



Mysticism and Spiritual Thinking in the writings of Tagore and Aurobindo

1. Mossammat Firdousi Sultana
Research scholar
Department of English
Seacom Skills of University
2. Dr. Goutam Ghoshal,
Professor, Department of English,
Seacom Skills University (SSU)

Abstract

Anything that is explained from a state of higher than the average consciousness of a human being is mystic. Like poetry, mysticism too depends a lot on paradoxes and unusual use of language. It is not a philosophical system though philosophies may lead to or flow from it. It is rather an attitude of mind, an innate tendency of the human soul which seeks to transcend reason and to attain to a direct experience of God. The mystic realizes God as the *raison d'être* of his being. He passes out of all that is merely phenomenal, out of all lower forms of reality, and becomes one with Being. To the transcendental theistic mystic this union is the union of love between man and God. Love, to the mystic, is the active expression of his will and his anguish for the God are his natural trait. Tagore is an unofficial ambassador to the world and he put India on the literary map of the world. Tagore, like George Herbert, transmutes his prose poems into the poetry of real mystical experience. Here he has achieved mastery in writing mystical lyrics. He speaks in the tone of one who is on terms of close intimacy and familiarity with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo's poetry, exemplifies his mystical vision, using profound symbolism and mantric rhythms to evoke spiritual experience. His poetic philosophy, as outlined in *The Future Poetry*, envisions poetry as a medium of divine expression, where words transcend intellectualism and become vehicles of higher consciousness. Additionally, his critical analyses, including *Essays on the Gita*, explore the integration of action, devotion, and knowledge in spiritual realization. This study delves into how mysticism shapes Sri Aurobindo and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's mystical ideas in contemporary spiritual and literary discourse.



Keywords: Mysticism, Humanism, Spirituality, Divinity

Introduction

Tagore's career as an Indian - English poet had been started with inclination to culture and nature. In 1912, on the eve of his departure to England for medical treatment, he tried his hand to translate some of his Bengali poems in English. He visited London with the manuscript. A shocking event took place that he lost this manuscript in the tube train. Later his English friend William Rothenstein and W.B. Yeats helped him to find the lost manuscript. English is the second language for Tagore but he studied some great English poets of nature – Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth. In this way, he has perfect knowledge of syntax as the linguist has. Moreover, he has Godly gift of keen observation. The Child is a lengthy poem. He wrote directly in English. Later he translated in Bengali as *Shishu Tirtha*.

Sri Aurobindo, a philosopher, mystic, and poet, holds a significant place in Indo-English literature for his unique synthesis of spiritual philosophy and creative expression. His works embody a deep mysticism that permeates his poetry, critical writings, and philosophical discourses. Tagore finds the presence of God in the nature around him. He addresses God by admiring the beauty of nature which is the reflection of the presence of God himself. Rajendra Shah – successor to Sundaram has no any close connection with Gandhian impact or spirituality of Aurobindo. He is a mystic. His first collection of his poems is *Dhvani* presents his love for nature and beauty of divine. *Shruti* – another collection of his poems is purely devotional. Shant Kolahal has subject matter referring to nature and God. Prasang Saptak has seven poetic dramas based on mythology and religion. In these dramas, he presents the pictures of great women characters. His spiritual journey or mysticism has three salient features; Knowledge, Yoga and Devotion.

Major Thrust

Indian literature can be traced back to Vedic time. In the Vedas and the Upanishads spirituality beautifully blended with poetic illustration. In chanting the Mantra, Shloka of Rigveda, the ultimate element has described as divine origin of universe. All the four Vedas have been clearly suggesting the elements of spiritual life. There are many Mantras of Upanishad directly derived from Rigveda. For example, a famous mantra describing 'Jeev' and 'Brahma' as two birds but stays on the same tree of body. This mantra suggesting the union of 'Jeev and 'Brahma' in human body. And concludes that dominance of 'Brahma' element in human body



leads to spiritual life. The same is voiced in *Mundak* and *Mandukya Upanishads* by introducing bird metaphor. In *Mundak Upanishad*, Rishi (teacher) says to his disciple; that all worldly things arise from *Akshar Brahma* (Ultimate divine element) and at last they all illuminated in the same. (Ekadash Upanishad; 1946, 91). Poetry and spirituality cover parallelly the scenario of ancient Indian Literature. Actually, in early days, poetry was the only from which used as medium of expression in literature. Ancient epics and mythological works of Indian Literature were also poetic. *Bhagavat Geeta* is the best example of highly spiritual yet simple poetry in Indian Literature.

T.S. Eliot does not believe that poetry and mysticism irreconcilable, but is not ready to concurrence the status of major poets to those who sing of the Divine. According to him such poetry gives a limited pleasure. T.E. Hulme points out that the man involved in the mystic quest, more specifically when he is absorbed in prayer, is not his normal, natural self (Wimsatt and Brooks 661). As Helen Gardner rightly points out, one notices variations from age to age in the concept of religion and the concept of poetry and the interactions between them. Being a romantic poet, Rabindranath Tagore as an admirer of nature was interested in natural scenes from the very beginning and the direct connection with the natural environment, earth and sky, seasons and plant life and simplicity of life gave him a lot of inspiration.

Rabindra Nath Tagore criticizes those who were trying to find God in seclusion. The poet wants the ascetics to participate in the daily humble activities of life for the realization of God. The poet advises the ascetics to give up chanting mantras, singing Bhajans, and counting the beads of the rosary. Tagore says that God lies among human beings. Consequently, to love everyone in this world is to love the Almighty and to serve mankind is to serve the God. God is not to be found in the temple but with the tiller, the stone- breaker and honest Labourers. Tagore's concept of the universal man represents the ultimate realization of human nature, neither supernatural nor superhuman. To grasp this highest form of human existence, one must understand the essence of human existence itself. Tagore describes God in the following way- *Whatever name may have been given to the divine reality, it has found its highest place in the history of our religion owing to its human character giving meaning to the idea of sin and sanctity and offering an eternal background to all the ideals of perfection which have their harmony in man's own nature.* (G.229) Tagore's conception of theistic God is related with the religion of man. He imagines God in two ways. First of all, he believes that God is beyond the human self and the entire universe. There is no conceivable attribute of God-mental or physical.



Rabindranath says- *The positive aspect of the infinite is in 'avaitanm', in an absolute unity in which comprehension of multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its contents like the beauty in a lotus, which is ineffably more than all the constituents of the flower.* (G. 69)

Sri Aurobindo, one of the foremost Indian philosophers and mystics of the modern era, profoundly explored the convergence of philosophy, spirituality, and practical transformation. His ideas illuminate a path for the evolution of human consciousness, emphasizing the divine potential within each individual. As a poet, Sri Aurobindo possessed a deep poetic consciousness, seamlessly blending spiritual insight with the goal of social betterment. He mastered various poetic forms but ultimately developed a distinctive style aligned with his spiritual philosophy. He viewed poetry as a mantra, a sacred expression emerging from the poet's innermost soul. According to him, a seer-poet attains vision when the mind evolves and merges with Satchidananda (Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss). His realization of the infinite made him a true mystic. In *The Life Divine*, he discusses the limitations of the human mind and the necessity of ascending to higher planes of existence. He writes: *The mind is an instrument of ignorance trying to reach knowledge; but knowledge itself is beyond the mind; it is supramental or spiritual* (The Life Divine, p. 291). In *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo examines the Bhagavad Gita's teachings through the lens of his integral philosophy. He emphasizes the synthesis of action (karma), devotion (bhakti), and knowledge (jnana) as pathways to divine realization. Aurobindo highlights the Gita's advocacy for spiritual action without attachment, a concept he expands to include the idea of divine work in the world.

An important feature of Aurobindo's mystical experience closely related to the denial of death is the experience of the unity of all life or the universal vision; everything in the universe including oneself is viewed as a Divine Unity. This idea is well illustrated in three poems namely *Parabrahman*, *God* and *Epiphany*, which belong to the period 1908-1909. In all the three poems, the world is considered a manifestation of God, not divorced, but intimately connected with Him; indeed, everything is contained and related to Him. Aurobindo is regarded as the mystic of mystics. Even as a young child, he used to show signs of mutism and interpersonal withdrawal, which were early signs of spirituality. Aurobindo was of the opinion that the ultimate goal of his mysticism was the regeneration and transformation of every human being, so that this earthly life of sorrow, pain and death may become the Life Divine. The way of self-realization in his poetry consists of a dual commitment namely effort and supplication.



The truth revealed in Aurobindo's another work *Savitri* belongs to the "supra-rational" world. It, therefore, belongs to the tradition of mystic poetry which has come down from the Vedas and the Upanishads to Jnaneswari. There are three aspects of the mystic vision of life in *Savitri*. The first explores the mystery of cosmic creation. The second is concerned with the potential divinity in Man. The third probes into the psychic experiences that occur during spiritual progress.

Conclusion

Mysticism, by its very nature, is challenging to define. Aurobindo believed that man is the son of God or the child of divine who is still striving for the perfection. The chief elements of the mystical experience such as the denial of death, the experience of universal consciousness, the loss of an individual identity, the paradoxical questioning after finding etc, are developed more fully in Aurobindo's works. For him, these are the ways, goals and the incentives to spiritual life. It is thus concluded from recent study that Tagore is a true follower of love and humanity. His philosophy is truly based on spirituality and mysticism. As a true follower of spirituality his divine love helps him to find his beloved God in every aspect of nature. Nature is his medium which provides the stimulus for his thoughts. And it seems that he is directly communicating with God.



Cited Reference

- B.C. Chakraborty: *Rabindranath Tagore: His Mind and Art* New Delhi: Young India Publications, 1971.
- Ghosh, Sisir Kumar. *Rabindranath Tagore*, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1990.
- Gupta, K. S. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. Routledge. 2016
- Ghose, S. *Rabindranath Tagore*. Sahitya Academy. 2007
- Chaudhuri, Haridas. *Sri Aurobindo: The Prophet of the Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1960
- Gupta, Nalini Kanta, *Poets and Mystics*. Sri Aurobindo Library, 1951.
- Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa, *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd, 1962
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd. 1913
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Religion of Man*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1949