

Spiritual Perceptions- The East and the West, Reflections on Spiritual Flashes and Visions on the Visionaries

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Abstract: *This paper discusses researches made so far on spiritual aspects in Romantics' poetry and Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Sri Aurobindo's poetry has predominant spiritual tone as they delineate highly inspiring supramental pathways to future and, experiment with spiritual truth. Romantics exhibited natural and spontaneous spiritual quest and aspiration. Several studies on these poems, in this aspect, pave a way for the further exploration in the realm and to make comparative analysis in order to explore what is universal in spiritual experience among them. Thus the survey of literature reveals that there have been many attempts to examine separately the spiritual characteristics of Sri Aurobindo and Western Romantics. But there has been no attempt to investigate the universal qualities of spiritualities by means of comparative study on these poets in a broader level. This paper reveals how spiritual reality is understood and expressed in poetry by different writers across the world. It has also been found that there are many identical features among various writers. The present study is undertaken to fulfill the need to compare the perceptions of different writers on the spiritual reality and also to assert the authenticity of the truth by means of identifying the universal elements among them. This approach will be fruitful as comparative literature unveils wide scope for investigation.*

Keywords: *Spiritual perception, consciousness, awareness, mysticism, psychological implication, Enlightenment, mystical language.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The realm of spirituality is magical and mysterious. When we look at the world with an approach of curiosity and admiration, we become aware that the world is filled with mystical life. Part of spirituality is being willing to acknowledge that something is beyond our comprehension. Science has its place in accepting the world but it will not ever have all the answers. When we look at the cosmos and into our own hearts and comprehend that which we don't recognize, we know that we have touched that which is mysterious and holy. The actual subject matter of poetry is the soul within, and not the physical world. The poet may deal with limitless subject matters, but these subjects must be used as a mean to express the soul within. The poetry deals with different subject matters of the world without any contemplation for soul, tends to lack the deepness and certainty of life. So, it is not the subject matter which is established by mind that serves the drive of the poet, but it is the expression of soul's truth which discloses itself through them. This paper discusses researches made so far on spiritual aspects in Romantics' poetry and Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Sri Aurobindo's poetry has predominant spiritual tone as they delineate highly inspiring supramental pathways to future and, experiment with spiritual truth. Romantics exhibited natural and spontaneous spiritual quest and aspiration. As comparative analysis of Sri Aurobindo and Western Romantics is a less probed area, several studies on these poems, in this aspect, pave a way for the further exploration in the realm and to make comparative analysis in order to explore what is universal in spiritual experience among them.

Dr. Kalaamani in *Sri Aurobindo: His Mind and Art* attempted to compare poetry of Romantics with that of Sri Aurobindo, but those comparisons pertain to other similarities between Sri Aurobindo and the Western Romantics. They are not focused much on spiritual elements.

Moreover, her comparison is confined to English Romantics. Indeed, her attempt and initiative have opened the avenue to compare Sri Aurobindo with the Western Romantics in Spiritual aspect.

K.R. SrinivasaIyengar made an elaborate study on Sri Aurobindo's Spiritual poetry Savitri, the divine epic, and the later lyrics- Six Poems (1934), Poems (1941), Last Poems (1952), and Collected Poems and Plays. He allotted three chapters of his book Indian Writing in English to discuss Sri Aurobindo's life, poetic theory and Savitri. These studies reveal Iyengar's exploration into new kind of poetry of Sri Aurobindo, called "Over-head Poetry". According to Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo's later poetry reveals the poets's attempt to achieve something analogous to Vedic mantra.

Another study of Iyengar's Dawn to Greater Dawn: Six lectures on Sri Aurobindo, expresses his observation on evolution of consciousness in Sri Aurobindo's poetry. This is found as the recurrent themes of Sri Aurobindo's later poems also. The subject of these poems is journey of consciousness from light to light, from one luminous revelation to another and then to the next until the consciousness arrives at the Supra-mental level. The last state is a state in which the self realizes it's true nature and the ego disappears. Iyengar also discusses in his study how Savitri is the recordation of the ends and means determining man's and earth's ultimate destiny set in the background of cosmic time.

Kalaamani's study explores the characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's poetry which were written at different stages of his life. The researcher in Sri Aurobindo: His Mind and Art classifies Sri Aurobindo's poetic career as the Cambridge Period, the Baroda Period and the Pondicherry Period. Among these various phases of poetic career of the poet, the poetry written during Pondicherry period is remarkable for spiritual quality. The author elucidates in her study the relationship between man and God using various modes; such as religious mode, romantic mode, and mystic mode. In religious mode "I" and Brahma are different, in romantic mode, "I" can become Brahma and in mystic mode "I" and Brahma are the same. Kalaamani attempted a comparative study between Sri Aurobindo's poetry and Romantics poetry. She compared Sri Aurobindo's "O Coil, Coil" with Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale". She brought out the significant similarities and differences between them. The author explored the poet's growing mind at various stages of life of the poet from his poetry.

It is believed that for a better understanding and fruitful investigation the philosophical background of the writer and the influences of various philosophies in his mind and the knowledge of emergent of new philosophy are prerequisite. S.K.Maitra's The Meeting of the East and the West is a study on philosophy of Sri Aurobindo against the background of the philosophies of Western philosophers. He compares the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo's with that of Bergson, Plotinus, Nicolai Hartmann, Hegel, Plato, Goethe, and Whitehead. He has observed that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the meeting point of the eastern and the western philosophies.

Mysticism in Sri Aurobindo is of unique nature. It is one of the dominating characteristics of spiritual poems. He can be called a scientific mystic. To him, Mysticism is concerned with knowing, becoming, and being. Evelyn Underhill's definition of "mysticism", quoted in Maitra, clarifies the term: "Mysticism is the science of ultimate, the science of union with the absolute and nothing else, and the mystic is the person who attains to this union and not the person who talks about it." (107) it is an experience different from normal waking state. It has nothing to do with reason but it is meant to be realized and accepted at the state of extended awareness. To Sri Aurobindo, it is an evolved state of consciousness, experiencing complete union with ultimate truth.

M.P. Pandit is an authentic exponent of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. He lived at Sri Aurobindo's Ashram for over fifty years, on the basis of his own experience, he wrote extensively on Sri Aurobindo's spiritual perception and his mission of life. His writings such as Introducing Savitri, A Summary of Savitri, and Yoga in Savitri are his attempts to make Sri Aurobindo's poetry accessible to common man. Pandit in Reading in Savitri discusses how the story of Savitri from Mahabharata leads us to the higher planes of existence from the world of mind and life to light and Sat-Chit-Ananda. He also discusses elaborately the causes for sufferings and the play of free will and fate.

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Navajata's Sri Aurobindo is a short biography in which Sri Aurobindo's vision of life and philosophical belief is revealed through his works in a lucid style. In Navajata's observation, there were three aspects which stood out as common factors in all Sri Aurobindo's writings. Those were his command of English language, his inspiration through silent mind, and his integral or spiritual approach to everything. He asserts that the knowledge and inspiration that Sri Aurobindo acquired was not by reading or by seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of his own consciousness.

M.K.Naik 's Indian English Poetry from the beginning up to 2000 shows that Sri Aurobindo's works were imitation of the aestheticism of 1890's. Sri Aurobindo wrote more than two hundred shorter poems over a period of fifty years and more, most of them were derivative and imitative but in his stranger moments he proved that he had "the strength of them". Sri Aurobindo came into his own in the later mystical poems like "Bird of Fire", "Thought the Paraclete" and "Rose of God". He asserted that even if Sri Aurobindo had not written Savitri, these poems would have ensured his place as an outstanding devotional poet. He said that Sri Aurobindo's Savitri and devotional lyrics were highly original.

V.K.Gokak is full of praise for Sri Aurobindo's undisputed mastery of materials from spiritual reality. He advises the readers to have untainted receptivity for the fruitful understanding of the poems. The article entitled "Doctrine as Imagination in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri" explains how metaphysical imagination fuses with metaphysical longing and emotion, and consequently produces poetry of highest quality. The type of imagination the author discusses is equivalent to the moment of revelation of truth. It is not an ordinary phenomenon at emotional sphere for sensuous gratification, but it is an imagination at metaphysical realm with intense aspiration for divine realization.

The assertion of the study made by Stephen H. Philip is that Spiritual reality in Savitri has objectivity. His article discusses spiritual objectivity of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri. He found from his investigation that "experimental components" and "psychological concreteness" in his writings. It makes spiritual reality available even to non-mystics. They convey them what mystical experience may be like from the inside; as an instance for this, the author referred to "Mental Silence" in books seven and canto seven of Savitri. It refers to psychological state where in, one has scientific objectivity. It is a state of entire awakening without the interference of interfering thoughts.

PremaNandakumar made a study pertains to Sri Aurobindo's vision. She calls Sri Aurobindo a Maha yogi, and his epic Savitri, "ripest and completest testament". Her study discusses the possibility of realization of Sri Aurobindo's vision and divinization of earth in future. She says that the epic is the reality. Sri Aurobindo, with the aid of his over mental vision and power of articulation, analyses the problems confronting modern man and shows the way of redemption. She argues that this life has emerged from matters; similarly unknown entity of mind (Super mind) will spring from this life. Her study elucidates how evolved consciousness serves as a bridge to connect the life in earth with heaven. Savitri incarnates "dynamic and universal love". Sri Aurobindo believes that the remedy for all evils of the world lies in feeling love and oneness.

Sisirkumar Ghose's study shows that Savitri is a voyage of circumnavigation of the levels of consciousness. He observed in Sri Aurobindo, steadiness and completeness of vision of spiritual reality. He further said that the final is implicit in the very first moment in Aurobindo's perception. He also found that Sri Aurobindo's vision is not anti-rational but supra-rational. According to him Aurobindo's poetry is the poetry of awakened soul for the awakening of others. In another article "Adventure of Consciousness" Ghose said that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is always an experience and enlargement of awareness. Savitri is a voyage of self-discovery, which takes the reader around the world and leaves them at last in themselves.

In another study entitled "Mysticism in Sri Aurobindo", Sisirkumar Ghose discusses the mysticism in the short poem of Aurobindo such as "Transformation", "A God's labour" and "Rose of God". He says that man is an unfinished animal without mysticism and further asserts that a mature person and a total man cannot but be mystical.

In Rashmi Gaur observation, Sri Aurobindo's poetry throbs with an expansion of the whole consciousness, ending in a readiness to submit our whole being to the illimitable vastness. It is a poetry which teaches introspection, to have faith in ourselves and in our capacity to transcend the immediate which limit our selfhood. He insists the responsibility of the self to spread the glory down to the mankind on earth, who are engrossed in misery. To him the individual's salvation does not bring any change to this world. The world has witnessed so many enlightened people, but the misery remains here always with the mankind. Hence the poet involves in the mission of divinization of the world.

Kulkarni talks about Sri Aurobindo's mysticism in his article "Aspects of Mysticism in Savitri". He referred in his article Aswapthy's intuitive approach to reality and his meeting with the reason. He explains the limitations of reason and its futility in the domain of supra-mental truth. According to him, reason does not give knowledge but divide the knower and knowledge. Further he says that Savitri's mysterious eyes are capable of seeing invisible vision. Due to her awakening in the centre of consciousness, she identifies herself with the Divine will. This leads to mystic transformation at her consciousness. .

Kulkarni discusses three aspects of mystic vision of Sri Aurobindo in this study. The first aspect explores the mystery of cosmic creation and the unity behind the seemingly diversity. The second aspect concerns with potentiality of divinity in man. Man is the creation who contains in him the seed of divinity but he is fettered by the laws of matters. The third aspect probes the psychic experience that happens during spiritual progress. The author inferred that by means of widening of consciousness man can become one with the Divine.

Thus the survey of literature reveals that there have been many attempts to examine separately the spiritual characteristics of Sri Aurobindo and Western Romantacis. But there has been no attempt to investigate the universal qualities of spiritualities by means of comparative study on these poets in a broader level. The study reveals how spiritual reality is understood and expressed in poetry by different writers across the world. It has also been found that there are many identical features among various writers. The present study is undertaken to fulfill the need to compare the perceptions of different writers on the spiritual reality and also to assert the authenticity of the truth by means of identifying the universal elements among them. This approach will be fruitful as comparative literature unveils wide scope for investigation.

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