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An Insight Into Sri Aurobindo's Poetry

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Abstract :

Sri Aurobindo maintained that poetry in future would divest itself of the outward trapping like meter, rhyme, even the emotional connection of words. The poetic essence or the essences of poetry would leap like a spark from the poem to the reader. The poet declared that the more directly the word reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry. This kind of poetry was termed “overhead poetry” by Aurobindo.

Keywords: overhead poetry, absolute, ascent, soul, visionary.

One can see in Aurobindo a poet, a fiery evangelist of nationalism, a teacher, a scholar, an interpreter of Veda, a critic of life and literature, a man of letters in excelsis, a master of prose art, a dramatist and a poet of great power and versatility. He writes in English and is equal to George Moore, Lawrence Binyon, WB yeats. Srinivas iyenger says: ‘without question aurobindo is the one incontestably outstanding figure in hindu Anglian literature. Tagore no doubt holds a comparable position in modern Bengali literature, though Indo Anglian literature too can claim this as one of its own unique reflected glories’.1(p144)

The reader who has knowledge of ancient Indian metaphysics can reap some reward from a study of aurobindo poems. The experiences drawn there are not of the ‘common kind’. To make it clear to the reader the poet had to form symbols and images to the central vision itself. His poetry is filled with Vedic and upanishadic connotations. Aurobindo poetry is profound and obscure. Obscurity is not for obscurity's sake but it is the only medium to express his mystic experience. Ordinary or plain words and expressions cannot translate his vision as it is. The sounds of the words are incantatory as in the Vedic mantras.

The common reader approaches aurobindo poems from the customary stand point of intellectual appreciation. He is not ready nor illuminated enough for receiving the flash poetry on the spiritual level. The poet was also aware of this gap between the poem and the reader. In connection with Savitri he says “you must not expect appreciation or understanding. Aurobindo wrote once” not one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for man to see.2(144), all the same the idea of his “life” should be any attempt at appraising his work as a writer.

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For Mathew Arnold poetry has an immense future because it consoles, comforts, delights strengthens, and joy and criticism of life can be drawn from it. But Aurobindo attaches more value to poetry than Arnold. He says that poetry sinks into the soul. He takes poetry to a higher level that cannot be reached by ordinary readers.

What a yogi experiences through yoga cannot be easily translated in terms of average human experiences. The meaning becomes visioned and felt as though man were no longer mental merely but poised on a level beyond mind' (p134). The common reader cannot comprehend the symbols and word clusters and the incantatory quality of the words. Only a true visionary can understand it. According to Aurobindo the poetic essence of the poem must leap into the souls of the reader in a flash.

Sri Aurobindo wrote 14 sonnets between 1898s and 1909s , another 74 sonnets during late 1930s to 1940s and most of his significant short poems and lyrical ones were written between 1940 and 1950. He used blank verse and hexameter in his poetry in a masterly fashion. Many kinds of quantitative versus like Alcaics sapphics were revived by him in forms of natural to English. His experiments with meteric versus is evident from his incomplete poems and prosodies

An ordinary reader can respond to the imaginary movements and color scheme in poetry on poetic level. The color pattern doesn't refer to the physical colors at all but the mystical colors. A visionary said to see in a trans. Each of the colors has a special mystic significance. We can find this in the Aurobindo poem *Thought the paraclete*. "*Thought the paraclete* is a vision or revelation of an ascent through spiritual planes, but gives no names and no photographic descriptions of the planes crossed.(149-150)." In Christianity the term paraclete refers to one who intercedes on behalf of another, is usually applied to the holy ghost as a mediator between the human and divine. An advocate on behalf of man. But in Aurobindo's metaphysic 'thought' is such a mediator as much as a medium. The color scheme in the poem can be understood neither on the physical or metaphysical level. "The Rose of God" is another poem which can be comprehend on this level.

William Wordsworth records in his "Prelude" his own experiences and communication with nature which others may fail to find unless they enter into his shoes. In the same way Aurobindo poetry and his metaphysics and spiritual experiences can be followed only by a few who have gone through that mystic experience.

John Keats followed new methods in writing poetry deviating from traditional odes. He invented his own form of odes. In the same way Aurobindo also observed his own methods and forms in poetry whether it is a sonnet or an epic. He added grandeur to poetry:

“Thy golden Light came down into my brain
 Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
 Thy golden Light came down into my heart:
 Thy golden Light came down into my feet:
 My earth is now Thy play field and Thy seat.

“This is an experience unique in itself. The poet's expression makes us feel the supernatural experience. Aurobindo sonnets are expressions of the spiritual consciousness in which thought sublimates into a translucidity of light and vision, feeling passes beyond itself into a sheer spiritual ecstasy and the word rarefies a pure voice out of silence. Line after line flow without effort simply and easily without a word in excess or any laying on of color only just the necessary. Aurobindo poetry presents the quintessential essence of his mystic and spiritual experiences.

Whatever be their form or structure either Shakespearean Sonnet, petrarchan Sonnet, lyrics or fragments have a family likeness with regard to their content. In them we have exhilarating rhythm patterns, reminiscent of cosmic music, heard only by Rishi or yogi. The imagery is cosmic and more poetic, the symbols and mythological references have all contributed to almost the divine song which creates a heart warming feel and novelty. All sonnets are as many musical chords of a symphony.

According to Professor Raymond Frank Piper 'Savitri' is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute.3(p206)

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- 2.(1).Ibid,144
- 3.(2).Ibid,144
- 3.K.D sethna "Sri Aurobindo- the poet."
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- 5.(3).idbd,206

