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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SRI AUROBINDO: RELEVANCE OF HIS SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Sri Aurobindo was not only the best philosopher of the twentieth century, but he was a political leader, a social worker, a poet, a yogi, a spiritual leader, and an ideal teacher. Today in the twenty first century we are living in a world where all the windows of it are wide-open. Good and evil all creeps through the window's uninterrupted beyond our control. But it is certainly possible to resist moral degradation if we can lead life in accordance with Indian spiritualism. Now the question is: how there been any relevance of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy during this modern era of rocket science and computer technology??? The answer is very obvious and is 'yes'. In this context Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Philosophy is utmost important if Human being wants to live in peace and harmony. He is very much relevant in this Twenty first century where Science and Spirituality should go side by side. The scientific development which is fixed eye only in the materialistic progress will not be able to achieve the permanent peace in the world but simultaneously it is very much necessary to uplift the human being through spirituality.

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INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century in the history of Bengal occupied a remarkable place where a few unparalleled lives appeared to change the destiny of Mother India. The period mentioned here was the starting point of a foreign rule in our motherland namely the rule of British period which was actually a period of looting and destroying our very old, colorful and glorious civilization. But this period also sowed silently to usher a golden period in which a new pattern of lives would appear which will bring an unimaginable change in our daily lived. Some of them who brought about the change are Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Jagadishchandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Prafullachandra Roy, Aurobindo Ghosh, Subhashchandra Bose and also many others. All of them contributed in the building of nation and the development living of living of society in their own ways. Some of the famous persons mentioned above were a poets, scientists, philosophers, religious a Poet, Scientist, Philosophers or Religious leaders or Politically conscious patriots. All of them were born in the Nineteenth century. Not only getting freedom from the foreign rule but also paving the glorious path for obtaining strength in development of inner quality, spiritual and scientific attitude, was the principal contributions of the above mentioned super personalities.

Sri Aurobindo has occupied a special place not only in the Indian history, but in the international arena. He was a multifaceted man having a magnanimous personality. His profound knowledge in both Western and Eastern cultures helped him to integrate for the development of human potential and growth. His biographers wrote, "Sri Aurobindo has been considered one of the foremost philosophers of the 20th Century, but he was far more than just a philosopher. He was a political activist, a mystic, a spiritual leader, a poet, a yogi and a teacher. Sri Aurobindo experienced the range of human activity and used that experience to communicate his insight in a way that we can appreciate and understand." However, the present Nuclear age is distinctively separate than that existed during his time. He saw the catastrophe of Atomic Bombs exploded in Japan's Cities at the almost end period of Second World War. Almost all powerful Nations now have nuclear arsenals and are creating awkward situation for the destabilization of human peace. The 20th and the present 21st century have seen various excellent scientific discoveries in different areas, e.g. the deep space exploration with the help of spacecrafts and artificial satellites, communicating the people living in any remote corner of the world within a few second, using genetic technology for curing the suffered lives at the hands of unknown disease, producing good quality of domestic animals with cloning methods etc., and these have now completely changed the life style of the people of the world. In this rocket age surrounded with computer technology and human like Robots for performing impossible work, does Aurobindo's teaching his

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philosophy and writings have any relevance? The answer is straightforward and is "Yes". In the following sections it has been attempted to clarify why it is necessary to follow the Teachings and Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo at the present materialistic age for saving the human being and the mother Earth. Before entering into a detailed discussion on this topic, let us put gave a bird's -eye- view on the life of this sage in order to understand his contribution in the upliftment of human life. In 1926, Sri Aurobindo retired from public life. He passed away on December 5, 1950 at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo spent his life working towards the cause of India's freedom, and for further evolution of life on earth. The historians wrote about him that "he (Sri Aurobindo) brought the energy and vision of the West with its focus on the perfection of the physical, material and mental areas of human life together with the spiritual development and philosophical directions developed over thousands of years in the East". Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is based on facts, experience and personal realizations and on having the vision of a seer or Rishi. Aurobindo's spirituality was inseparably united with reason. The goal of Sri Aurobindo was not merely the liberation of the individual from the chain that fetters him and realization of the self, but to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down the divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. He said, "The Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy". 'The evolution of human life into life divine' was the main theme of his vision. In one of his article he wrote, "Man is a transitional being. He is not final. The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in the evolution of earth. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner spirit and the logic of nature's process".

In this context Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Philosophy is utmost important if Human being wants to live in peace and harmony. He is very much relevant in this Twenty first century where Science and Spirituality should go side by side. The scientific development which is fixed eye only in the materialistic progress will not be able to achieve the permanent peace in the world but simultaneously it is very much necessary to uplift the human being through spirituality. Sri Aurobindo said, "The most vital issue of the age is whether the future progress of humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West or by a nobler pragmatism guided, uplifted and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge". Though, the present civilization has surpassed many crossroads but real change and progress can be attained through both Spiritual and Scientific culture working together simultaneously. He expressed his views on the change of human life: "To hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition". Also he wrote, "As man moves towards spiritual freedom, he moves also towards spiritual oneness". Most of human being is now engaged in Search of Happiness but "True happiness lies in the finding and maintenance of a natural harmony of spirit, mind and body" as the saint Sri Aurobindo said. Unless we change our life-style according to Yoga, and desire only to have materialistic achievement we will wander in the earth like a blind who has lost not only his external sight but internal also. To save the mother earth and humanity, we must follow the Philosophy and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo. It was not Sri Aurobindo's aim to found a new religion or to seek followers. Yet, his

philosophical ideas and spiritual force led the foundation of a movement to bring about human transformation. Several Sri Aurobindo Centers exist in the United States including one in Pensacola, Florida. For space reasons, I describe briefly only a few of this teachings.

Teachings Spiritual

(a) GOD

The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India. Behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by the illusion of separation. Like the ancient Rishis (seers) of India, Sri Aurobindo taught that the One Reality and Consciousness is beyond number, gender and definitions. This reality is seen in the cave of one's heart, and it is described it as Sat, Chit, Ananda. The discovery of your own inner being, then, is an authentic path to enlightenment.

Sat (Absolute Being): The One Reality is beyond all time and Space and it's a form of as a supreme transcendence. What it manifests, whether the macrocosm or the microcosm, is necessarily within its own being, much as an object floats in ethereal space. Sat is absolute, primal existence. The One Reality is self existent without a cause. It is just.

Chit (Awareness or Consciousness): The One Reality is fully Conscious Power. It is not inert or dead matter. It possesses all knowledge about the past, present and future. It is the source of all knowledge. It is the eye of the eye and the ear of the ear. The One Consciousness is not a passive reality. It is accompanied with Power. It is Chit-Shakti.

Ananda (Bliss): The One Reality lacks nothing; it contains all and encompasses everything. As it lacks nothing and possesses all, its nature is one of delight. The state of bliss is an integral part of the One.

(b) Creation

God is complete in Himself/Herself. He/she lacks nothing. God is not compelled to create. God creates for joy. Creation is an act of Ananda, joy or bliss. God fulfills Himself in his creation, just as an artist fulfills himself in his creative work. As God is all, contains all, the creation is more accurately described as a manifestation. God becomes the creation. The creation is His Lila, a play. But we should not conclude that it is whimsical. There is a purpose in the cosmos which is both earnest and joyful. God dwells in each article of his creation He is in us, and we are in Him. A fundamental teaching of Sri Aurobindo is one of Unity of all created things. Encompassing diversity, there is unity. Behind individual souls, there is the Self, one with the Divine. Not only human life but all created life including that of animal is a unity. We spring from one source. Differences and divisions are unreal. The belief that we originate from one common source and are all One with that source has ethical implications: it leads to a kinder and a gentler world.

Is Creation Accidental? Material scientists would have us believe that creation is an accident or the work of chance. The Gita teaches that creation is the work of a Mighty hand. It is not a machine that somehow got started without purpose or

goal. Creation is not an illusion or Maya. It is not a dream. It carries in itself the Word of God.

(c) Evolution

Sri Aurobindo puts forward the cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of existence. Existence is not a finished product. God did not create the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Existence is a Truth of things unfolding by a gradual process of evolution. "The Truth of Existence is its Becoming." Evolution is not the evolution of matter but evolution of consciousness. Consciousness is the fundamental thing. Consciousness is the life force, the energy, the motion that creates everything in the universe, from the microcosm (the smallest) to the macrocosm (the largest). There is consciousness in matter, for example in the movement of electrons and protons within the atomic structure. The vegetable kingdom of trees and plants exhibits a certain degree of consciousness. Consciousness evolves into a higher level in the animal. The mind of man is the highest expression of consciousness at the present time. But evolution does not end with Mind. Within the human being, there is the "Higher Mind." In deep contemplation, Rishis (seers) reach the higher mind. Consciousness is usually equated with the mind. But mental consciousness does not exhaust the complete range of consciousness, just as the eye cannot exhaust all the gradations of colour or the ear all the gradations of sound. So there are ranges of consciousness below as well as above the human mind. Sri Aurobindo has laid out for us the entire ladder steps of higher consciousness: mind, higher mind, intuitive mind, overmind, and supermind. Through the process of evolution, man will someday achieve a supramental consciousness. Supramental consciousness means beyond mental consciousness. Those who possess supramental consciousness will be a different breed, just as man is different from the animal. They will not be stronger or more intelligent than ordinary men. But those with supramental mind will transcend human limitations.

(d) Suffering

Sri Aurobindo wrote 2 chapters on pain and suffering in *The Life Divine*. His views can be summarized thus.

1. In life, pain is a smaller element than joy. With almost no exception, there is more joy than pain in life. If pain was the greater element, people would commit suicide. The fact is that almost nobody wishes to die.
2. Pleasure is our normal state and pain is abnormal. We feel pain more intensely because it is abnormal.
3. Suffering is not suffering from a higher vantage point.
4. Pain is "the hammer of the gods." Pain helps break down our resistance to the truth and erodes the hold of the ego.
5. Sri Aurobindo does not want us to invite suffering into our lives or to inculcate it. His yoga does not emphasize asceticism or renunciation as some Indian paths do. If suffering comes, one should accept it calmly.

(e) The goal

Christians seek Heaven, Buddhists seek Nirvana and Hindus seek Moksha or liberation from the cycle of life and death. These are otherworldly goals. Salvation and freedom lies elsewhere, not here on earth in this life. Sri Aurobindo is affirmative. The goal is not the attainment of Heaven in

afterlife but a perfect life here on earth. The solution to mankind's problems consists in spiritual rebirth. The true aim will regard man as not a mind, a life and a body, but as a Soul incarnated for divine fulfillment on earth. The goal is to live from within, from the soul center. The aim is to establish in society a true "inner theocracy," not the false theocracy of a Church, priesthood, an ummah, but that of the inner Priest, the inner Prophet. Man's goal is to discover hidden divinity in himself. "To fulfill God in life is man's manhood." He starts from animal life but a divine existence is his objective. A person who lives in the Spirit is one with all.

Sri aurobindo's five dreams

Sri Aurobindo had five dreams. All are on the way to being fulfilled even though then they looked impractical at the time. For example, nobody expected the British Empire to crumble as it did after WWII.

1. The first of these dreams was a free India. India today is free. It won independence on 15 August 1947, Sri Aurobindo's birthday. It was no coincidence.
2. Sri Aurobindo's second dream was that Asia will rise. Asia today is resurgent. Japan is the second largest economy in the world. China promises to be a new economic and military super power, even though its politics is backward and freedoms are denied. India is economically not far behind. The true value of India is its spiritual heritage, something that the modern Indian elite deprecate.
3. Another dream was the spiritual gift of India to the world. This too has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure.
4. The fourth dream of a world union is under way but not yet fully realized. Some global unification has occurred. In language, culture, economics and technology and many other fields, the world is on its way to a powerful unification. English is literally the global lingua franca. Art, culture, music now have a global audience. In summary, the world has made progress in achieving lingual, cultural, and economic unity. Political unity is the last frontier to be conquered in humanity's onward march.
5. Sri Aurobindo's fifth and final dream was the spiritual evolution of man. Man must live from within, from his soul center. Man's goal is to discover hidden divinity within himself. Yoga is a method in this enterprise. This is still a distant dream. Here the difficulties are more formidable. But progress is being made even on this front. More and more people are becoming "seekers", not just "believers." It is reported that more people in France call themselves Buddhist, Hindu or spiritual seekers than Protestant or Jewish. From 10 to 20 percent of the American public according to Robert Fuller subscribe to the New Thought teachings. Sri Aurobindo's personal force is at work. The change will first occur in selected individuals and then will spread more widely among the populace.

Sri Aurobindo has been a major force in my life and in the lives of many others. He does not preach asceticism or withdrawal. But he was against conspicuous consumption, against show and excess. His affirmative philosophy about life is invigorating. He was not a pacifist, like Mahatma Gandhi

was. He supported the British and the Allies against Hitler during WWII. His dreams are being fulfilled: India is free; Asia has risen; human race is being unified. The spiritual evolution of mankind is yet a distant goal but here so much progress is being made.

Conclusion

It has been repeatedly proclaimed that the fundamental truth of all religions is no different from one another and various religion texts like the Gita, the Bible, the Koran, the Tripitak all affirms the songs of humanity to be sung on and on. Still knowing the mantra of peace for entire humanity, often than not, we don't hesitate to hold weapons against each other only to prevent our onward progress of happiness and prosperity. Religion teaches us to lead a life well by a moral philosophy but it is only fair to admit that we are now engrossed to dismantle entire humanity, ignoring the minimum moral value of a human being. In this critical juncture of dehumanize era, the scientific spirituality of Sri Aurobindo is very much relevant. We can find true salvation only if we can combine science proper with the spirituality propounded by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo was not only the greatest philosopher of twentieth century, he was also a valiant political leader, a social worker, a poet, a yogi, a spiritual guide, and above all an ideal teacher. He assessed the psyche of humanity with his strong vision of introspection the stability of human civilization crumbles and it has somehow created an awkward situation for the coming generations. Today nothing is beyond the grasp of a human being thanks to the ultra modern inventions of science and technology. Man has overcome all the hurdles hurdle and won almost everything. Man started to plough the universe with the gifts of spacecrafts and artificial satellites. Sitting idly in arm chair, we can easily gather the news of any remote corner of the world within a flash. Man has managed to cure some almost incurable disease with the help of genetic exposure. Advancement of life style is traceable when ordinary domestic animals are upgraded by a big margin by the application of cloning method and thus man completes the circle of his onward march. Now the question is: how there been any relevance of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy during this modern era of rocket science and computer technology ??? The answer is very obvious and is 'yes'. It is essential to follow without any oscillation the spiritual education and philosophy of the Sri Aurobindo is the present materialistic period to preserve true human existence and human nature. Spiritual development and philosophical thought of Sri Aurobindo brings the sense of completeness in physical, material and mental aspects of human life. His spirituality was thoroughly rational. According to Sri Aurobindo spirituality is essential to realize the self to be relieved in the diversity of nature and to transform ourselves into the very essence of nature.

A Devine life can be realized in this spiritual humanity. He opined that this perception is obviously bigger than any religious or scriptural or philosophical truth. Human mind wanders but one can calm (fame) those changeable minds with the firm grip of spirituality. The progress of so called industry, technology and science has made us restless and ever mobile and has pushed mankind's existence into serious danger making people disturbed and tired of life .Spirituality is the only way to escape this danger .Science and technology upholds to different aspects of the same coin and grasping it with both hands if we tend to explain every phenomenon on its merit then there one could see the progress of mankind but ideally there will be no human, it will automatically become a robot or any instrument like that. In this context, spiritual science of shri Aurobindo is very relevant. In spiritual science, we can see spirituality is positioned perfectly parallelly with science. Only through scientific studies men can make progress materially but it tends to make them restless and disturbed. On the other hand, only spiritual practice drags people well behind of age. Both aspects should be denied as they can't restore permanent peace and progress exclusively. Sri Aurobindo's spiritual science acts here as the only remedy of this malady.

Today in the twenty first century we are living in a world where all the windows of it are wide-open. Good and evil all creeps through the window's uninterruptedly beyond our control. But it is certainly possible to resist moral degradation if we can lead life in accordance with Indian spiritualism. It is absolutely unreasonable to expect a real positive change in human life and culture with the transformation of nature, driven by western nationalism and their economics. That sublime change in life can be tasted only through Indian spirituality. Real happiness, peace, lie with the natural proportionate amalgamation of soul, mind and body. If we can't lead life in the beaten track found by Aurobindo. We will slowly but surely fail to save humanity and civilization from inevitable ruin.

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