

REVIEW ARTICLE



ISSN: 2321-3108

## THE THEME OF 'NATURE' IN THE LYRICAL POEMS OF SRI AUROBINDO

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Article Info:

Received:20/4/2013

Revised on:24/05/2013

Accepted for

Publication:05/6/2013

### ABSTRACT

'Nature' has played an important role in poetry written in different periods. However, in different ages it received different treatment. Theme of Nature is present not only in English literature but also in World literature. When we thought of Nature, he thought of Man. Man is the most happy and healthy when he lives in the midst of Nature. The aim of this paper is to examine Sri Aurobindo's shorter lyrics, in particular, the glimpses of nature in Indian aesthetic realization. The natural identity of the soul that has the eternal value of supreme one and it carries the experience of life and death from birth to birth, the soul that connects the sequence of experiences. The central theme of Sri Aurobindo vision is the evolution of life into a "life divine". In his own words:

"Man is a transitional being. He is not final. The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in the earth evolution. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner spirit and the logic of Nature's process".

The aesthetics proper and a half-developed theory of poetry came in the closing session of a great series, as if to give the final shape to the Aurobindonian world view. Contrary to the common belief in our English departments, where the other major prose works are thought of as irrelevant to Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics and theory of poetry, I must say that his poetics can only be grasped thoroughly with reference to his total view of life.

### Introduction

Life and nature are comparative ideas since nature is the study of how life acts and connects inside the hover of presence. When we set aside the opportunity to look at the excellence of our general surroundings, we can see parallels inside our own particular lives. One who is adjusted with nature is adjusted with the act of living. All of nature moves in a winding as do our own lives. It is vital to invest energy in nature on the grounds that along these lines we can progress toward becoming receptive to its insight. Then again, when we disregard the magnificence of nature and invest our energy in a urban wilderness our feelings of anxiety go up and

we start to feel as though we are made out of the solid that we see surrounding us<sup>1</sup>.

The natural world has been one of the recurring subjects of poetry, frequently the primary one, in every age and every country. Our concepts of nature are relative, historically determined. The nature poem is affected by ideology, by literary conventions as well as social and cultural ideas. The great neoclassic writers dealt with men as members of an organized, usually an urban, society; of this society the author regarded himself as an integral part; its highest standards were those he spoke for. As the worshiper of nature Sri Aurobindo made a major departure in this respect. Sri Aurobindo loves nature as well as human being. He made the most

proper combination between his love of man and love of nature in his works. He entrusted his love of man on the love of nature and in return, his love of natural scenery and the life of the people living in nature. He not only wrote so many poems but also developed his own outstanding theory on poetic creation. In a large number of his poems, Sri Aurobindo revealed his true compassion and love for the sufferings of the poor and the unfortunate. Sri Aurobindo provides a simple useful definition of nature poetry as poetry that "considers nature as subject matter and inspiration."

Nature in Sri Aurobindo's poetry can be considered as an extension and a demonstration of his philosophy of evolutionary Nature. Consequently, we have in Sri Aurobindo's poetry, nature at the Tower level' consisting of basic life forms and physical manifestations which are open to the senses. At the other level, we have sophisticated works which demonstrate the workings of evolutionary Nature at the level of higher consciousness.

#### Discussion

Most of the poems Sri Aurobindo wrote in England were influenced by the poetry of the Victorians and in them we have evidences of a poet adept at evoking rich, idyllic images of nature in its physical forms. Described as 'promissory notes' by Srinivasa Iyengar, the poems give a foretaste of the future career of Sri Aurobindo as a poet, with the final redemption of the 'promissory notes' in *Savitri*<sup>2</sup>.

Nature and the imagination were inextricably linked. The imagination would serve as an inspiration, a refuge, and a place for reliving moments of bliss. In the poetry of Sri Aurobindo, nature is where the imagination meets the senses. He described nature as he imagined and experienced it. He did not know poetic diction and thus had a natural use of language of himself. Sri Aurobindo was not forced, he let his feelings guide him and his development occurred gradually.

The first attempt of Sri Aurobindo to write a narrative poem was the incomplete *The Vigil of Thaliard*, written in 19<sup>th</sup> century only. In fact this is the only long poem Sri Aurobindo wrote in England. Sri Aurobindo seems to have grabbed the Thaliard scene from Pericles in which Thaliard shows up as a master of Antioch, utilized by Antiochus to kill

Pericles. The theme of the poem is by all accounts the hero's look for his spirit's freedom. One can detect here Sri Aurobindo's own particular longing for freedom of the spirit communicated so persuasively in the shorter verses of the time. Another theme of the poem is the significance of time in the Universe, an angle Sri Aurobindo appeared to have detected at an early age. The picture of the dervish has been utilized to relate Thaliard's profound undertaking in the scenery of Time. At the point when Sri Aurobindo says that 'time is a resting dervish', the participle 'dozing' clues around evening time Thaliard sits for his yoga alone in the woodlands of the night and the irregular scene is passed on through some extraordinary symbolism: The roses shivered in their sleep.,

The lilies drooped their silver fires,  
The reeds upon the humming steep  
Bowed low their tapering spires;  
For tho' no sob pulsed in the air,  
No agony of wind,  
Down heaven's moonlight-painted stair  
Trod angels who had sinned (Sri Aurobindo.  
Collected Poems, 2009)<sup>3</sup>.

The images of 'fireflies', 'glow-worm' and 'stars' add to the mysterious surroundings, which bear a striking resemblance to the opening lines of Coleridge's *Christabel*. The simile which compares the fireflies to drops of 'burning rain' gives us a sense of the difficulty of the atmosphere in which Thaliard sits, besides highlighting Sri Aurobindo's tendency to transfer adjectives from one context to another unlikely context - a tendency that reveals itself frequently in *Savitri*. The transfer continues at some stretch in the poem:

Fireflies drizzled in the dark  
Like drops of burning rain,  
The glow worm was crawling spark,  
The pool a purple stain,  
The stars were grains of blazing sand (Sri  
Aurobindo. Collected Poems, 2009).

The images of the 'spear', 'blast' and 'tempest' that follow most appropriately prepare the background for the vision of the murdered king, Pericles. It is apparent that the act of violence haunts the child Thaliard, and hence is his search for spiritual solace for his tortured soul. These images and the ones that follow immediately are symbolic

representations of the turmoil in Thaliard's soul. Sri Aurobindo appears to be relating the turmoil in Thaliard to the environment surrounding him., in much the same way many of Shakespeare's characters and incidents are related to the atmosphere in which they live and act.

One of the basic premise of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of nature is that it is ever evolving. For Sri Aurobindo, evolution is 'nothing but the progressive unfolding of spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God out of this apparent animal being'<sup>4</sup> Evolution of Nature is at two levels, one at the level of physical form, and the other at the level of consciousness. The evolution of the physical form is essentially to prepare the instruments of the evolution of consciousness. Another critical aspect of evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo, is that for evolution to begin and maintain itself, there has to be an involution of higher consciousness into lower forms of Nature.

Though most of the early lyrics of Sri Aurobindo deal with frustrated love and inevitable death and the consequent melancholy that they promote, these are not the only issues to occupy him in England and also at Baroda. Some of his early lyrics reveal his intense feelings on politics and careers of political leaders. *Hic jacet* (Glasnevin Cemetery) and *Charles Stewart Parnell*, both written in 1891, are vigorous expressions of his political sensibilities, and are remarkably strong in their sentiments. We are taken far away from the Virgilian celebration of landscape and their invariable inter-relationship with love. Sri Aurobindo's 'nature' in these poems do not reveal Keatsian flourish. With sheer economy of words, images and suggestions, Sri Aurobindo portrays death, but the melancholy tone is missing:

Patriots, behold your guerdon. This man  
found  
Erin, his mother, bleeding, chastised,  
bound,  
Naked to imputation, poor, denied,  
While alien masters held her house of  
pride.  
And now behold her! Terrible and fair  
With the eternal ivy in her hair,  
Armed with the clamorous thunder, how  
she stands

Like Pallas' self, the Gorgon in her hands  
(-Sri Aurobindo, Collected Poems, 2009)<sup>5</sup>.

We get one of the first examples of a departure from the strictly sensuous treatment of nature and man in the poem *To a Hero-Worshipper*, where there is a powerfully moving first person account of a depressed man. Whether the poem was actually inspired by a personal tragedy is unclear, but in the poem we have Sri Aurobindo evoking the same aspects of nature which he previously extolled to build up a series of powerful contrasts between everything that is ideal and enjoyable and his own inability to come to terms with life. Imagery in the poem is all sourced from physical nature, and the poet highlights his suffering and despondency through his inability to adequately respond to the beauties of nature.

Two lyrics, *A Vision of Science* and *In the Moonlight*, are sharp departure from all previous lyrics of Sri Aurobindo in that they deal with an untouched issue –the increasing realization that science may have already reached its final frontier of influence. Sri Aurobindo's target here is the materialistic dogmatism of the early twentieth century. Interestingly, *A Vision of Science* is composed on an argument, initially between Religion and Science, in which Science emerges victorious, and then between Science and Nature, in which Nature exposes the limitations of Science and materialism. The fact that Science is actually fighting a losing battle with Nature is highlighted in another poem, a rare experiment in anapaestic metre. The poem is composed in the form of a question and answer where the marvelous machinist who rules over the material world, is finally shown to be 'Tost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature'<sup>6</sup>. Sri Aurobindo uses a number of images to highlight the nature of the Creator. However, the poem ends with the conclusion that the Creator cannot be adequately or satisfactorily described. The best achievement for a man would be to know the Creator only through the appreciation of the beauty of the Nature around him.

No other work of Sri Aurobindo apart from *Savitri* has such a rich concentration of images expressing the abstract as *Iliad*. A study of the nature imagery in *Iliad* can be made under four thematic divisions: prophecy; illustrative of men not listening to the prophecy, those explaining the

process of division and disintegration into which men have lost themselves; and images projecting the chaotic state of men as a consequence of their disobeying and disturbing the course of evolutionary Nature. The abstract image of prophecy and fate propelled by the Ananke that Sri Aurobindo makes visible is of Time and Will. In fact most of the important images of the narrative deal with the nature of the impending event of destruction. Let us consider a couple of passages having images indicating the potential of the fateful event. Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden. Earth sees not; life's clamour deafens the ear of the spirit:

Man knows not; least knows the messenger  
chosen for the summons.

Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts,  
his heart's ignorant  
whisper,

Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time  
and the rustle of Nature<sup>7</sup>.

Again,

Mix in the strife and die hate while the  
varied meaning of Nature

Perishes hurt in its heart and life is emptied  
of music<sup>8</sup>.

In the first quote, Sri Aurobindo hints at a spiritual blindness that robs man to hear the voices of the spirit. Talthibius, the messenger of Achilles is the voice that prophecies doom for man. Ironically, man does not reject the voice as a routine manifestation of ego. He rejects it since his un-evolved earth-Nature does not recognize the invincibility of the prophecy. For him, therefore the words of the messengers are not prophecies, but merely the message of a warrior who is their enemy. The consequence of this rejection is expressed in the second quote. The turmoil and hate impairs an already immature ability to perceive the meaning of Nature and life is turned to suffering and pain. The Trojan assembly which considers the message of peace and rejects it, is effectively the representative of the entire human race in that they have not yet evolved to the state of an understanding of the ways of evolutionary Nature. It does not make the mistake any the less in gravity since ignorance to decipher the ways of Nature comes from negative world associations caused by pride, ego and hate.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, nature was not just there; it would come to life inside their minds. His perspective was a very important factor in his poetry; the poet Sri Aurobindo mediated between nature and the imagination. Even though he wrote about nature and found inspiration in it, nature poetry was seldom an objective description. Both poetry and prose were filtered through the imagination of the author, influenced by things he had heard, seen, read or fantasized before. The most imperative part of Sri Aurobindo's utilization of nature in his expressive poetry is the progress that Nature as a personal experiences from the most punctual poems he wrote in England to the later lyrics of his vocation. The change was inescapable. The prior lyrics were affected by the Romantic and Victorian poetry he was uncovered to in England. We recognize impacts of Keats in his arousing inspiration of nature and Shelley in his utilization of natural objects as sources of inspiration. Sri Aurobindo's twist is anyway not without control. His established preparing makes numerous of his lyrics nearly Miltonic and he shares Tennyson's enthusiasm for seeming well and good of a stanza. Sri Aurobindo's poetic exercises at Baroda uncover a considerably more profound motivation at work. He felt profoundly acquainted with Indian philosophical works, particularly *the Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*, and such impacts attempted to change his viewpoint on Nature - a change featured in a considerable lot of his lyrics from the Baroda years what's more, even later. The change was not a refutation of the physical or sexy parts of Nature that was a commonplace theme in his lyrics written in England. It was successfully an 'exceeding' of that viewpoint - and absorption with something drastically extraordinary and not really a dismissal of his way to deal with Nature of the early days. It is this absorption of the old and the new ways to deal with Nature that makes Sri Aurobindo's story poems developed adaptations of his lyrics and pieces.

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