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Deep Eco Darshan in Aurobindo: Spiritual Renaissance for Evolutionary Crisis

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Abstract:

Deep ecology is a spiritual philosophy that preaches a new world view to save the world from the present ecological degradation and degeneration. In response to the anthropocentric shallow environmentalism Deep Ecological consciousness has now emerged as a new spiritual discipline. By 'ecosophy' or Deep ecology Naess (1973), the founder of deep ecology movement, means any integrated philosophy of Nature-an 'earth wisdom'-of ecological harmony with the experience of Self-realization or identification with the whole nature admitting its intrinsic or inherent value. In Rishi Aurobindo we can delve deep ecological insight of spiritual renaissance which can address the greatest ecological crisis in the evolutionary history. His rhythmic numbers with mantric power, spiritual flow, divine glow, intrinsic value, transcendental vibrations, and integrated Yogic discipline can awaken, illuminate, divinize and thus metamorphose the mundane consciousness of human mind and soul to the divine consciousness of inherent harmony with ecology as a web of divine relationships. In my paper I would like to highlight this deep ecological insight of Sri Aurobindo and analyse his holistic Renaissance light which has the power to purify human nature to destroy delusion, fanatic illusion and arrogance so that the dualistic self can be reconnected with the Divine Self to identify with intrinsic ecology, making it divine-transcending us from ego consciousness to eco-consciousness. Here the word 'Darshan' is an Indian tradition, not just English word philosophy, rather it implies seeing, experiencing, introspecting something deeper and thus it offers a subtle ground for formulating ecosophy. With this 'Darshan' one can experience and achieve Naess-like "interrelatedness", "maximum symbiosis", "self-realization" and "ultimate premises" in ecology for great tolerance of peaceful co-existence when no one will hurt nature in suicidal attitude.

Keywords: ecosophy, deep Ecology, intrinsic value, spirituality, Darshan, monism.

Deep ecology is a spiritual philosophy that preaches a new world view to save the world from the present ecological degradation and degeneration. In response to the anthropocentric shallow environmentalism Deep Ecological consciousness has now emerged as a new spiritual discipline. By 'ecosophy' or Deep ecology Naess (1973), the founder of deep ecology movement, means any integrated philosophy of Nature-an 'earth wisdom'-of ecological harmony, with the experience of Self-realization or identification with the whole nature admitting its intrinsic or inherent value. This spiritual introspection offers a solution to

the environmental crisis through a radical shift in human consciousness- a fundamental change in the way people relate with the environment. Greg Gerrad says, “Deep ecology demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature. It identifies the dualistic separation of humans from nature promoted by Western philosophy and culture as the origin of environmental crisis, and demands a return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere. The shift from a human-centred to a nature-centred system of values is the core of the radicalism attributed to deep ecology”. (Greg pp 24) Naess’ ‘ecocentric’ view of nature can be achieved through developing ecological self and thus when we find ourselves in nature, care for nature spontaneously follows.

Rishi Aurobindo,(1872-1950), a great lover of nature, an enigmatic Indian personality, a visionary of a new enlightened world, a humanist, a mystic and spiritual yogi. He is noted for integral vision of life and spirituality and evolution of human consciousness. M.K. Naik epitomizes his life as “a glorious chronicle of progress from patriot to poet, yogi and seer” (Naik pp 47). He has his works on the Veda, the Bhagavadgita and on Yoga. He composed so many poems, especially sonnets. *The Life Divine*, the principal work of philosophy, and *Savitri*, an epic in blank verse, are the greatest contributions of Rishi Aurobindo. In his writings we can delve deep ecological insight of spiritual renaissance which can address the greatest ecological crisis in the evolutionary history. His rhythmic numbers with mantric power, spiritual flow, divine glow, intrinsic value, transcendental vibrations, and integrated Yogic discipline can awaken, illuminate, divinize and thus metamorphose the mundane consciousness of human mind and soul to the divine consciousness of inherent harmony with ecology as a web of divine relationships. The deep ecological insight of Sri Aurobindo and his holistic Renaissance light has the power to purify human nature to destroy delusion and fanatic illusion and arrogance so that the dualistic self can be reconnected with the Divine Self to love earthly nature, making it divine- transcending us from ego consciousness to eco-consciousness. Here the word ‘Darshan’ is an Indian tradition, not just English word philosophy, rather it implies seeing, experiencing, introspecting something deeper, ‘intrinsic’ and ‘monistic’, and thus it offers a subtle ground for formulating ecosophy. With this ‘Darshan’ one can experience and gain such ecological Naess-like “interrelatedness”, “maximum symbiosis” and “self-realization” in nature for great tolerance of peaceful co-existence when one will not hurt nature in suicidal attitude.

Poetry is one of the ways of the spiritual cultivation; the harvest is the Divinity. Sri Aurobindo’s poetry as well as his aesthetics is all of a piece with his metaphysical and sociological speculations; the possibility and imminence of human transformation- a radical change in man and his world, his polity, society and the total sphere of his activities-one change leading on to the other changes until everything would commonly usher in a new heaven and a new earth (Muruli pp148). His poems, specially sonnets are foundation to attain God through prayer and meditation based on this world of nature. Nature is his field of spiritual cultivation for divine crops for wayward mankind. For Aurobindo, Nature becomes the very abode of heavenly essence. This spiritual basis and belief provides human veneration to see the natural world with ecological conscience. In *The Divine Hearing*, a sonnet the poet perceives God in every aspect of nature- inner and outer. The poet says-

“All sounds, all voices have become Thy voice:
Music and thunder and the cry of birds,
Life’s babble of her sorrows and her joys,
Cadence of human speech and murmured words,
The laughter of the sea’s enormous mirth,
The winged plane purring through the conquered air,
The auto’s trumpet-song of speed to earth,
The machine’s reluctant drone, the siren’s blare
Blowing upon the windy horn of Space
A call of distance and of mystery,
Memories of sun-bright lands and ocean-ways,-
All now are wonder-tones and themes of Thee.
A secret harmony steals through the blind heart
And all grows beautiful because Thou art.”(Aurobindo pp. 130)

So an all embracing Presence here binds all of us with egalitarianism and universal brotherhood in ecological ambience.

In the poem *Who* Aurobindo had a wonderful spiritual experience where he could perceive the presence of God manifesting in objects of nature. In the “blue of the sky”, in the “green of the forest” the presence of the greatest Artist is implied. The poet says in *Who*, a short poem-

“In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?” (Aurobindo 40)

Sri Aurobindo sees us as divided beings, one part of us satisfied with our present, another aspiring for higher ones. A *tree* is symbolically human aspiration to rise higher to make this earthly life divine and thus it links the earth with heaven while human beings are seen to be only hungry for earth, to consume the earth. Here the poet implies earthly attachment as the obstacle to spiritual upliftment and a pure transformation of consciousness is required from matter to body, body to mind, mind to spirituality. The poet says in *A Tree*, a very short poem-

“A tree beside the sandy river-beach
Holds up its topmost boughs
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.
This is the soul of man. Body and brain
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.” (Aurobindo pp. 47)

Sri Aurobindo’s enlightened consciousness perceived the living presence of Goddess Kali in the temple on the bank of the river Narmada whereas we might see just an stone or clay idol. Such a world view he had that he found Goddess even in stones as in his poem, *The Hidden Plan*.

“Even in the stone and beast the godheads lurks,” (Aurobindo 132, line7)

Sri Aurobindo articulates in his sonnet, *The Stone Goddess* -

“In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,-
A living Presence deathless and divine,
A Form that harboured all infinity”. (Sri Aurobindo pp139)

Life belongs to the Divine and sacred and perennial descent of divine grace is on earth to make earthly life sacred. One feels the ocean of the light, the grace of God emanating from the lines of *Descent*- the poet says-

“Light and still more light an ocean billows
Over me, round me”.
And thus the poet feels that –
“All the world is changed to a single oneness;
.....

Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,” (Aurobindo 563)

In Aurobindo’s poems we get divine strength, perennial inspiration and innermost joy as his lines are imbued with divine nectar of higher regions. Its light changes the individual from within when one’s inner being finds the force from the divine creations to have inner journey. In ‘The Blue Bird’ the blue bird is the objectification of inner bird, Krishna, The Absolute, and Sri Aurobindo has his inner journey through the bird when he enjoys sacred surroundings

of nature. The liberated and upsouring bird of *The Blue Bird* is actually a link between Divine world and lower nature of humanity. The bird is an embodiment of eternity, medium of spiritual and ecstatic delight. Nature is here the vehicle of spiritual consciousness in the form of bird. The poet says in *The Blue Bird*, a short poem-

"I am the bird of God in His blue;
Divinely high and clear
I sing the notes of the sweet and the true
For the god's and the seraph's ear." (Aurobindo pp.104)

Like Shelley's *To a Skylark* the poet has his inner journey from this earthly life to divine one making the bird a divine manifestation, a sacred one of ecology.

Rishi Aurobindo's poetry delineates a supra mental ecology to spiritualize human thought. Bathed in such light human self realizes the ultimate truth and thus ego-centric human nature disappears to have eco centric nature. An integral and perfect relationship grows between human self and ecological self through inner realization. Human mind finds divine pleasure being totally merged in the contemplation of integral wholeness of Naess-like "maximum symbiosis" of the eco-universe as he feels perfection in himself overcoming dualistic darkness. The poet articulates in the poem, *The Kingdom Within*

"A peace, a light, an ecstasy, a power
Waiting at the end of blindness and the curse
That veils it from its ignorant minister,
The grandeur if its free eternal hour." (Sri Aurobindo pp129)

The very theme of his poetry is soul within, not the outer. There is always an inner odyssey from one luminous consciousness to another until the supra mental consciousness arrives through matter, body, mind and soul. His integral Yoga mantra in his creations is to awaken collective consciousness with spiritual discipline to achieve spiritual harmony with ecology as a study of a natural web of life where man as an organic part of a broader network of relationships. Sri Aurobindo's poem *Revelation* is 'the highest experience', 'the direct sight', and 'the direct hearing' of God in web of nature. In *Revelation*, a mystical lyric Aurobindo passes through a spiritual illumination to attain an enlightened vision. To him Nature becomes the abode of heaven. The poet feels as if the presence of God, Vision of God leaps behind the rocks and passes like a blow of wind- as the poet says in his poem, *Revelation*.

"Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks

Like a startled bright surmise

Visible to mortal eyes,"- (Sri Aurobindo pp. 47)

In *Savitri*, a modern epic of Aurobindo there is same revelation which expresses “an integral and cosmic truth beginning with the origin of the world and rising towards man’s ultimate divine fulfilment on earth“, . The poet says in *Savitri*

„Plains lay that seemed the expanse of God’s wide sleep,

Thought’s wings climbed up towards heaven’s vast repose

Lo-st in blue deeps of immortality.

A changed earth-nature felt the breath of peace." (Aurobindo 672)

To Sri Aurobindo the aim of poetry is not mere an imitation of nature rather it presents something deeper and inner. In his poetry there is profound eco-mystic consciousness and an intrinsic interrelationship between man as one part of the ecosphere and living environment, where they as a whole have the right to live and flourish. His poetry seeks holistic light of equilibrium between human life and ecology, having deep introspection, deep questioning, and deep commitment. Self-realization is the means for an individual to intuitively gain an ecocentric life, the earth is to be thought as a part of human life not separate from from it. The poet realizes in his poem, *The Hidden Plan*,

"A greater Presence in her bosom works;" (Aurobindo pp132 line 5)

Aurobindo’s poetry is marked with metaphysical and supra-physical mental energies in the spiritual bindings of body, mind and cosmic universe for eco-spiritual realization and moral values. His poems are fused with Vedanta philosophy, eternity and cosmic forces that influence the psycho-physical organisms of all living things and make us enjoy heavenly pleasure and make us feel as the poet feels in his poem, *The Golden Light*

"Thy golden Light came down into my feet:

My earth is now thy playfield and thy seat."

(Aurobindo pp134, concluding lines)

The Divine light of Aurobindo’s poems can purify, universalize, integrate and divinise our feeling to superior Consciousness to look at nature with compassion. Reading his poetry helps us to liberate our soul from lower nature to enjoy blissful spiritual enjoyment. His sonnet *Evolution* is an elevation of consciousness from the inanimate earthly objects to the higher stages of consciousness leading us to Naess-like “ultimate premises”. In his essence he enjoys-"We enjoy life as a playground of Divinity" having divine union to manifest in the bosom of nature realizing all existence as an expression of larger Self, having oneness and all embracing relation with each other. So since everything is divine, an ethic of reverence is

required from humans toward all other manifestations of God. Sri Aurobindo writes in his sonnet, *The Indwelling Universal*.

“I contain the whole world in my soul’s embrace
In me Arcturus and Belphegor burn.
To whatsoever living form I turn
I see my own body with another face.
All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes;
The one heart that beats within all breasts is mine.
The world’s happiness flows through me like wine,”

(Aurobindo pp. 131)

Sri Aurobindo achieves such ecological identification that he has ‘wrapped the wide world’ in his ‘self’. He recites the sonnet, *Cosmic Consciousness-*

“I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self
And Time and Space my spirit’s seeing are.
.....

All Nature is the nursling of my care.” (Aurobindo pp. 134)

Man’s attitude to nature based on master/slave theory to extract maximum from nature for own necessity is the cause of depletion, destruction, devastation. The root cause of environmental crisis lies in the deeper spiritual degeneration and consequent human alienation from nature- thinking nature as separate one. The objective devastation of nature is the result of subjective degeneration that is nothing but spiritual degradation. So actual solution of the eco-crisis lies in spiritual reconnection with nature. The Renaissance light of Sri Aurobindo can heal the nature with the worship of the sacredness and oneness of all life. We can learn to live in empathetic harmony with nature hearing her cry with sacred sympathy, treating her as source of all life, not as a resource to be consumed. Aurobindo’s mantric vibrations are so powerful that if one tries to drink it one has to be merged in all things around only to enjoy eternal bliss of nature. The poet expresses in his sonnet, *Life-Unity*.

“I housed within my heart the life of things,
All hearts athrobe in the world I felt as mine;
I shared the joy that in creation sings.”(Aurobindo pp. 135)

The poetry of Sri Aurobindo rises to meet the spiritual needs of a society grounded in the stultifying mire of material and intellectual despondency (Murali 155) and present ecological degeneration is the outcome of our spiritual despondency. Only with unified introspection one can fully enjoy life in totality. So the poet says in *The Life Divine*: To be and to be fully is Nature's aim in us; but to be fully is to be wholly conscious of one's being.... To be aware wholly and integrally of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is the necessary condition of true possession of existence. (pp. 1023-24) with such intrinsic self consciousness as the poet says in *The Godhead*, a sonnet.

“I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
In me, enveloping me the body of Him.” (Aurobindo pp. 138)

Sri Aurobindo expresses his sublime Naess-like 'knot' of interrelatedness of his self within the fabric of ecology-inner or outer- in the sonnet, *The Universal Incarnation*.

“The heart of a world in which all hearts are one” (Aurobindo pp. 138)

We can remove the ecological crisis which is the outcome of disharmony caused by egoistic blindness and greedy earthly attachment. Selfish human self finds true identity in Aurobindo's poems and feels elated with the understanding of the true self when world becomes ours. In silence and boundlessness the poet could perceive the whole universe unlocking his heart to it. In meditative consciousness the poet feels in *Ocean Oneness*.

"Identified with silence and boundlessness
My spirit widens clasping the universe". (Aurobindo pp.557)

In *Rose of God* the Rose is the supreme symbol of the efflorescence of God. Bliss, Light, Power, Life and Love are the five essences that fuse as the integral perfection of God. Bliss is for human heart, Light for the human mind, Power for human will, Life for the body and finally Love to:

"Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's kiss". (*Rose of God* pp.584, last line)

In *Transformation* the poet describes the transformation of the earthly nature into Divine Nature and the poet's transformation to the divine one. The poet has drunk the divine wine, and thus he becomes a divine one and to him "time is my drama" that means that time is like dream- not real and so eternity remains. His every cell gets illuminated with divinity of boundless joy and peace. The poet says in his sonnet *Transformation*.

“I am no more a vassal of flesh,” and

“My body is God’s happy living tool,”(Aurobindo pp. 161)

and thus his illuminated soul enjoys such universality which Sri Aurobindo calls as quoted in Ghosal (pp 196) “the realization of the All in the individual by the transformation of the limited ego into a conscious centre of the divine unity and freedom”

A God’s Labour, a short poem describes the man’s and earth’s transformation-manifesting divinity on earth and linking earth and heaven. Sri Aurobindo as visionary wishes to form a rainbow bridge marrying the earth to the sky and thus he wishes to bring God down here on this polluted and plundered earth. This transformation is termed as a God’s labour. In *A God’s Labour*, a short poem the poet articulates-

”I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge

Marrying the soil to the sky

And sow in this dancing planet midge

The moods of infinity.

.....

He who would bring the heavens here

Must descend himself into clay

And the burden of earthly nature bear

And tread the dolorous way”(Aurobindo pp. 99)

Same divinity echoes in *Savitry*, an epic in blank verse of Sri Aurobindo.

“To raise the world to God in deathless Light,

To bring God down to the world on earth we came,

To change the earthly life to life divine.” (Aurobindo pp 692)

The change of earthly life to divine one will breed the belief that every living being, human or non- human has a right to blossom.

Conclusion: Divine light of Sri Aurobindo’s Renaissance spirituality shows humanity the way to evolve to a higher level of consciousness to heal the earth. Meditative awakening with his divine ‘Darshan’ stirs inner light to elevate our soul, expand our vision, and nourish our heart so that we can listen to the cry of distressed nature with hearty compassion. His divine rhythms purify our subtle feeling and sympathetic understanding to celebrate the sacredness

and oneness of all living beings in harmony with nature. In Sri Aurobindo's Eco-Darshan we have the highest light to address the present evolutionary crisis.

So, with Aurobindo we should think that "Time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper and wider life towards which humanity moves. The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the king within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature".
(*Sri Aurobindo: The Resurgence of Asia*)

"The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come.

But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate in this change or if it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crushing circumstances.

So, wake up and collaborate."(*The Mother (The Mother's Agenda-5/46))*)

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