

## Sri Aurobindo' S Views on the Ideal of Human Unity

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**Abstract:** Sri Aurobindo ( 1872-1950) was a visionary par excellence. His Philosophy can be classified into two main categories : Spiritual Philosophy and Political Philosophy. He was the founder of Spiritual Nationalism. All his efforts were directed towards bringing harmony and unity among mankind on the basis of spiritualism. Ultimate aim of his Spiritual Philosophy was to bring Divine life on earth whereas the ultimate aim of his political Philosophy was the idea of World Union. Present research paper aims at simplifying the Political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in order to understand his Ideal of Human Unity

**Key Words:** Sri Aurobindo, spiritual philosophy, political philosophy, human unity, world union

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Geographically speaking it is the planet Earth which the basis of the existence of living beings including humans. Politically speaking it is the world which automatically becomes the basis of existence especially of the humans. Nature has made us as one single species but human ideas & aspirations have divided us on the basis of all manmade barriers : national boundaries, race, language, religion , economic status etc. There is a fine saying in English: 'United we stand, divided we fall' Though every human being understands what it means, no one seems to be interested in following it in practice. Thus at every level, unity seems illusive, something ideal and hence unachievable.

Sri Aurobindo was a philosopher who not only envisaged the spiritual aim of human existence but also suggested practical ways to attain it through political unification of mankind to achieve higher aim of human existence on this planet. In his collection of Essays titled '*The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, war and Self Determination,*' he has expressed his clear vision and views on the Ideal of Human Unity through almost 35 essays covering every aspect related to the concept of Human Unity. Beginning with the '*Ancient and Modern Methods of Empire*' Sri Aurobindo goes on unfolding the '*Ancient Cycle of Promotional Empire – Building and the Modern Cycle of Nation Building*'. Having dwelt on the functions of '*The Group and the Individual*' he goes on to explore '*The possibility of a world Empire.*' He could foresee the possibility of '*The United States of Europe*' and '*The peril of the world state*'. Visionary in Sri Aurobindo suggests how to maintain '*Diversity in Oneness*' and what would be '*The Religion of Humanity*'.

#### The Turn Towards Unity : It's Necessity and Dangers

Sri Aurobindo firmly believes that today the ideal of human Unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness. He is quite sure that this ideal of human unity is 'likely to figure largely among the determining forces of the future' ( **The Turn towards Unity 281**). The Scientific discoveries have transformed the world into the Global village'. Hence the chances of unification are better and bright than ever. But Sri Aurobindo does not favour a greater social or political unity. Rather, he is of the opinion that " collective life is more at ease with itself, more genial, varied, fruitful when it can concentrate itself in small spaces and simpler organisms"( **The turn towards Unity, 281**)

There are many instances in history of Europe & Asia which point out to the fact that the human race prospered in smaller kingdoms rather than in the empires.

" Europe has lived in England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, the small states of Germany –all her later civilisation and progress evolved itself there, not in the huge mass of the Holy Roman or the Russian Empire."(282)

Similarly in Asia the best period for India was when she was divided into small kingdoms like Pallavas, Chalukyas, Pandas, Cholas and Cheras. She gained very less from the Moghul, The Gupa, The Maurya – except political and administrative organization and some fine art and literature.

Yet Sri Aurobindo firmly believes that a social, administrative and political unification of mankind is the need of the hour. How it can be achieved, what are the do's and don'ts for it and what would be its nature are certain queries which he answers satisfactorily in his more than 30 different essays on the topic '*The Ideal of Human Unity*'.

### **The Possibility of a World Empire :**

In this essay Sri Aurobindo clearly mentions the possibility of a few nations vying to be superpowers and eventually one of them becoming the super power holding others into its grasp. But at the same time he is quite hopeful that "with the present conditions of life, especially with the ruinous nature of modern war, such a succession of struggles, quite natural and possible in former times, seems to be beyond the range of actual possibilities" (**The Possibility of a World Empire** 341).

He also predicts that if such power emerges and moves towards world - domination, it would find inevitably 'a coalition formed against it by almost all the Powers capable of opposing it and this with the sympathy of the world at their back'( 341)

Almost 100 years after Sri Aurobindo penned down these thoughts we find the political equation of the world exactly in the form of what Sri Aurobindo predicted much before. He is quite sure that the 'gradual unification of the world by the growth of great heterogeneous empires forming true psychological unities is only a vague and nascent possibility" ( 343). On the contrary, he believes that the Unification of the world can only come about by a new development of the unexpected out of the infinite surprise of Nature".( 343)

### **The Possibility of a First step towards International Unity**

Sri Aurobindo is aware of the enormous difficulties which lie ahead in the possibility of a first step towards International Unity. In this essay Sri Aurobindo clearly mentions the obstacles in the path He writes :

"If we consider the actual state of the world and its immediate possibilities, we shall see that a first period of loose formation and imperfect order is inevitable". (**The Possibility of a First step towards International Unity**385 )

On this background of what happened to European Union (EU) and Britain's exit from it (Brexit), upholds the claim made by Sri Aurobindo much earlier. How practical Sri Aurobindo sounds when he clearly mentions that 'the ideas and schemes of the world's intellectuals who would replan the whole status of international life altogether and form its roots and form its roots in the light of general principles are not likely to find any immediate realisation". So Sri Aurobindo is hopeful that 'the future will be shaped not by the ideas of the thinker but by the practical mind of the politician which represents the average reason and temperament of the time and effects usually something much nearer the minimum than the maximum of what is possible"(386). But the advice comes not without warning. He warns if the politician mind is left entirely to itself, one could expect only rearrangement of frontiers, a redistribution of power and possessions and a few desirable or undesirable developments of international, commercial and other relations which is one disastrous possibility leading to more disastrous convulsions. Yet hope never eludes him. Wars may prove to be the obstacle but he is sure that the war-weary people will give time for 'new ideas, feelings, forces, events to emerge which will counteract this pernicious influence'.( 387) One can very well check the ring of truth in this statement. Written originally in 1916 before the end the war. This happier possibility of the first step toward International Unity could not materialise immediately. But the growing insecurity, confusion and disorder have made the creation of some international system more and more imperative if modern civilisation is not to collapse in bloodshed and chaos. The result of this necessity has been first the creation of the League of Nations and afterwards the U.N.O. Neither has proved very satisfactory from the political point of view, but henceforward the existence of some such arranged centre of order has become very evidently indispensable ( editor's comment, footnote, 387)

Sri Aurobindo knows it for sure that the formation of such International organisation could prevent the crises like a war for some time but could not stop them altogether. The visionary in him writes : " still, it would be vain to hope that the principle of international control will be thoroughly effective at first or that this loose formation, which is likely to be in the beginning half form, half nebula, will prevent further conflicts, explosions, catastrophes" ( 389). The reasons behind this apprehension being lack of experience, wisdom and foresight on the part of the human race in general and the ruling class in particular. This prediction and the estimate of its causes have been fully justified by the course of events and the outbreak of still greater more disastrous war.

Sri Aurobindo's views on limitation of armies and armaments as a remedy to prevent conflicts are firm and realistic. He opines that it can only lighten the national burden in peace but cannot prevent or even minimise the disastrous intensity and extension of war. Even International Law cannot be a perfect remedy because the authority of Law depends either on the strong interest of the majority or the dominant minority or on the armed

force, police and military. ' The metaphorical sword of justice can only act because there is a real sword behind it to enforce its decrees and its penalties against rebel and the dissident'.(392)

Thus armed forces seem to be a necessity to enforce the law, in any loose international formation armed forces would be divided among its constituent groups. Hence he forewarns that any loose formation without powerful central control could not be satisfactory, effective or endearing. This is exactly what we see happening at the International level when attempts are made by the nations to unite on certain common principles. In the absence of effective and powerful central force they crumble and perish.

### **The Problem of Uniformity and Liberty :**

The dream of the political and administrative unification of mankind can be resisted by the collective national egoism. Hence one needs to think about the concepts Uniformity and Liberty. Sri Aurobindo feels that the principle of liberty will resist and claim a more flexible, free and spacious system in order to achieve world unification. Whereas the principle of uniformity will help the mankind to come together on uniform basis like life habits, knowledge , political, social , economic and educational uniformity. In his opinion, it seems improbable today because of the immense masses it would have to embrace, the difficulties it would have to surmount, the many problems that would have to be solved before it could become possible ;(413). Yet this impossible seems achievable to Sri Aurobindo with the growth of science and the rapid march of socialism .

### **The Ideal Solution-A Free Grouping of Mankind .**

Once the target of uniformity and liberty is achieved through the growth of science and march of socialism, the dream of human unity would seem realistic. Hence Sri Aurobindo gives the first principle of human unity . According to him it should be a system of free and natural groupings which would leave no room for internal discords, mutual incompatibles and repression and revolt as between race and race or people and people . It must be so because Sri Aurobindo firmly believes that on no other foundation could the unification of mankind be secure or sound . Though it seems a remote possibility today , he has faith that it is not an impossible dream. National and imperial egoism could act as contrary force. He ends the present essay on the note of optimism:

“For the present, let us note that it (the claim of Europe of European civilisation) works strongly against a wider recognition of the newborn ideal and that until the problems it raises are resolved, the settlement of the world on any such ideal principle must wait upon the evolution of new forces and the coming to a head both in Asia and Europe of yet unaccomplished spiritual , intellectual and material revolutions”(435). Today, we find that these revolutions have now happened and these obstacles ,though not yet entirely have faded are fading out of existence.(Foot note ,436)

### **The Need for Administrative Unity :**

Sri Aurobindo emphasizes upon the need for Administrative Unity to achieve the higher aim of Human unity. He expects the centralization of all control - military and police, administrative, judicial, legislative, economic, social and cultural in the one international authority. Since this was written, this idea coming into existence has become much more rapid and thoroughgoing in three at least of the greatest nations and a more hesitating and less clearly self conscious imitation of it is in evidence in smaller countries ( Footnote, 497).

Sri Aurobindo sounds firm and clear when he writes that a common world culture is the most probable outcome. He is sure that the obstacle of race - sense may also be removed by the closer intellectual, cultural and physical intercourse which is inevitable in the not distant future. Even variety of languages would not be the hindrance in achieving the goal of human unity. The Individual will be its smallest unit. Hence it is essential for an individual to be free and progressive because “ It is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society become possible”. ( The peril of the world state, 512)

### **Diversity in Oneness :**

While embarking on the journey to reach the goal of human unity Sri Aurobindo does not forget the value and importance of diversity. He knows that 'uniformity is not the law of life and life exists by diversity. Languages and cultures may vary, a gospel of Anarchism might enforce itself and break down the world culture for new creation. Yet Sri Aurobindo ends his essay on the note of optimism :

“ The question is whether there is not somewhere a principle of unity in diversity by which this method of action and reaction, creation and distribution ,realisation and relapse cannot be, if not altogether avoided , yet mitigated in its action and led to a more serene and harmonious working .” (**Diversity in Oneness** 522)

### **The conditions of a Free World Union**

Sri Aurobindo , finds a Free World Union to be a more reliable solution than a World – federation. Free World union starts on the national basis. Gradually the national idea might be expected to undergo a radical transformation . He further states that “It might disappear into idea of group – aggregation which would not be separation in spirit , yet would preserve the necessary element of independence and variation needed by both individual and grouping for their full satisfaction and their healthy existence. (547). such individuals who have undergone necessary intellectual and psychological change would alone give some chance of durability to the unification. That change, according to Sri Aurobindo, would be the growth of living idea or religion of humanity.

### **The religion of humanity:**

Sri Aurobindo upholds the Religion of Humanity as the very essence of human unity. To understand the concept better, Sri Aurobindo divides it into two parts –

i) Intellectual Religion of Humanity And ii) Spiritual Religion of Humanity.

He opines that – “ the intellectual religion of humanity already to a certain extent exists , partly as a conscious creed in the mind of a few, partly as a potent shadow in the consciousness of a race ” (**The religion of humanity** 565). The Shadow of the spirit , according to him is yet unborn but is preparing for its birth .

Intellectual Religion of Humanity strengthens the human being to be unbiased and impartial. It upholds the principle that the mind of man is to be released from all bonds. It should be allowed to enjoy freedom and opportunity . All These ideas should be practically implemented. Whatever humanism the world experiences today is the result of Intellectual religion of humanity. But still in order to accomplish the aim of spiritual religion of humanity it has to make its self more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative. Human egoism is the enemy that stands in a way of the religion of humanity. It could be in the form of the egoism of the individuals or the egoism of class and nation . Religion of humanity aims at establishing real unity between man and man , a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought , feeling and life . This ideal was first expressed some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn. According to Sri Aurobindo it must always remain the highest injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth.

Sri Aurobindo upholds Freedom, equality and brotherhood as the three Godheads of the soul. He firmly states that ‘they cannot be really achieved through the external machinery of society or by man so long as he lives only in the individual and the communal ego’ (569). But A society that pursues liberty as its ideal is unable to achieve equality and a society that aims at equality will be obliged to sacrifice liberty. Ego cannot speak of fraternity unless and until the goals are common. Hence Sri Aurobindo states forth that – “brotherhood is the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity “(570). He believes that the union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else. Brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul. Freedom, equality and unity are the eternal attributes of the spirit. When human beings practically recognise this truth, there will be the awakening of the soul in man. Sri Aurobindo strongly believes that with the awakened soul the man will learn to live from his soul and not from his ego. This according to him is the inner meaning of religion . He expects the religion of humanity to strive for such selfless oneness before it can fulfil itself in the life of the race in order to attain the goal of Human Unity.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion it can be said that what we find around us today is mechanical unity by political and administrative means. It is not free from ego, hence not permanent. For the true human unity to be achieved, the human race has to follow the religion of humanity and spiritualise itself by making spirituality the general law of human life.

What we see around at the International level is the false notion of peace that has born out of fear and unification that has come into being out of compulsion and convenience. Such union cannot stand the test of the time. What the world needs today is a psychological force “ which tends to break beyond the formula of the nation and aspires to replace the religion of country and even , in its more extreme forms , to destroy altogether the national sentiment and to abolish its division so as to create the single nation of mankind “(573)

When will it happen? perhaps nobody knows. Yet a visionary in Sri Aurobindo forewarns, “If the humans cannot find out the way, Nature herself is sure to shape these upheavals in such a way as to bring about her end” (574) Therefore the sooner or later , humanity as a whole has to think about unification or at least some formal organisation of human life on earth to save it from impending doom . Sri Aurobindo envisaged it way back in 1918, almost a century before, but humanity as whole is yet divided . The religion of humanity is yet to be established . The aim of human unity still seems to be far away . The question is - Are we waiting for some catastrophe to unite us as a race or are we willing to follow the visionaries like Sri Aurobindo who strongly feel that human unity is practically inevitable for our survival and prosperity on the planet Earth .

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