



Sri Aurobindo's Vision Of India

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Synopsis

India was in the forefront of civilization for more than three thousand years. Sri Aurobindo was one of the greatest rishis of Bharat Varsha who told us about our glorious past and the golden future. In *Foundation of Indian Culture*, Sri Aurobindo wrote about how India continuously threw out with exuberant self-confidence an amazing society of literatures philosophies, schools of painting and architecture and dancing and music, sound systems of government, fruitful traditions in medicine and engineering and the elaborate sciences of grammar, mathematics, chemistry and astronomy

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Introduction

India was in the forefront of civilization for more than three thousand years. Sri Aurobindo was one of the greatest rishis of Bharat Varsha who told us about our glorious past and the golden future. In *Foundation of Indian Culture*, Sri Aurobindo wrote about how India continuously threw out with exuberant self-confidence an amazing society of literatures philosophies, schools of painting and architecture and dancing and music, sound systems of government, fruitful traditions in medicine and engineering and the elaborate sciences of grammar, mathematics, chemistry and astronomy. Sri Aurobindo states, "One of the oldest races and greatest civilization on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality the most feared in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality." (quoted by Iyengar, 4) India had taken into itself "numerous sources of strength from foreign strains of blood and other types of human civilization" and over a long stretch of years dared gloriously and raced forward adventurously. India withstood wave after wave of invasion. Every challenge was met with a new synthesis. How did India possess such vitality?

Sri Aurobindo states:

Her first period was luminous with the discovery of the Spirit; her second completed the discovery of the Dharma, her third

elaborated into detail. The first simpler formulation of the Shastra, but none was exclusive; the three elements are always present.

(Collected works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.14, P.402-4)

At the Vedic dawn, the Rishis had the vision of Satyam-rtam-brhat (The True, the Right, the Vast). Sri Aurobindo possessed the key to understand the Vedas:

Sri Aurobindo states:

The central idea of the Vedic Rishis was the transition of the human soul from a state of death to a state of immortality by the exchange of the falsehood for the Truth, of divided and limited being for integrality and infinity. Death is the mortal state of Matter with Mind and life involved in it; immortality is a state of infinite being, consciousness and Bliss. Man rises beyond the two firmaments... Heaven and Earth, mind and body to the infinity of the Truth, Mahas, and so to the divine Bliss. This is the "great Passage" discovered by the Ancestors, the ancient Rishis. (CWSA, Vol.10, 43).

Rishis like Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Vamadeva, Dirghatamas, Madhuchandy, Bharadwaja and Medhatithi were ecstasies diviness, diviners, poets. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes, "The

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Indian mind has always – and especially in times of perplexity or distress – turned back to the Vedic home of origins and its springs of Perennial Truth. (5)

During the Upanishadic Age, the insights of the Veda became more defined and intuition went hand in hand with logical reasoning. The Upanishads add intellectual dimension to Vedic poetry. Sri Aurobindo states:

The ideas of the Upanishads can be rediscovered in much of the thought of Pythagoras and Plato and form the profoundest part of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism with all their considerable consequences to the philosophical thinking of the West, and Sufism only repeats them in another religious language. There is hardly a main philosophical idea which cannot find an authority or a seed or indication in these antique writings” (CWSA, Vol.14, 270-271).

Sri Aurobindo further waxes eloquent on the Upanishads:

The scenes of the old world live before us in a few pages. The sages sitting in their groves ready to test and teach the corner, princes and learned Brahmins and great lauded nobles going about in search of knowledge the king's son in his chariot and the illegitimate son of the servant-girl, seeking any man who might carry in himself the thought of light and the world of revelation, the typical figures and personalities, Janaka and the subtle mind of Ajadha Shatru, Raikwa of the cart, Yajnavalkya militant for truth, calm and ironic, taking to himself with both hands without attachment worldly possessions and spiritual riches and casting at last all our wealth behind to wander forth as a houseless ascetic, Kishna son of Devaki who read a single word of the Rishi Ghora and knew at once the Eternal, the Ashramas, the courts of kings who were also spiritual discoverers and thinkers, the great sacrificial assemblies where the sages met and compared their knowledge and we see how the soul of India was born and how arose this great birthsong in which it soared from this earth into the supreme empyrean of the spirit. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not only the sufficient fountain head of Indian Philosophy and religion, but of all Indian art, poetry and literature. (CWSA, Vol.14, 28).

After this emerged the age when the shastras were codified. Following it was the period of the two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar states: “these are national epics, odysseys of the soul, reports of the Battle of Dharma, and the Chief characters are not just human beings but apocalyptic projections of spiritual visions and psychic ecstasies. Great substance is wedded to equally great style – the Mahabharata with a sustained mainliners of its own, the Ramayana with its sicken flow and grave and strength and warmth – and perennial indeed is their appeal, and truly inexhaustible their power for shaping woman character”.

Sri Aurobindo states about the epics:

The epics are ... a highly artistic representation of intimate significances of life, the living presentment of a strong and noble thinking, a developed ethical and aesthetic mind and a high social and political ideal, the ensouled image of a great culture. As rich in freshness of life but immeasurably more profound and evolved in thought and substance than the Greek, as advanced in maturity of culture but more vigorous and vital and young in strength than the Latin epic poetry, the Indian epic poems were fashioned to serve a greater and completer national and cultural function... (CWSA, Vol.14, 293).

Sri Aurobindo finds in Kalidasa a poet who ranks with Milton and Virgil, but with “a more subtle and dedicate spirit and touch in his art than the English, a greater breath of native power informing and vivifying his execution than the Lain poet” and Abhijnana Shakuntalam is the “most perfect and captivating romantic drama in all literature” (CWSA, Vol.14, 298, 305).

The last five chapters of *Foundations of Indian Culture* deal with the literature of the Indian languages. The great period of Tamil literature was contemporary with the classical Sanskrit age and there is a brief mention of Tiruvalluvar, Avvaiyar, the Vaishnava and Saiva saints and the great epics of Kamban and Tulsidas. Bhakthi poetry is dealt with including that of Nanak and the Sikh gurus.

Sri Aurobindo repeatedly emphasizes on the spiritual destiny of India:

The spiritual mind of India regarded life as a



manifestation of the self. The community was the body of the creator Brahman, the people was a life body of Brahman in the Samasti, the collectivity, it was the collective Narayana as the individual was Brahman in the Vyasti, the separate Jiva, the individual Narayana, the king was the living representative of the Divine and the other orders of the community the natural powers of the collective self, prakartayah. The agreed conventions, institutes, customs, constitution of the body social and political in all its parts had therefore not only a binding authority but a certain sacrosanct character (Vol.14, 340,341)

The nation builders structured unity on spiritual and cultural foundations. India has survived the shocks of the ages. K.R.Srinivasan Iyengar states: "Sri Aurobindo saw the morning Yuga-Sandhya over fifty years ago, and at the present movement when the twilight is got in the new dawn, the moon of the future cannot long be denied to our aspirations and strivings". (509).

Sri Aurobindo assures us that there is a golden future for India:

India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples. And that which we must seek now to awake is not an anglicized oriental people, docile pupil of the west and doomed to repeat the cycle of the occident's success and failure, but still the ancient immemorable Shakti recovering her deepest self, lifting her head higher towards the supreme source of light and strength and turning to discover the complete meaning and to a vaster form of her Dharma (CWSA 380).

The great past of India was followed by a period of decline. The 19th century lead to a renaissance. There was an interfusion of the new and the old. The primary of the west was no longer accepted. Indian spirituality is all inclusive. It was an integral force comprising matter, life and mind. Sri Aurobindo has great hope for India:

We should apply our spirituality on broader and freer lines... open ourselves to the throb of life, the pragmatic activity, the great endeavour but not therefore abandon our fundamental

view of god and man and Nature... India has the key to the knowledge and conscious application of the ideal, what was dark to her before in its application, she can now, with a new light, illumine, what was wrong and wry in her old methods. She can now rectify, the fences which she created to protect the outer growth of the spiritual ideal and which afterwards becomes barriers to its expansion and further application, she can now break down and gives her spirit a freer field and an ampler flight. She can, if she will, give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which all mankind is labouring and standing, for the clue to their solutions is there in her ancient knowledge (CWSA Vol.14, 431,432,433).

Amal Kiran in the book *The Sun and the Rainbow* has stated that since Rig Vedic times it has been clear that this has been a spiritual country (2). He states that the dynamic yoga of the Gita regards the world as a field of God's manifestation. The Gita is a gospel delivered on a battlefield. It combines the practicality of Yoga and the practicality of life. Sri Krishna makes the Beyond dynamic here and now, he links up with if the concrete form. An attitude similar to the Gita is to be found in the greatest Yogi of our age, Sri Aurobindo. Amal Kiran notes: A magnificent leonine personality – a writer educated from boyhood in England and writing he English language like a mother tongue in splendid poetry as well as prose – a scholar in Greek and Latin – at home in French, German and Italian, not to mention Sanskrit – and other Indian languages – once a politician of profound constructive power – a gigantic philosophical intellect whose chief work, *The Life Divine* has been hailed as epoch making – a still more towering Master of Yoga, which Tagore in the East and Rolland in the West called the custodian of the future – Sri Aurobindo was a figure to dominate, the world's gaze. (5) His Yoga is integral, an all-round fulfillment of the Divine on this very earth and not in a remote paradise or a transcendental Nirvana. This why Pondicherry, with its Ashram, can be regarded as a gateway to a wonderful future. (Amal Kiran, 6)

Conclusion

The Mother stated : "India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this



country. India is a living being, as much as say, Shiva India is a goddess as Shiva is a god. If she likes, she can manifest in human form. Let us conclude with Sri Aurobindo's words from the above collection: Mother India is not a piece of earth, she is a power, a Godhed. (CWM, Vol 13, P.1).

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