

Sri Aurobindo as 'A Truth – Bearer' And 'A Singer of Beauty': An Appraisal

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Abstract – This article lays focus on the poetic forte and vision of the universally acknowledged writer Sri Aurobindo, especially his love poems with a touch of immortality and perfection. It examines how he has presented a youthful vitality combined with an intense love of life and it may be said that being a singer of beauty, Sri Aurobindo stands as a model of his own belief that a poet is a 'truth – bearer' and 'beauty – singer'.

It is universally acknowledged that Sri Aurobindo represents "the return of the Rishi", the orphic voice of the poet in the modern chaotic world. Scholars, philosophers, man and men whose minds are nourished with enlightenment and supreme knowledge do find in him the promise of the superman, the profounder of Integral yoga, the prophet of the Life Divine, while others look upon him as the prophet of peace and the fiery evangelist of Nationalism. There are still others who look upon him as a teacher, scholar, interpreter of the Vedas, critic of life, man of letters in excelsis, master of prose, great dramatist and excellent poet of great power and vision.

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Born on 15th August 1872, in Calcutta to his parents, Krishnadhan Ghosh, a physician and Swarnalata Ghosh, he had his school education at the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling. During his college days, Sri Aurobindo is said to have acquired a high degree of proficiency in the Classics, some intimacy with French and English and more than a nodding acquaintance with German, Italian and Spanish. He secured the Butterworth Prize for Literature and the Bedford Prize for History. He has to his credit publication of such immortal works as

1. The Life Divine, (1939 - 40)
2. The Synthesis of Yoga (1948),
3. Essays on the Gita (1922)
4. On the Veda (1956)
5. The ideal of Human Unity (1919)
6. The Human Cycle (1949)
7. The Future Poetry (1953)
8. The Foundations of Indian Culture (1953)
9. The Renaissance in India (1920).

Generally speaking, there is a perfect fusion of poetry and philosophy in his work especially in Savitri of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo holds the view that the poet is the seer and revealer of Truth. He is one who has got an insight into the things around and who can reveal the beauty and reality hidden from the sight of an ordinary man. In Sri Aurobindo's own words, "The privilege of the poet is to go beyond and discover that more intense illumination of speech that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance, in which there meets the divine rhythmic movement with a depth of sense and a power of infinite suggestion welling up directly from the fountain heads of the spirit within us. Poetry is the expression and movement which comes from us out of a certain spiritual excitement caused by a vision in the soul, of which it is eager to deliver itself"

Sri Aurobindo, the well –known Yogi of Pondicherry is an Indian writing in English. His disciples, followers, devotees and even critics have enlogised his virtues as a mystic poet, a yogi – philosopher and a patriot. "Sri Aurobindo is a mystic poet" is a universally accepted factor. Despite all stated above what most of them have overlooked is that he has always been a worshipper of Beauty and Truth. He may be equalled at par with the Romantic poets of the Nineteenth Century England namely Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley. Like Wordsworth, he saw a spirit pervading all of Nature; like Keats, he philosophised that 'Beauty is

Truth, and like Shelley, he wanted Man's spirit to be free and soar to unknown heights of imagination and inspiration. Sri Aurobindo is said to have left behind him 'a wealth of literature'. To many of his contemporaries, Sri Aurobindo was a power out of the ordinary, a star that dwelt apart.

As a poet and critic of poetry, Sri Aurobindo is ranked among the supreme masters of our times and his poetical output represents the creative effort of about sixty years running to some three thousand pages. Though the prolific writing of Sri Aurobindo keeps him at par with great poets like Dante, Milton and Keats, prose writers like Dr. Johnson and dramatists like Shakespeare, a quick glance at some of his works is itself enough to establish him as a worshipper of Beauty and Truth considered as the most finished among his early works in blank verse, Love and Death has been acclaimed as a memorable poem with a matching technique of Sri Aurobindo. It holds within its short span, "a snatch of the poere and amplitude coupled with a delicate splendour reminiscent of Milton's Comus" (P59). Here in this poem, indomitable love is presented as gaining victory over Death. Ruru, the handsome young hero invades Patala (Hades) to reclaim his beloved, Priyamvada who dies untimely of snake – bite. Ruru willingly barter away half of his own life to live the other half with his beloved restored to life. The legend reminds one of one of the great legends of orphans and Eurydice; with the difference that orphans could not bring his beloved back to earth. In this poem he touch in one magnificent flight heights which can only be called classical" (P 9). The poem has reached classical heights with the elaborate use of similes and metaphors and Sri Aurobindo has presented a youthful vitality combined with an intense love of life of some of the notable events of the poem, one to be cherished is the presentation of the youthful love of Ruru and Priyamvada before her death in the following lines:

"To him, the earth was a bed for this sole flower

To her, all the world was filled with his embrace"

(LD 231)

The next event in this poem is the exquisite pathos of Priyamvada's death:

"She for a moment stood

Beautiful with her love before she died,

And he laughed towards her"

(LD 234).

Love and Death also contains what can be called an indirect presage of Sri Aurobindo's later spiritual and

scriptural power of expression. The following are the thought provoking lines of majestic pathos:

"Long months he travelled between grief and grief,

Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,

Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind"

(LD 337)

In this poem, Ruru challenges Death to show what man is. Ruru becomes a superman, because his true love for priyamvada has given him the superhuman ability to bring Priyamvada from the underworld where Death reigns supreme, back to his own world of the Living. Sri Aurobindo himself is a superman, made so by his pure love for the Divine. He wants all men to become superman and this can be made possible by love, when love emerges out of the union of Beauty and Truth. Thus, Sri Aurobindo who, in the words of Sisirkumar Ghose, an ardent disciple,

"But at no period was Sri Aurobindo, a puritan or averse to the joys of life, love or the senses"

has proved himself as a worshipper of Beauty and Truth. Urvasie is the story of King Pururuvus, a mortal hero, who took a nymph of heaven, an Apsara by name Urvasie, for a bride. Sri Aurobindo's description of dawn and the arrival of the Apsaras, especially the most beautiful of them all, Urvasie, one of the most beautiful which has ever been penned:

..... "It was she,

The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,

Yet virgin. In a silence sweet she came,

Unveiled, soft – smiling, like a bride, rose – cheeked,

Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind

Stirring her hair and all about her gold

(Urvasie 190)

Then, the poet describes Urvasie thus:

..... Among them she,

Like a high sun of splendour, or half seen

All troubled with her hair. Yet paradise

Breathed from her limbs and tresses wonderful

with odours and dreams"

(Urvasie 190)

These two passages are shot with an impetuous beauty, which stresses not only the heart of Pururavus, but also the reader's. Each line reveals Sri Aurobindo's love for Beauty which gives his poetry, especially his love poems a touch of immortality and perfection. Sri Aurobindo regarded Delight and Beauty as fundamental things for an artist and a poet. So in his Future Poetry, he comments thus,

"These twin powers meet make a consonance of the perfect harmony of his work and are the first deities he serves, all the others only group themselves about them, strive to be admitted to the soul of delight and the privilege of beauty and have to make them in a compelling oneness"

(TFP 254)

The poem Urvasie is also steeped in love's countless moods. The following passage may be cited as a fitting example:

"Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met with her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts Tumultuous up against his beating heart, He kissed the glorious month of heaven's desire so
clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge" (Urvasie 206)

Aurobindo's Savitri, by any standards, is a most remarkable poem which is supposed to be perhaps "the most expending of man's mind towards the Absolute" (Nadkarni 4). The poet took the mahabharata legend and breathed into it a new life. As a result, Savitri has become a supreme expression of Sri Aurobindo's message and vision. The mother in a message given in 1971 said:

"Sri Aurobindo came to tell the world of the beauty of the future that must be realized. He came to give not a hope but a certitude of the splendour towards which the world moves. The world is not an unfortunate accident. It is a marvel which moves towards its expression. The world needs the certitude of the beauty of the future And Sri Aurobindo has given that assurance" (Iyengar 492).

One of the powers of Savitri is delight and beauty. Sri Aurobindo sees the delight breaking out in the whole of creation from the earth to the air, the hills and the sky, when the Omniscient Goddess approaches the dark Night of the Nescience:

"..... and scattered on sealed depths, her luminous smile kindled to fire the silence of the worlds. All grew a consecration and a rite. The wide – winged hymn of great priestly wind Arose and failed upon the alter hills; The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky" (S4)

In the opening lines of the poem, Sri Aurobindo takes us to the higher regions where his vision has found its joy and peace; there are not only the regions of Light and Truth and Divine Power, they are also regions of "Beauty and a sweetness dire". These are regions where Beauty and Truth exist side by side where the Divine dwells. Most of the poetic lines verge on the sublime. Savitri can be called 'the song of life divine' because in it, Sri Aurobindo presents a world of Beauty and Truth; where Time and Death are powerless.

Sri Aurobindo has presented Antiochus in Rodogune as a man of great courage, for he is a believer in the sanctity of Truth. Truth imparts to man greatness, courage and a grandeur which one can see in Antiochus. Even the cunning, conniving and scheming phallus has to grudgingly admit that and exclaim:

"Must thou be royal even in thy fall" (R 450).

Thus, Rodogune's Beauty and Antiochus's Truth, have in their union given birth to love. This love takes them to the eternal heights of joy, to live on even after death. Thus, Sri Aurobindo proves himself to be a worshipper of Beauty and Truth, in his early verse – drama Rodogune.

Sri Aurobindo, the yogi – poet, as he commented in his prose work The Future Poetry, has revealed in his poetic works and verse – dramas that "Universal love" felt by man is the actual "spiritual truth". Love manifests itself in Beauty and Truth in the form of a small spark. When ultimately Beauty and Truth merge, this union leads to the birth of love. This 'love' is the most powerful weapon provided to man by the Divine to defeat Death and ascend to units with the Divine. This powerful emotion of love gives man the strength to defeat Death and become immortal. Sri Aurobindo has proved that such evolution of man is possible in his epyllions Urvasie and Love and Death and his immortal epic Savitri and his verse – drama Rodogune. Sri Aurobindo, a worshipper of Beauty and Truth has made one understand and believe that Beauty and Truth are Divine and man when he follows in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo, will become as immortal as Sri Aurobindo himself.

To Conclude, it may be said that being a singer of beauty, Sri Aurobindo stands as a model of his own belief that a poet is 'a truth – bearer' and 'beauty – singer'.

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