

REFLECTIONS ON SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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[Sri Aurobindo, a contemporary Indian philosopher has contributed immensely to the political ideals of India. He was actively involved in politics during the freedom movement of India from the British rule. Although his involvement in active politics was for a short span of time ,yet he has written many articles on political issues in the journals like ' *Inddu Prakash*', '*Bande Mataram*' etc. These illustrious writings on politics by him actually are the sources of Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy. His political ideals aim at the highest unity of human being. We shall humbly try to show in this write-up that Sri Aurobindo while forwarding his political ideals being guided by the aim to achieve spiritual unity of mankind.]

Sri Aurobindo, a contemporary Indian philosopher has contributed immensely to the political ideals of India. He was a revolutionary all through his life. Actually, the influence of the Upanisad and the Gita in his life have moulded his spiritual as well as political ideals. By the influence of Gita ,Sri Aurobindo has developed the socialistic ideals of performing owns own duty called svadharma.."Svadharma is the work in agreement with the law of one's being. We worship God by doing our ordained duties. God intends every man for some work in connection with society" (Radhakrishnan 571).

Sri Aurobindo was actively involved in politics during the freedom movement of India. Although his involvement in active politics was for a short span of time, yet he has written many articles on political issues in the journals like '*Inddu Prakash*', '*Bande Mataram*' etc. These illustrious writings on politics by him actually are the sources of Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy.

Political freedom is the life breath of a nation, according to Sri Aurobindo. He says that the complete political freedom is the basis of social and educational reform, industrial expansion and also the moral improvement of the race. He maintains that being ruled by the foreigners is an unjust and unnatural condition. And this feature of a nation is prominent in India during the British rule. Sri Aurobindo's study of history led him to the conclusion that without a revolution no country could win its freedom. He says that for this purpose the political system of a country must run on three lines: Firstly, it is required to build up a secret revolutionary organization and to propagate revolutionary thoughts and ideas. Secondly, in order that the people must accept the idea of complete independence, a public movement must be organized. Thirdly, Sri Aurobindo feels the necessity to prepare the common people's mind for non-cooperation and passive resistance by which the government machinery could be paralysed. These ideas of him were extremely necessary as India was in struggle for freedom from the British rule.

According to him, there is an intimate relationship between the practice of yoga and politics. He believes that the practices of yoga give one the power by which one can liberate the country. For him the country is not a piece of matter and a geographical entity. According to him, the country is the Mother and everybody must worship her.

Sri Aurobindo, while discussing about politics has discussed about the organic theory of the State. The State is an organized group which develops for the survival, growth, efficiency and self assertions of individual. In the primitive age men were living in an insecure state surrounded by beasts and on the other hand adverse nature. Against this unprotected condition man tries to be organized and thereby to protect themselves. State is the organized form of man's living. So it can be said that the State is a necessity born of circumstance and environment. However, there is a constant tendency on the part of an individual to assert their egoism. This on the other hand creates conflict between the State and the individual. Sri Aurobindo refers to the fact that the State or the group life obeys its dharma when it governs the individuals. But such a dharma ultimately leads to the claim that the State is

greater than the individuals constituting it. But, Sri Aurobindo is against such dharma.

He says that the State has no soul but an individual has a soul. He maintains that the existence of a soul in man is responsible for the moral responsibilities on the part of man. The existence of soul in individual gives him social responsibility and to care for social opinion. Individual being as he is conscious so he fears for the communal law. State, which has greater power is not affected by the internal scruples or external checks. The State cannot be thought of having any moral responsibility. Its sense of morality cannot be thought of.

Sri Aurobindo has shown the inadequacy on the idea of State. The idea of a State is that which is theoretically the sub-ordination of the individual to the good of all that is demanded. But such an idea of a State practically implies the subordination of the individual to a collective egoism which seeks to satisfy certain collective aims and ambitions shaped and imposed upon the great mass of the individuals by a number of ruling persons who are supposed to be representatives of the community. He maintains that there is no guarantee that this ruling class or ruling body represents the best mind of the nation or its noblest or its highest instincts. So, he made a strong plea to correct the mistake of the modern mind which seeks to develop, in place of a living people, a mechanical State. State, according to him is an instrument of the communal life taking the place of life itself. (Josi 107)

According to him, the State is not an organism but it is a machinery which acts as a machine without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create. This feature of the State owned activities has been explained by him with the example of State owned education. It is true that education must be for all. So while forming an educational system the State is eminently useful as it can ensure education for all. But on the other hand, if the State tries to control the education of the people then the true development of people is not possible, since in such a situation education will be turned to be a routine and within a routine work man cannot express his potentialities. As a result man's total growth will be disturbed. So he says, "The State tends always to uniformity because uniformity

is easy to its essentially mechanical nature, but uniformity is death, not life." (Sri Aurobindo 301)

He maintains that without the individual growth there can not be real and permanent good of all. And in order to attain permanent good first of all individual good is required. Without the advancement of humanity the society cannot attain any permanent development and in order for the development of humanity, the individual growth is the first step. Sri Aurobindo is always in search of more profound, internal and real development. He maintains that this cannot be attained by the concept of State which can provide external or administrative unity only. And these things are not healthy, durable or beneficial over all the true line of human destiny. According to him, men must avoid mechanical means for his true development. One must practice moralized and spiritualized humanity united in its inner soul and not only in its outward life and body. Thus he opines that, "The only means that readily suggests itself by which a necessary group freedom can be preserved and yet the unification of the human race achieved, is to strive not towards a closely organized World-State but towards a free, elastic and progressive world union" (Sri Aurobindo 523)

Sri Aurobindo, however says that there is some improvement in the concept of the State. As a result the State tries to justify its existence by organizing the general economic and animal well-being of the community and even of all individuals. He says that, "It is beginning to see the necessity of assuring the intellectual and indirectly, the moral development of the whole community." (Sri Aurobindo 299). He is not against the call of the State that the individual should immolate himself on its altar and to give up his free activities into organized collective activity.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the idea of the nation is far more basic than the idea of the State. He says that the State is a 'soulless machine' and a mere power apparatus. According to him if the State is not based on nationality it is bound to be artificial, mechanical and will perish. He maintains that there is a nation soul but not State soul. So the power of the State should be diminished and nation to be an important unit of human society.

Actually Sri Aurobindo's political thought begins with the concept of nation and nationalism which proceed through

internationalism and its goal is ultimate human unity. He maintains that there is no contradiction among these three ideals. Nationality is the religion, he says, the religion of one's own (*svadharmā*). And this idea of nationality as a religion of him is beyond the family tie. Therefore, it is required to weaken the attachment to clan and tribe so that nation can be born. There are, in his view some constituents of a nation. First of all a nation requires a land or country. The members of a nation, in order to get some means of livelihood, requires economic unity of the nation. A nation which has economic unity can provide job opportunity to its members so that they can earn their livelihood. Again, a nation in order to be free from other nations requires political unity. If the members of a nation are not politically united then they cannot fight against others for their freedom. Finally, the nation must be a powerful organization so that the protection of life, division of labour and general progress can be attained. He maintains that the nation unit is not formed or does not exist merely for the sake of existing. Its central purpose is to provide the facilities through which the race including all individuals, different classes may move towards full human development.

According to him we must attempt to proceed from nationalism to internationalism. Internationalism is the attempt of the human mind and life to grow out of the national idea and form and even in a way to destroy it in the interest of the larger synthesis of mankind. Actually, the idea of internationalism was born of the thought of the eighteenth century and it took some kind of voice in the first idealistic stages of the French Revolution. But at that time, it was a vague intellectual sentiment. In practice, this idea did not find any strong force in life to help it to take visible body.

Sri Aurobindo maintains that at the present day there are different conditions and tendencies in human life which are favourable to the progress of the internationalist idea. Among these various factors science and scientific discoveries are the most important factors. Science has contributed to this direction immensely. It helps to multiply points of contact and threads of communication. Scientific conclusion is common to all men of everywhere. He says that such common acceptable conclusions of scientific knowledge pave the way to internationalism. According

to him, it is international in its very nature. He says that there is no such thing as a national science, but only the nation's contribution to the work and growth of science which are the indivisible inheritance of all humanity. It helps, on the other hand, in the Scientific minded men can easily be driven to the international spirit and all the world is now beginning to feel the scientific influence and to live in it. Science helps to bring closer every part of the world with every other part and thereby is developing some sort of international mind.

Sri Aurobindo says that we have to search the cause behind such attitude of internationalism. According to him, if we think that the factor behind this attitude is external then its influence is much less direct and much less compelling than any that precedes it. Actually for mere living in international unity is not absolutely necessary. In such a case international living cannot be regarded as perfect, rational or ideal collective living of the race. He says that for the vital man in us, who is the dominant element in our instinct and in our actions does not care for any such elements like international unity. The vital man is quite satisfied with just the tolerable form of living with which he is accustomed to live. According to him, by his very nature he tries to develop his individual being as much as possible. Though man tries to improve his power and living yet he feels the necessity to unify himself with his fellow beings. And such feelings of man actually led him to form groups, collectivities etc. However, such a feeling of man to be united with others is not always conscient. He maintains that this will of man is but irresistible.

Sri Aurobindo has stressed the nature's law of unity in diversity .According to him, unity is preferable to uniformity. Man has a unique feeling of mental conflict along with vital and physical conflict and this conflict is not with others, but with himself. So, he says that man is capable of an inner evolution, a progression from higher type, a constant self transcending. According to him, although the first aim of the individual must be his own inner growth and fullness and its expression in his outer life, but he can do this through the relation to the other individuals, to the various communities and to the humanity at large. He maintains that absolute freedom, equality and liberty are neither possible nor

inevitable. So, he says that man must create spiritual unity instead of uniformity among diversity.

He maintains that misunderstanding among the different countries and countrymen that prevailed in the world is due to the lack of respect and honour of one to the other. He asks others to make an attempt to understand and to respect each other's soul not only for their own sake, but for maintaining the human unity through mechanical rules and regulations, but through inner spirit.

Thus we find that Sri Aurobindo who was moulded by the spiritualistic ideals of the Upaniṣad and the Gītā was also involved on the problems of the society as well as of politics. This shows that he was aware of the issues and problems which arise in the social and political sphere in the world. In case of politics he strives for highest kind of unity i.e., internationalism. This ideal i.e., international unity of Sri Aurobindo is the external expression of his inner feeling of spiritual unity of man. His appeal for international unity actually tends towards spiritual unity of human being.

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