

## **From Irish Revolution to Indian Freedom: Sri Aurobindo's Vision of National Liberation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Literature is extremely important for shaping the world that we live in today. It has served, and will continue to serve, as a source of propaganda. Safely saying, India celebrates nearly every revolution across the globe and literature plays a significant role. This comes along on the 78 years of India's independence. It is important to note what pre independence literature had to serve for India's freedom struggle. Other contemporary poets like Ghosh and Tagore lacked an insight of the socio-political and spiritual landscape of the country. Sri Aurobindo Ghose, easily grasped both the synthesis of the East and the West, and dipped into the spiritual resources poured out by the so-called masters of literature, be it Spenser, Milton or his English contemporaries. He fancied teaching patriotism as a form of religion. Whoever had the audacity to touch him became a recipient of courage due to the all might aura protecting him. This was both a shock and excitement for Indian politics. It might be correct that he woke up one day and found himself to be popular, or that he came, saw, and captured it all. He, too, shot out like a meteor and fled from the political sphere, but unlike the meteor, the astonishing glow he shone on Indian politics did not vanish along with him. The blaze he ignited did not subside as it passed through Indian politics until its honourable custodians guided it towards a far-off milestone. This paper seeks to document Sri Aurobindo's impact in the context of the Indian independence movement.

**Keywords:** National Integration, Spirituality, Freedom Struggle, Poetry, Cultural Identity, Colonial Resistance.

Poetry defines the uplifting expression of emotions that stems from the rhythmic excursion of self-exploration across the enchanting archipelagos of form and figure, both within and outside.

Sri Aurobindo

In each phase of history, literature has served a key role, being used as a primary form of propaganda. It is fair to say that literature serves a crucial role in almost every major revolution that takes place around the world. There's no denying that it happens in India, too. It is imperative to understand the significance of pre-independence literature and its contribution to the Indian freedom movement.

In contrast with his contemporaries, Aurobindo Ghose (popularly known as Sri Aurobindo), Rabindranath Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu merged the art of poetry with a deep awareness of the



country's sociopolitical realities and spirit. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to claim that Aurobindo Ghose was arguably one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. He held the multitude of roles of a mahayogi, an Indian philosopher, a poet, an Indian nationalist, an actor of Indian thought, a literary critic, and a radical politician. Sri Aurobindo, or the happy synthesis of East and West, equally mastered the western tradition of Spenser, Milton, English romantics, Dante, and the Greek-Latin masters, rising to spiritual heights, heavily relying on his spiritual resources. With unbending devotion, he taught nationalism as a religion claiming the position of the prophet of this new creed by instilling heroism and spirit to all those who came in contact with him. Colonial India, during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, was not close to considering English literature for decolonization, but needed to cultivate a symbiotic relationship with it. However, this enlightened Indian yogi did not relinquish his identity despite the brilliance of his expression of ideas and ideals through the European lens.

Aurobindo's works often are perceived and interpreted as an indication of his spiritual evolution, which is a profound misunderstanding. As a result, the political vision outlined in the poems is generally neglected and hidden. At the same time, Aurobindo's writings blazon his political outlook, which starkly opposes the Orientalist cultural imperialism enshrined within the canon.

According to him, "You, Aurobindo, have the word and we are waiting to accept it from you. We India shall communicate to the world through you and henceforth you will bear the communication with other nations." These lines suggest that Aurobindo's poems aren't simply shouts from an Indian ascetic, but instead fulfill the aspirations of a statesman who sought to galvanize the cultural identity of a colonized people in revolt against British imperialism.

In "Lines on Ireland," a poem he wrote in 1896, Aurobindo laments the decline of Ireland. It gives the impression that Ireland has outgrown her old nature:

How changed, how fallen from her ancient spirit!  
She that was Ireland, Ireland now no more,  
In beggar's weeds behold at England's door ..."

With Ireland serving as a stand-in, Aurobindo offers commentary on India. A mask as that is observable in other parts of the poem, "Night by the Sea":

In thy bosom's snow white walls  
Softly and supremely housed  
Shut my heart up; keep it closed  
Like a rose of Indian grain ,"

This way of thinking is seen in the commemoration of the Irish republican Charles Stewart Parnell's sacrifice. In his short poem of the same title Charles Stewart Parnell (1891):

O pale and guiding light...  
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,  
Since vainly filled the luminous doom of birth.



The same poem contains some Sri Aurobindo's lines, which illustrate the poet's self-identification with Parnell and India with Ireland:

Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords  
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,  
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!

In 'Love in Sorrow,' he recalls how he "had wronged" his "youth and nobler powers" through what he deems to be "weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours," but succeeds in restoring faith in his roots. This poem is a striking and sorrowful exclamation to the motherland and to self-rule. His poetry on Ireland became the bedrock of irredentist fervour and nationalist zeal. In an address to the Irish, Aurobindo's suggested remedy was not military action, but rather an inward gaze towards one's centre, stillness, contemplation, revival of true essence, and cultural distinctiveness. He indicates the condition of the oppressed state – not the external power – the reason for Ireland's captivity and submission.

In new expression, metaphors and similes serve the role of representing themes throughout the poem's individual stanzas. Refining one's intellect may bring healing to one's depths of anxiety and estrangement one bears within. Remaining faithful to moral boundaries is fundamental in life, regardless of the choice one makes. Unfortunately, in societal need, many abandon help that is spiritual.

But thou to thine own self disloyal, hast  
Renounced the help divine, turning thy past  
To idle legends and fierce tales of blood,  
Mere violent wrath with no proposed good.

The poet's attack culminates in the line which emphatically asserts:

How fallen art thou being ruled by these!

Aurobindo to some extent was under the influence of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay whose approach interlacing self with spirit is exemplified in Anandamath. He was supportive of a face to face encounter for sannyasis wishing to obtain liberty or nirvanas. Patriotism or Nationalism has a spirituality aspect. National self-revealing, especially the revival of inner, deep-seeded custom, is sacramental. That sanctity ought to be preserved in any case. It determines the spiritual strength of the nation against foreign subjugation. Sri Aurobindo appreciated this bond when stating about the poetics prose writer: he called them no in essence but "the sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose." In the last achingly transformational piece, the author puts forth the assertion of moth, 'the lotus' with Saraswati to implore garland of wisdom and narrate the tormented love story of the writer.

Thy tears fall fast, O Mother, on its bloom,  
O white-armed mother, like honey fall thy tears;  
Yet even their sweetness can no more relume  
The golden light, the fragrance heaven rears,  
The fragrance and the light for ever shed  
Upon his lips immortal who is dead.



CR Das referred to Sri Aurobindo as, “the poet of patriotism, prophet of nationalism, lover of humanity.” A face of ardent nationalism was Baji Prabhu. His most famous work is a long narrative poem entitled 'Baji Prabhu' which recounts the incredible life and feats of a maratha warrior who fought valiantly against the Mughals.

Descending stooped, towards the vesper verge  
He gazed and cried: "make iron of your souls.  
Yet if Bhavani wills, strength and the sword  
Can stay our nation's future from o'erthrow  
Till victory with Shivaji return.

And then again:

Inflicted. And from time to time the gaze  
Of Baji sought the ever-sinking sun.  
Men fixed their eyes on him and in his firm  
Expression lived. So the slow minutes passed.

This piece has been under debate for its outstanding blend between form and purpose. Sri Aurobindo's poem, Vadula, published under the monicker The Mother to her Son deals with temerity. The following extract does not mark the lines where Mother India is screaming for relief from her children.

Shrink not from a noble action, stoop not to unworthy deed!  
Vile are they who stoop, they gain not  
Heaven's doors, nor here succeed  
When thou winnest difficult victory from the clutch of fearful strife,  
I shall know thou art my offspring and  
shall love my son indeed.¶

While in a different culture, Sri Aurobindo did not give up trying to unearth the unique traditional roots of the country. He focused on self-assertion through powerful spiritual regeneration and rooting of cultural identity. National identity is deeply rooted in the heritage and personality of a nation. Sri Aurobindo started here and unified spirituality and nationalism, like the indestructible confluence of Ganga and Jamuna, ensuring the preservation of the glorious past and the 'Sanatana Dharma' which is revered.

Sri Aurobindo's early poems reveal that he was searching for a befitting symbol of his Mother India. The lyrics stress the need to reclaim lost pride and magnificence to liberate from alien oppression. In his book The History of the Indian National Congress, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya claimed that Aurobindo's genius 'blasted out like a meteor' and he enjoyed a brief sojourn in the upper heavens for a limited time.

In the third book of "Savitri", Sri Aurobindo composed:

'As yet thought only same high spirits' dream



Or a vexed illusion in man's toiling mind,  
A new creation from the old shall rise,  
A Knowledge inarticulate find speech,  
Beauty suppressed burst into paradise bloom,  
Pleasure and pain dive into absolute bliss.  
A tongueless oracle shall speak at last,  
The Superconscient conscious grow on earth,  
The eternal's wonders join the dance of Time.

There has been much treatise regarding the merits of Sri Aurobindo as a poet. The harsh criticism directed towards Sri Aurobindo, including his dismissal as a poet by English critic and poet Kathleen Raine, Keke Daruwalla, Alphonso-Karkala, and even Nissim Ezekiel, is even more ironic given that Aurobindo preferred self-identifying with the literary discipline of poetry. Still, it is impossible to overlook his two epics, numerous short and long poems, and sonnets. In 1909 during the Alipore bomb trial, Chittaranjan Das, the defense attorney, claimed that Aurobindo Ghose was a nationalist poet leader —

Long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long  
after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead  
and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as  
the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after  
he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed  
not only in India, but across distant seas and lands.¶

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