

Sri Aurobindo's Ideology on Indian Culture

Dr. Y. Sumithra

Lecture in English, SWR GDC(G), Kanchikacharla, A. P.

Abstract: A culture can be material, like in Western society, or mainly spiritual, as seen in India. Aurobindo asserts that authentic culture represents a balance between physical nature and human psychology. He compares materialistic focus of Western culture with the spiritual richness present in Indian traditions. He advocates for Indian spirituality as not just deep but also vital for worldwide unity and comprehension, suggesting that India's spiritual wisdom can lead humanity to an elevated shared awareness. He underlines the importance of religion, art, literature, and governance in forming a strong cultural identity, pointing out the tolerance and flexibility present in Indian spiritual traditions

Sri Aurobindo's ideological insights, cultural power, and nationalism established him as an exemplar for the freedom fighters of that era. He was one of the earliest freedom fighters advocating for complete Independence and played a key role in assisting India to escape the colonial mentality. This concept of existence serves not only as a critique of Western views but also as a tribute to India's vast heritage, promoting the preservation and rejuvenation of its traditions amid European impacts. Aurobindo's works connect with today's readers looking to grasp the intricacies and richness of Indian culture, especially as India explores its post-colonial identity within a modern framework

Key words: Articulate, civilization, culture, existence, orientation, tolerance.

Introduction:

Sri Aurobindo, who was born in Bengal but spent utmost of his life in Gujarat and Puducherry, one could get the abecedarian gospel of India's soul and its development trip. The minstrel-champion had left an imprint wherever he went, Mr. Modi said.(1). Sri Aurobindo's ideological clarity, artistic strength and nationalism made him a part model for freedom fighters of that time. He was among the first freedom fighters to call for full Independence and necessary in helping India break free from the social mindset." The Foundations of Indian Culture" by Sri Aurobindo is defend and articulate the substance of Indian Culture against Western examens, particularly those expressed by William Archer in his book" India and the Future." Published between 1918 and 1921 in the philosophical journal Arya. Aurobindo's essays address the Question of India's civilization and explore the profound spiritual, cultural and philosophical traditions of the country.

Cultural Values:

After Aurobindo's compleation of study in england around 14 years, he returned to India at the age of 21 years and studied Indian Culture and life. He was deeply told by Swami Vivekananda and Rama Krishna Paramahamsa. In his first essaya, Aurobindo arugues that a culture is to be valued to the extent that it encourages a natural harmony of spirit, mind, and body, and a civilization must be judged by how it expresses that harmony in its abecedarian ideas and ways of living. A culture may be material, as in Western society, or generally spiritual, as in India. This poses the question of whether the unborn stopgap of humanity depends on a mechanized, utilitarian society grounds utilitarian socity grounded on reason and wisdom or on a spiritual, intuive and religious civilization, in which every aspect of the culture works together to advance the progress of the soul toward a advanced spiritual knowledge.

For Aurobindo, the answer is clear. Although he does n't dismiss the benefactions the West has made to mortal progress, he argues that it's the spiritual traditions of India that can inspire the

rest of the world to grasp the concinnity of all humankind, grounded on the knowledge of a universal godly knowledge. This will be a concinnity in which diversity will flourish, rather than a spurious concinnity in which one culture simply obliterates all others. To this end, India must live up to the loftiest ideals of its tradition and defend itself against the infiltration of alien ideas.

According to Sri Aurobindo,

“ that India shell rise, it's Sanathana Dharma that shell rise ”

“ that India shell great, it's the Sanathana Dharma that shell be great ”

“ that India shell expand, extend her service, it's the Sanathana Dharma that shell expand and extend it tone each over the World ”

“ it is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists ”

A Défense of India:

Many of Archer's assertions are refuted by Aurobindo in "A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture." Aurobindo views Archer as a representative of an entire school of Western writers who have disparaged India. Archer's main accusations were that Indian culture was defeatist in its ability to keep up with the contemporary world, full of superstitions, irrationality, and immorality, and that it did not promote individual responsibility. Furthermore, a passive otherworldliness that was detrimental to the exercise of individual volition was fostered by the prevalence of the theories of karma and reincarnation.

Aurobindo vehemently refutes the accusation that India represents a gloomy, world-negating ideology in response to this onslaught of attack. He notes that the four pillars of human life—fulfillment of desire and enjoyment of the world (kama); material, economic aims and the necessities of mind and body (artha); ethical behavior (dharma); and spiritual emancipation (moksha)—were the foundation of ancient Indian culture. Only after achieving the first three pillars could the fourth be attained. When Indian spirituality is at its best, it has a profundity that secular Western society, which only acknowledges the tangible and comprehensible, cannot match.

A “noble effort of the human spirit to transcend mere desires and material satisfaction, ultimately achieving a pinnacle of spiritual tranquillity, greatness, strength, enlightenment, divine realization, enduring peace, and bliss” is what Aurobindo describes. He subsequently provides a comprehensive rationale for Indian culture. He starts by examining the essence of Indian religion, which he believes contrasts sharply with the Western emphasis on doctrine and ideology. In truth, due to Hinduism's lack of a singular authority and official institution, along with its apparent acceptance of diverse ideas and spiritual experiences, many Westerners struggle to comprehend Hinduism as a true religion. Aurobindo points out that in India, dogma, or fixed intellectual belief, is the least important aspect of religion; what matters is the religious spirit.

The central tenet of Indian religion is the conviction that all finite forms of life originate from a transcendent, infinite, everlasting, or absolute dimension to existence. For the sole sake of its own amusement, this ultimate eternal consciousness takes on a variety of seemingly distinct forms. Therefore, the ultimate essence of the human being is the absolute, and realizing this ultimate truth—also known as a state of God realization—is the aim of human existence. Even though there are numerous sects and opposing ideologies in India, they all acknowledge these facts as the fundamental tenets of religion.

Aurobindo goes into detail about how Indian religion is generally tolerant. He acknowledges that there have been instances of persecution and fanaticism, but they have not been as severe as those that occurred in the West. India was prepared to accept the legitimacy of new spiritual masters who have expanded the religious heritage and acknowledged the necessity for diversity in spiritual experiences. Hinduism, at its best, strikes the right balance between spiritual freedom and order. Family and communal customs, the Brahmins (priests and scholars), and the line of gurus (spiritual

instructors) who not only passed down the tradition from generation to generation but also innovated it provided order and stability. The fact that Hinduism's authorized scriptures continued to proliferate and that it permitted a wide range of interpretations of its foundational texts, like the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedas, prevented them from being used as tools of tyranny rather than enlightenment, further demonstrates the religion's willingness to develop and grow, to build freely on the foundations of tradition.

In keeping with his comparison of India and the West, Aurobindo contends that Western religions erroneously think that genuine spirituality can be attained through the development of ethical systems, the cultivation of aesthetic beauty, or the intellect or emotions. Genuine spiritual life, however, is a deeper, more profound experience for Indians since the innermost self transcends the mind and emotions, no matter how nuanced or discriminating they may be. In Indian tradition, anything less than this is regarded as ignorance or, at worst, a shallow type of knowledge.

According to this viewpoint, elevating all facets of existence and "divinizing human nature" is the aim of Indian spiritual culture. This is the third stage in the development of Indian spirituality, according to Aurobindo, and it is not yet finished. At the beginning of the Vedic era, the first stage took place. The oldest Indian literature, the Vedas, chronicled humanity's initial encounter with the divine through the manifestations of the natural world. The Vedas also discussed a more profound spiritual truth that was only known to initiates, who comprehended the role and nature of the gods in both their internal and external meanings. The emergence of epic literature and philosophy marks the second, post-Vedic, period. A new pantheon centered on the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva emerged, and the Vedic gods lost their original meaning. When everyone, not just a select few, "find their whole existence on some completely disclosed force and vast uplifting truth of the Spirit," the third stage will fully materialize. Then and only then will India be able to declare that its spiritual mission to the world has been accomplished.

Art and Literature:

Aurobindo addresses the accusation frequently made by Westerners that Indian art is not "realistic" in his chapters on Indian art, which he defines as architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, and theater. Aurobindo notes that although Indian art aims to reveal some facet of the limitless divine soul through symbols, Western art is heavily inspired by exterior nature and outward living.

The first three of Aurobindo's five chapters, which cover three millennia of Indian literature, are devoted to the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the two heroic epic compositions, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The continual awareness of infinity and the capacity to convert it into a variety of pictures are what set Vedic poetry apart. The Vedas lack the intellectual and philosophical depth that the Upanishads provide. Aurobindo notes that many of the most important Western philosophers, such as Pythagoras, Plato, the Neoplatonists, the Gnostics, and later German metaphysicists, were influenced by the philosophy of the Upanishads. In fact, Aurobindo asserts that almost every philosophical concept of any substance has a seed or authority in the varied Upanishads.

In his last writings, Aurobindo challenges the widespread belief that Indian culture has failed on the social, political, and economic fronts despite the wonderful spiritual life it offers. He contends that ancient India was administered sensibly and effectively; the previous system lasted for a very long period until it collapsed due to foreign invasion and conquest as well as the deterioration of the ancient culture.

Aurobindo's Impact:

Aurobindo had lofty goals when he started publishing *Arya* in 1914, which is where the pieces that make up *The Foundations of Indian Culture* initially appeared. In addition to outlining a new paradigm of human knowledge that would include the pinnacles of yogic experience, he wanted

the journal to attract a worldwide readership. Additionally, he wanted the journal to convey his ideas on how humanity might progress in the future.

It's possible that Aurobindo's early accomplishments were less significant. The majority of the Arya's circulation was restricted to India. Despite the modest readership, Aurobindo's words received a lot of responses. Thoughtful young Indians saw in Aurobindo's writings a resurgence of the genuine spirit of Indian thought as well as profound insights into the contribution Indian spirituality could make to the modern world in the wake of the devastation caused by World War I and the seeming soullessness of a quickly expanding industrial civilization. To learn more from Aurobindo, many travelled to his ashram in Pondicherry.

The pieces were read by a far larger audience when they were published as a book in 1953. India no longer had to put up with a foreign culture disparaging its customs after gaining political independence from Britain. Like the writings of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Swami Vivekananda, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* is a superb explanation of the Vedantic tradition to a West that was becoming more conscious of the shortcomings of its own secular culture and was prepared, at least in some areas, to absorb knowledge from the East.

Conclusion:

Therefore, education, according to Shri Aurobindo, is a tool for the actual operation of the spirit of the mind, a body of the nation, and an individual. His educational philosophy holds that everyone possesses some degree of spiritual consciousness in the form of a unique ability, which the teacher should acknowledge and permit to develop. He engaged everyone in an effort to elevate humanity from its current situation to a more promising future.

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