principles of development, we have to pass on to the question of the validity and adequacy of the religious view of the world. We have to justify it as a reasonable attitude for reasonable beings, or, if it cannot be justified, to show why it is an indefensible attitude. This problem divides into two corollaries – first, there is an epistemological problem. Is the mind of a man competent enough to pronounce judgment on the nature of reality? Is knowledge of the supra-sensible possible? Or is it a contradictory to human experiments in terms to speak as if human experiments could experience all subjects or objects that which actually transcends experience? And what is the true nature of religious knowledge? And what is the nature of the religious knowledge? Is it essentially of the same nature and acquired in the same process like that of a ‘secular’ knowledge? Or is it something qualitatively different from it and of such kind as to be able to penetrate to realms that are closed to ordinary knowledge and out of the reach of the ordinary faculties by which knowledge is acquired? Is faith a higher mode of knowing? Can religious consciousness be able to give you a superior kind of truth? Secondly, there is an ontological problem. Here the problem regarding religion has to be examined in the light of human mind; they have to be further inquired in the light of ultimate reality itself. Is the nature of reality such as to justify the religious view of whole world or it is just a sign of our error and illusion? And what specific form of religious belief, if any, is considered to be the most adequately describe, in other words, express the true nature of the Reality? And is there any format of religious belief ever possible in Reality?

Philosophy of Religion deals with such tricky questions. Actually there is no difference between these two questions in nature. Both of them deal with the same problem regarding the true nature of the super-natural substance of whose existence we always try to confirm. The question regarding the metaphysical, i.e. the supramental mold in Sri Aurobindo’s hypothesis regarding the Social-Political thought also, according to me, belongs to the criteria of the Philosophy of Religion. Actually Sri Aurobindo is a profound Yogi in his heart, so he can never believe the existence of anything in this enormous world without total surrender to the Almighty. However this path is not at all an easy one. In the path of achieving the political freedom, he dreamt of achievement of spiritual freedom as its important and gradual corollary. If we go through his life-story then we can be amazed to see that his decision to be a part in Indian politics was also guided by this dream of gaining Spiritual Superiority over other nations. He loved our Mother-Nation mostly above all, even his decisions of indulging in politics and retiring from it, were also not according to his own will, but according to the Divine Will of Supreme or God. His aim was an indispensable one not only for the upliftment of the country, but also for the development of his fellow countrymen. How could we ever deny his contribution in Indian politics as well as in Indian spirituality? Not only as a politician but also as an insightful mystic we have to remember him through the ages. Therefore we have to be indeed grateful towards Sri Aurobindo for teaching us the inherent value as well as the inevitability of spirituality hidden even behind the well-known and well-established concepts used in the realm of politics.

**SPIRITUALITY & POLITY IN INDIA**

In this endeavor, let us try to formulate Sri Aurobindo's own thesis as found in two following paragraphs in the article named "The Life of Nationalism" in *Bande Mataram* – '...The Moderate legend of its origin is that it was the child of Lord Curzon begotten upon despair and brought safely to birth by skillful midwifery of Sir Bampfylde. Nationalism was never a gospel of despair nor did it owe its birth to oppression. It is no true account of it to say that because Lord Curzon favoured reaction, a section of the Congress Party lost faith in England and turned Extremist, and it is vain political trickery to tell the bureaucrats in their councils that in was their frown which created Extremism and the renewal of their smiles will kill it. The fixed illusion of these moderate gossellers is that the national life of India is merely a fluid mirror reflecting the moods of the bureaucracy, sunny and serene when they are in a good humour and stormy and troubled when they are out of temper, that it can have no independent existence, no self-determined character of its own which the favour of the bureaucracy cannot influence and its anger cannot disturb. But Nationalism was not born of persecution and cannot be killed by the cessation of persecution. Long before the advent of Curzonism and Fullerism, while the Congress was beslaving the present absolutist bureaucracy with fulsome praise as a good and beneficent government marred by a few serious defects, while it was singing hymns of loyalty and descanting on the blessings of British rule, Nationalism was already born and a slowly-growing force. It was not born and did not grow in the Congress Pandal, nor in the Bombay, Presidency Association, nor in the councils of the wise economists and learned reformers, nor in the brains of the Mehtas and Gokhales, nor in the tongues of the Surendranaths and Lalmohuns, nor under the hat and the coat of the denationalised ape of English speech and manners. It was born like Krishna in the prison-house, in the hearts of men to whom India under the good and beneficent government of absolutism seemed an intolerable dungaeons, to whom the blessings of an alien despotic rule were hardly more acceptable than the plagues of Egypt, who regarded the comfort, safety and ease of the Pax Britannica, - an ease and safety not earned by our own efforts and vigilance but purchased by the slow loss of every element of manhood and every field of independent activity among us, - as more fatal to the life of the people than the poosta of the Moguls, with whom a few seats in the Council or on the Bench and right of entry into the Civil Service and a free Press and platform could not weigh against the starvation of the rack-rented millions, the drain of our life-blood, the atrophy of our energies and the disintegration of our national character and knowledge, and ideals; who looked beyond the temporary ease and opportunities of a few merchants, clerks and successful professional men to the lasting pauperism and degradation of a great and ancient people. And Nationalism grew as Krishna grew who ripened to strength and knowledge, not in the courts of princes and the schools of the Brahmins but in the obscure and despised homes of the poor and ignorant. In the cave of the Sannyasin, under the grab of the Fakir, in the hearts of young men and boys many of whom could not speak a word of English but all could work and dare and sacrifice for the Mother, in the life of men of education and parts who had received the mantra and put from them the desire of wealth and honours to teach and labour so that the good religion might spread, there Nationalism grew slowly to its strength, unheeded and unnoticed, until in its good time it came to Bengal, the destined place of its self-manifestation and for three years, unheeded and unnoticed, spread over the country, gathering in every place the few who were capable of the vision and waiting for the time that would surely come when oppression would begin in earnest and the people look round them for some way of deliverance.

For, that an absolute rule will one day begin to coerce and trample on the subject population is an inevitable law of nature which none can escape. The master with full power of life and death over his servant can only be gracious so long as he is either afraid of his slave or else sure that the slave will continue willing, obedient and humble in his servitude and not transgress the limits of the freedom allowed him by his master. But if the serf begins to assert himself, to insist on the indulgence conceded to him as on a right, to rebel against occasional harshness, to wag his tongue with too insolent a licence and disobey imperative orders, then it is not in human nature for the master to refrain from calling for the scourge and the fetters. And if the slave resists the application of the scourge and the imposition of the fetters, it becomes a matter of life and death for the master to enforce his orders and put down the mutiny. Oppression was therefore inevitable, and oppression was necessary that the people as a whole might be disposed to accept Nationalism, but Nationalism was not born of oppression. The oppressions and slaughters committed by Kamsa upon the Yadavas did not give birth to Krishna but they were needed that the people of Mathura might look for the deliverer and accept him when he came. To hope that conciliation will kill Nationalism is to mistake entirely the birth, nature and workings of the new force, nor will either the debating skill of Mr. Gokhale nor all Dr. Ghose's army of literary quotations and illusions convince Englishmen that any such hope can be admitted for a moment. For Englishmen are political animals with centuries of political experience in their blood, and though they possess little logic and less wisdom, yet in such matters they have an instinct which is often surer than reason or logic. They know that what is belittled as Extremism is really Nationalism and Nationalism has never been killed by conciliation; concessions it will only take as new weapons in its fight for complete victory and unabridged dominion. We desire our countrymen on their side to cultivate a corresponding instinct and cherish an invincible faith. There are some who fear that conciliation or policy may unstring the new movement and others who fear that persecution may crush it. Let them have a robust faith in the destinies of their race. As neither the milk of Putna nor the hoofs of the demon could destroy the infant Krishna, so neither Riponism nor Poona prosecutions could check the growth of Nationalism while yet it was an indistinct force; and as neither Kamsa's wiles nor his viṣakanyās nor his mad elephant nor his wrestlers could kill Krishna revealed in Mathura, so neither a revival of Riponism nor the prison of discord sown by bureaucratic allurements, nor Fullerism plus hooliganism, nor prosecution under cover of legal statutes can slay Nationalism now that it has entered the arena. Nationalism is an avatāra and cannot be slain. Nationalism is a divinely appointed śakti of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came.<sup>2</sup>

### **SPIRITUALITY & EDUCATION IN INDIA**

In Indian context the role of spirituality is utterly predominant, be it the case of ethics, politics or even education. In ancient India, education was given on the basis of religion and spirituality. The pupils have to be of high-caste unless they are believed not to receive compatible for good education. Karna and Eklavya in Mahavarata are the perfect examples of such manipulation. The basis of this differentiation between children of four social classes, e.g. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras actually dependent upon the spiritual base of India. It is strongly believed that Brahmanas emerge from the Head of the Deity and hence power of

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<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, 'The Life of Nationalism', Bande Mataram, p. 597-600

knowledge is their birth-right; the Kshatriyas emerge from the Arms of the Deity and hence they are believed to have power, chivalry, heroic attitude; the Vaishyas emerge from the Thighs of the Deity and hence they have the power of production, business etc; and the Sudras emerge from the Feet of the Deity and hence they are deprived of any rights except servitude, obedience etc. Hence from this Vedic example it becomes crystal clear that in ancient time religion remained as the basis of education as except Brahmanas (and partially Kshatriyas and sometimes Vaishyas; but in very small amount) nobody was thought to be able to receive education. Education is thought to be the Mantras or hymns (as conceived by the Vedas) of prayer enchanted to please the Deity, and being the highest class of the society only Brahmanas can get this opportunity. Hence spirituality and education from their primitive stages are totally inseparable from each other.

### **SRI AUROBINDO ON SPIRITUALITY OF INDIA**

In the book named *Bande Mataram* Sri Aurobindo clearly depicted his above stated dream of making India the spiritual guide of other nations. ‘...our own efforts and the impulse given or the work done by the leading men, whether Moderates or Extremists, have been so small, petty and inefficient that they are absolutely insufficient to explain the extraordinary results. The machinery has been absurdly inadequate, the organization nil, the means at our disposal pitifully small, the real workers few and mostly obscure, and yet the Indian world has stood amazed and the Anglo-Indian aghast at the vast and incommensurate results of an apparatus so inefficient. We believe, therefore, that Divine Power is behind the movement, that the Zeitgeist, the Time-Spirit, is at work to bring out a mighty movement of which the world at the present juncture has need, that that movement is the resurgence of Asia and that the resurgence of India is not only a necessary part of the larger movement but its central need, that India is the keystone of the arch, the chief inheritor of the common Asiatic destiny’<sup>3</sup>. The old Mongolian dynasty and also the Muslim [called as the Mohamedan one by Sri Aurobindo] dynasty ruled over Asia for some times, but both of them are not able to reconcile several cultures as well as their fundamental features as superbly as India does. So, in his opinion, not these two, but Indian civilization was destined to fulfill the so long cherished spiritual aim of God or Sachchidannda. This is the actual sense of Sri Aurobindo’s dream of India’s gaining Spiritual Mastery all over the entire world.

Actually the arrival of British merchants in India, according to Sri Aurobindo, was also destined by God as a part of his plan. In his opinion, whatever has happened with our motherland and our beloved countrymen was also pre-determined by Him. ‘What is it that you seek, rulers who are eager to confuse the interests of a handful of white administrators with the welfare of humanity, or what is it that your dream, traders who think that God made this India of ours only as a market for your merchandise? This great and ancient nation was once the fountain of human light, the apex of human civilization, the exemplar of courage and humanity, the perfection of good Government and settled society, the mother of all religions, the teacher of all wisdom and philosophy. It has suffered much at the hands of inferior civilisations and more savage peoples; it has gone down into the shadow of night and tasted often of the bitterness of death. Its pride has been trampled into the dust and its glory has departed. Hunger and misery and despair have become the masters of this fair soil, these noble hills, these ancient rivers, these cities whose life

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<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, ‘The Question of the Hour’, p. 391

story goes back into prehistoric night. But do you think that therefore God has utterly abandoned us and given us up for ever to be a convenience for the West, the hosts of its commerce, and the feeders of its luxury and pride? We are still God's chosen people and all our calamities have been but a discipline of suffering, because for the great mission before us prosperity was not sufficient, adversity had also its training; to taste the glory of power and beneficence and joy was not sufficient, the knowledge of weakness and torture and humiliation was also needed; it was not enough that we should be able to fill the role of the merciful sage and the beneficent king, we had also to experience in our own persons the feelings of the outcast and the slave. But now that lesson is learned, and the time for our resurgence is come. And no power shall stay that uprising and no opposite interest shall deny us the right to live, to be ourselves, to set interest us even in our evening and midnight has been broken into pieces and their glory turned into a legend of the past. Yet you venture to hope that in the hour of our morning you will be able to draw back the veil of night once more over our land as if to read you a lesson. God has lighted the fire in a quarter where you least feared it and it is beginning to eat up your commerce and threaten your ease. He has raised up the people you despised as weaklings and cowards, a people of clerks and babblers and slaves and set you to break their insurgent spirit and trample them into the dust if you can. You have tried every means except absolute massacre and you have failed. And now what will you do? Will you learn the lesson before it is too late or will you sink your Empire in the mire of shame where other nations have gone who had not the excuse of the knowledge of liberty and the teachings of the past? For us, for you, today everything is trembling in the balance, and it is not for us who have but reacted passively to your action, it is for you to decide'<sup>4</sup>.

Sri Aurobindo's main aim of life is to make the Supermind bound to descent upon the earthen level, so that it can help in the spiritual advancement of our beloved countrymen. Therefore, with the political advancement, the spiritual development of India and Indians seems indivisibly correlated with. However in this present chapter, I am trying to grasp the true nature of this spirituality inherent within the realm of Indian politics, as conceived by Sri Aurobindo.

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