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## **Sri Aurobindo : The Prophet of Nationalism and the lover of Humanity**

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### **Abstract**

Sri Aurobindo was indeed a versatile genius—Poet, metaphysician, patriot, lover of humanity, and a Political Philosopher. His works attempt to represent the crystallization of the new and rising soul of India and have a spiritual message for humanity.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was looked upon as a prophet of the Indian nationalism. His concept of nationalism is based on the Philosophy of the Vedanta which stands for unity and harmony among individuals. In that sense all persons are equal and there exists a unity between God and Individuals. He used religious ideas and symbols to shape the concept of nationalism. However he represents the humanistic face of Hinduism. From this perspective his concept of nationalism is wide enough to include different religious, cultures and traditions. His theory of nationalism is based on awakening the spirit of nationalism in the minds of Indian.

In the second part of his life, beginning 1910, when he worked on the spiritual level to realize human unity, he had expressed five dreams which are now becoming realities of the world's political consciousness. So, the present paper focuses on this subject.

**Keywords** : Nationalism, Humanity, Vedanta, Harmony, Spiritual, Dreams, Political consciousness etc.

**“ Swaraj is the direct revelation of God to this people, - not mere political freedom but a freedom vast and entire, freedom of the individual, freedom of the community, freedom of the nation, spiritual freedom, social freedom, political freedom”**

**Sri Aurobindo Ghosh**

Sri Aurobindo Ghose is one of the most colourful children of 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal Renaissance, an enigmatic personality, unfathomable for the richness and width of his scholarship and creativity. He is one of the prominent leader that inspired us. His commitment and hard work throughout his life brings the result of success and a good example for others to follow. He was born in Calcutta on the 15th August 1872. He was the third son of Dr.Krishnadhan Ghose and Srimati Swarnalata Devi. He belonged to a Bengali family.



When he was five years old, he was sent to the Loreto Convent School in Darjeeling. The school was an English medium school; and thus Aurobindo started lisping in English at the age of five years. And also he was profoundly impressed his teachers in Darjeeling school for his intelligence and singular sweetness of his nature. At the age of seven he was sent to England and stayed there for fourteen years. At a very young age, Aurobindo had acquired a very considerable proficiency in the classics and he was therefore able to proceed to King's College, Cambridge, with a senior classical scholarship of the value of 80% per year. When Aurobindo was just about twenty years old, he had achieved rare academic distinctions.

He had mastered in Greek and Latin, English and French and he had also acquired sufficient familiarity with other continental languages like Germany and Latin. For fourteen years, he had spent his life in England and had develop foreign taste and tendencies and he had been denationalized like his own. He secured a promising appointment in the Baroda state service. He then left England for India in February 1893. At the age of twenty eight he married Mrinalini who died in the plague of influenza at the young age of 32 while waiting in Calcutta to go and join her husband in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo died in 5 December 1950.

Sri Aurobindo's main vision was the evolution of human life into the life divine in this earth. His philosophy contradicted the traditional views and he was of the view that it is possible to go beyond liberation and even surpass the normal integration of nirvana.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To explore the spiritual concepts of Sri Aurobindo.
2. To assess the Aurobindo's ideal of human unity.
3. To examine Aurobindo's contribution for the nationalism of India.

### **Methodology**

The present study attempts to analyze Sri Aurobindo : The Prophet of Nationalism and the lover of Humanity. It discusses the major concepts of Nationalism created by him.

The researcher used historical method of research for the study. Both primary and secondary sources were explored for collecting relevant data of the study. Authenticity and validity of the content were established through external criticism of data. Interpretation of the data was done through content analysis to establish facts and for determining trends that data suggested.

### **Analysis & Discussion**

Sri Aurobindo's most important and significant idea was relates to the role of the 'Spiritual' in completing the process of unification of mankind. He refers to this as union at the level of soul, those vehicle is the Religion of Humanity. It is qualitatively different from political union whose highest form would be a world-state or an economic union like the erstwhile European Common Market. Such unions represent what he termed "formal" (as opposed to real) unity and to be found only in what sociologists define as 'secondary association.' In a secondary association, the members are bound together by material interests, by formal rules

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governing the structure of the association and where parts meet parts. What Sri Aurobindo envisages is a spiritual union whose advent the triumph of the Religion of Humanity ensures. It is a primary association whose members are bound by a sense of belonging together. Spontaneity is its hallmark. But the Religion of Humanity, as Sri Aurobindo interpreted it, is neither a political nor a humanistic ideal, though liberty, equality and fraternity are its three basic attributes.

### **Sri Aurobindo : The Prophet of Nationalism and the lover of Humanity**

Sri Aurobindo was indeed a versatile genius—Poet, metaphysician, seer, patriot, lover of humanity, and a Political Philosopher. His works attempt to represent the crystallization of the new and rising soul of India and have a spiritual message for humanity.

He was looked upon as a prophet of the Indian nationalism. His concept of nationalism is based on the Philosophy of the Vedanta which stands for unity and harmony among individuals. In that sense all persons are equal and there exists a unity between God and Individuals. He used religious ideas and symbols to shape the concept of nationalism. However he represents the humanistic face of Hinduism. From this perspective his concept of nationalism is wide enough to include different religious, cultures and traditions. His theory of nationalism is based on awakening the spirit of nationalism in the minds of Indian. He believed that only unity could throw the British rule.

Aurobindo is considered as one of the greatest Political thinkers of modern India. His concept of nationalism was based on identifying India with our mother. Naturally the strength of mother India according to Sri Aurobindo depends on the power (shakti) of the Indian masses cutting across religious, linguistic and racial divisions. He defined the essence of nationalism in a manner which helped Indians to transcend the differences of caste, language, custom, religion etc. He identified the Indian renaissance with the emergence of nationalism in India which helped the rejuvenation of Hinduism in the spirit of vedanta philosophy.

He wanted the common people to participate in the freedom movement. In this way they could serve the motherland. He for the first time realised the importance of mass-participation in our freedom movement. The doctrine of Passive Resistance Penned by him in April 1907 was the first scheme of a mass-movement against British Rule for achieving Indian freedom. Thus one of the notable features of his concept of nationalism is that it does not exclude any community, rather include all communities. In a word, his concept of nationalism is all-inclusive.

His revolutionary spirit is seen here already ablaze with the fire of nationalism that was to turn into ashes the iron fetters of bondage and slavery in a foreseeable future. Let us listen to some of the first words of the soul of the nation that were penned by Sri Aurobindo:

“Our appeal, the appeal of every high-souled and self respecting nation,  
ought not to be to the opinion of the Anglo-Indians, no, nor yet  
to the British sense of justice, but to our own reviving sense of manhood,



to our own sincere fellow-feeling—so far as it can be called sincere—with the silent and suffering people of India. I am sure that eventually the nobler part of us will prevail, that when we no longer obey the dictates of a veiled self-interest, but return to the profession of a large and genuine patriotism, when we cease to hanker after the soiled crumbs which England may cast to us from her table then it will be to that sense of manhood, to that sincere fellow-feeling that we shall finally and forcibly appeal.’’

The most important things of history have remained unacknowledged, and the early story of the inspiring force of Indian Nationalism illustrates this truth quite vividly. How many of us really know the thoughts and stirrings of the soul of India that were being incubated in the fire that was burning in Sri Aurobindo right from the time of the series of those articles that were offering

‘‘New Lamps for the Old’’? and how many of us can today recall the unparalleled event of world history when within three brief years the great daily *Bande Mataram*, edited by Sri Aurobindo, discovered the soul of the Indian nation day after day, infusing in the country wave after wave with new currents of electricity of thought, and changed the entire atmosphere and fixed in the awakened mind of the people the goal of the attainment of complete independence, complete *Swaraj*? And how many of us are able to see that it was during those three years, the basic programmes of the struggle for freedom of India were already visualized and empowered for their eventual unfoldment leading up to the victorious fulfilment during the next forty years? The programmes of boycott and non-cooperation, the programme of *Swadeshi* and National Council of Education and Programmes of creation of arbitration courts and reaching out to the masses of the people were not only advocated. But were greatly and warmly responded to through the powerful messages that emanated from *Bande Mataram* and spread over the whole country.

Sri Aurobindo’s *The Ideal of Human Unity* (henceforth *IHU*) represents one such approach. But it stands apart from others in terms of both its thematic and methodological uniqueness. It is futuristic, but not deterministic. It is in consonance with Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual philosophy, rather an offshoot of it branching out from his theory of *Spiritual Evolution*. *IHU* may also be studied as a philosophic vision of a globally unitarian political movement culminating in a spiritual integration of Human Community.

The *IHU* also carried a declaration of hope. Its underlying message contained an assurance of perpetual peace. The assurance was given in a period of conflict, turmoil and turbulence to a war-form world. Though published in a book form in 1919, *The Ideal of Human Unity* began to make its serial appearance in *Arya* at a time (September, 1915), when the First World War was already one year old. Its last instalment came out when the end of the war was still a few months away. The bleeding of the ‘civilised’ West in this gory and modern war involving huge loss of life and property was just one part of its narrative. The other part—more depressing and painful part—was the irreplaceable damage to stable and traditional moral world built upon Christian values, shaped by Humanism of post-Renaissance period and strengthened by Enlightenment-produced Rationalism. This intangible world faced an existential crisis, if not a total collapse. Even the idea of Progress lost its shine. Belief in its inevitableness became somewhat shaky, if not blurred.



It is in this darkening atmosphere of gloom and hopelessness, with things falling apart and centre unable to hold, that Sri Aurobindo appeared with the assurance that there was light at the end of the tunnel. His words hardly received the attention it deserved. The world of nation-states went its own way and hurtled towards a repeat of August, 1914. But that hardly matters. For Sri Aurobindo's *The Ideal of Human Unity* was not a manual of instructions for statesmen and policy-makers. It is a presentation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of human unity, statement of a 'Seer' not of a Doomsday preacher, or a running commentary on global politics. It is a statement of vision that derives its validity from the past movements of historical forces, and legitimacy from Sri Aurobindo's unbending faith in the spiritual progress of mankind.

The nature and problem of Human Unity are not the only themes to which the erudition and cogitation of Sri Aurobindo remained confined. He brings under focus many other themes along the line. This is to ensure that the problem of Human Unity is cognised not as an isolated, self-contained and autonomous problem, but as a multi-branched integrated problem that does not exclude state-nation dichotomy, contradiction between uniformity and diversity, law-liberty confrontation, even the inter-relation of 'Political' and 'Spiritual'. Broadly speaking, Sri Aurobindo appears to pursue a triple object in his work. The first is to explore and interpret the meaning of 'unity'. The second is to throw light on the linkage between material and non-material (spiritual) levels of unity and show how the quest for unity must end at the spiritual level. Thirdly Sri Aurobindo seeks to assure the conflict-tormented mankind that unity, as man's history proves, is a function of conflict. He declares with remarkable self-assurance that the unification of the life of humanity is inevitable. This necessarily issues from an inescapable operation of natural forces. One of such forces is the ever-widening group-life necessitated by ever-increasing material and psychological needs. This brings to human awareness the need to preserve and bring to fullness the principle of individual and group-freedom within the human unity—not outside or in opposition to it. In other words individual and group-freedom too, do not develop outside or in opposition to total human freedom. They can by nature develop only within the parameters of, as parts of and in consonance with the progressive realisation of the latter.

The most important and significant idea of Sri Aurobindo, however, relates to the role of the 'Spiritual' in completing the process of unification of mankind. He refers to this as union at the level of soul, whose vehicle is the Religion of Humanity. It is qualitatively different from political union whose highest form would be a world-state or an economic union like the erstwhile European Common Market. Such unions represent what Sri Aurobindo termed "formal" (as opposed to real) unity and to be found only in what sociologists define as 'secondary association.' In a secondary association, the members are bound together by material interests, by formal rules governing the structure of the association and where parts meet parts. What Sri Aurobindo envisages is a spiritual union whose advent the triumph of the Religion of Humanity ensures. It is a primary association whose members are bound by a sense of belonging together. Spontaneity is its hallmark. But the Religion of Humanity, as Sri Aurobindo interpreted it, is neither a political nor a humanistic ideal, though liberty, equality and fraternity are its three basic attributes.



## Conclusions

The ideal unification of mankind must be based not only on an outer body of a federation of free nationalities, but on a psychological and spiritual basis of fraternity born out of the religion of humanity. However, this new force, “the religion of humanity”, is a possibility only of the new spiritual Truth-Consciousness, the Supramental consciousness. For the last forty years

Aurobindo did intense tapasya to realise the last three of his five dreams:

**First Dream:** The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity.

**Second Dream:** Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilization.

**Third Dream:** The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties.

**Fourth Dream:** Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun...That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

**Fifth Dream:** The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

This is the prophecy of nationalism and internationalism, of human unity and the coming new supramental race beyond man that was attempted by Sri Aurobindo and the Future is impregnated with these seed-dreams. It is left for Time to fulfill these dreams and prophesies of Sri Aurobindo.

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