

Life Divine – Sri Aurobindo and The Tradition

1. Introduction

A. Indian Spiritual Tradition

1. India's destiny is to be the guru of the world.
2. No other country has contributed so profoundly to spiritual thought and experience
 - Hinduism
 - Buddhism
 - Jainism
 - Influence on Christ
3. Indian spirituality is not a monolithic organization like a single mountain peak.
4. Actually there are many traditions in India – but most of them have a common core and basis.
5. It consists of numerous main lines – each unique but all related by common threads and themes
 - Vedas
 - Upanishads
 - Puranas
 - Epics
 - Metaphysical philosophers – Shankara
 - Devotional literature
6. It includes countless different paths and methods
 - Hathayoga
 - Pranayama
 - Jnanayoga
 - Bhaktiyoga
 - Karmayoga
 - Tantra
 - Rajayoga
 - All having unique elements
7. It includes hundreds of branches, disciplines, approaches

8. He says it reached its highest points in the Vedanta of the Upanishads
9. Here we contrast Sri Aurobindo with the mainstream of tradition
10. Indian spirituality is like the Himalayan mountain range with countless peaks of differing height and grandeur

B. Sri Aravindam

1. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy and Yoga is classified and considered one among the many branches and approaches or sects.
2. That is natural for those who understand little or nothing of spirituality or to whom Sri Aurobindo is only one more name among the long progression of saints and rishis – Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and so many others.
3. But it is misleading in the extreme. It is OK for the world to believe
4. But for a devotee, such a belief closes the door on an infinite spiritual opportunity
5. It is like saying that
 - a cycle rickshaw and an airplane are both vehicles for transport
 - The rickshaw is useful to carry three persons at 5 miles an hour for a mile or two within a town or small locale.
 - The latest airplane can carry 500 passengers at 500 miles an hour around the world in a single day
6. If Indian spiritual tradition is the towering Himalayas peaks looking down on earth from 8000-9000 meters, Sri Aravindam is the sun radiating on earth and the entire solar system from a height of 93 million miles
7. Actually, it is the Supramental Sun of which He wrote: "A ray which can pervade and illumine a million universes."

C. Why this topic?

1. Our purpose is not to proclaim that Sri Aurobindo is better than the tradition or that we are superior to those who follow the tradition.
2. That would only be to organize ignorance. Our objective is Knowledge.
3. The greatest of His achievement does not make us better or more important than other seekers and devotees – it only makes us more fortunate.
4. But there are other reasons for discussing this topic.
5. Our minds are so deeply steeped in the tradition that we are apt to misunderstand and misinterpret much of what Sri Aurobindo says unless we are very clear about the points of departure. Such mistakes are very common and to some extent unavoidable for a long time.

6. I can describe Jane and Elizabeth as sisters of the same family, both well-mannered, good looking likable people. But to really understand them, you have to also know their differences:

- Can you imagine Jane poking fun at Darcy when they were staying at Netherfield?
- Can you imagine Jane getting angry at Darcy and provoking him at the Ball?
- Can you imagine Jane speaking to Darcy as she did when he proposed at Hunsford?
- Or to Lady Catherine when she came to Longbourne? – she would have fainted
- Can you imagine Eliza feeling timid or intimidated by Caroline & Mrs. Hurst?
- The whole story hinges on the fact that Eliza is a remarkable individual who lends her strength and goodwill for Jane's accomplishment.
- Eliza is an evolutionary individual. Jane is a normal, good girl.
- Mistaking one sister for the other or considering them as very similar is to miss the entire meaning of the story.
- This is an example of two sisters who look very similar.
- Imagine the error that arises from Elizabeth's confusion between Darcy and Wickham – one has all the goodness and the other has all the appearance of goodness.

D. The distance between the Tradition and Sri Aravindam is infinitely great – minimum and maximum

1. What is the difference between the achievements of Lydia vs Eliza?
2. What is the difference between the man who gets what he needs to live and the devotee who gets opportunities to rise to top of society?
3. What is the difference between the voter and the PM in a democracy?
4. What is the difference between the arboreal Ape and modern Man?
5. That is the difference between minimum effort and maximum response to Mother
6. That is the difference between Man and Superman
7. That is the difference between Sri Aravindam and The Tradition

E. Attainments of the Tradition

1. Sri Aurobindo had immense respect for the Tradition
2. The rishis have achieved what no others have achieved
3. Now science is confirming some of the great discovers of Vedanta
 - Monism of Matter and Energy
 - Triply formulated energy
4. Western psychology is still in its infancy by comparison

5. Even today it is a great knowledge – but it is a PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE
6. What does it matter to us whether the tradition is complete or partial, since the rishis attained so much more than we ordinary people?
7. Sri Aurobindo tells us that It matters very much for several reasons
8. Yet He is so polite that it takes a careful reading to understand the crucial points of departure.
9. He constantly affirms the highest truths of Vedanta and shows us where they can and need to be extended or completed.
10. Only rarely does he point out a deficiency in the tradition.
11. Yet in reality he goes beyond the tradition on ALL CRUCIAL POINTS
12. In most cases he completes rather than contradicts it.

F. What are the essential differences from Vedanta

1. Tradition provides a path to spiritual liberation whereas human destiny is spiritual transformation.
2. Tradition rejects life rather than providing us with the knowledge to master and perfect life.
3. Tradition leaves the world unchanged or even worse off than before, whereas He tells us the Divine's goal is Divine Life.
4. Vedanta offers the knowledge that is power for the individual to realize the Spirit.
5. Sri Aravindam is knowledge that is power to spiritualize Life.
6. Not only the goals are different, the methods are very different as well.
7. Sri Aurobindo uses the highest Divine powers to accomplish in a short time what requires a lifetime or many life times of yogic austerity.

G. Relevance for our lives as devotees

1. This knowledge is not merely relevant for yoga or philosophy
2. It has IMMENSE practical implications and applications for us in our lives
3. Dr. Thorne
 - Squire Gresham acquired wealth over centuries
 - Sir Roger acquired a greater fortune in a lifetime
 - Mary Thorne – an orphaned child whose father died and mother ran off to Canada – acquired Sir Roger's wealth by inheritance and Frank Gresham's by marriage – making her more prosperous than either – and far more happy
 - That is what Mother and Sri Aurobindo offer us – a knowledge, power, accomplishment and fulfillment that neither centuries of tradition or a lifetime of intense labor can attain.

H. The Indian tradition saturates the thinking of every Indian in ways you may not be even aware of

1. Submission and resignation are age old attitudes born of the tradition.

- One devotee submitted to the outrageous and unreasonable demands of his landlord for higher rent, perhaps thinking that his attitude was spiritual.
- Non-reaction and harmony are not the same as passive submission.
- Submission is not surrender
- He never thought that Mother asks him to consecrate the problem, not just give up.

2. One devotee believes that Mother can act only through devotees and problems with other people are beyond Her power – like a local head man who has influence only within his village or community.

3. Another devotees feels he has to endure the suffering and problems that come to him because it is his karma.

- He never thinks of looking for inner-outer correspondences to see why life is acting in this manner because the tradition does not disclose the oneness of life and the power that knowledge gives us.

2. The Absolute

A. Tradition tells us

1. the Absolute (Brahman) is unknowable.
2. It is the source of all things in this world.
3. Yet at the same time it is uninvolved in life of the earth.
4. It cannot be the source of determinisms in the world.

B. Sri Aurobindo tells us that

1. The Absolute – the Brahman – can be known – but not by Mind
2. He tells us it is the source of ALL DETERMINISMS
3. The world looks undivine or illusory because we view it through a false consciousness -- our egoistic consciousness – like Eliza's false view of Wickham and Darcy
4. Sri Aurobindo tells us to change our view
5. He gives us the Knowledge to see the world truly -- Knowledge that is Power

3. The Absolute & The Relative

- A. He says The Absolute is the Relative – the world also is the evolving Divine**
- B. This means our lives can be reconciled with highest spiritual truth and spiritual delight**
- C. We don't have to leave the world to find our souls, to know God or to enjoy supreme felicity.**
- D. Unlike Charlotte we don't have to marry Collins for money and security.**
- E. Like Eliza and Mary Thorne, we can marry for love and also find prosperity and social elevation and intense personal fulfillment.**

4. Sat & Asat

- A. All traditions tell us that we have to battle against the negative forces – suffering, falsehood, evil, death**
- B. Asat, nothingness, the sense that life is meaningless is the ULTIMATE NEGATIVE**
- C. He tells us that Asat, Non-Being, is really a greater inexpressible positive, too wonderful for definition or description.**
- D. Tradition tells us our ultimate destiny is to disappear back in the Nihil – then why did God create the universe in the first place?**
- E. He tells us our ultimate destiny is to discover the infinite marvels of the Unknowable here on earth in the body.**

5. Life in the World

- A. Not Illusion – it is REAL**
- B. Not Mechanical force of Prakriti – it is Conscious Force of Divine**
- C. Not fixed Karmic law of suffering – Marvel of infinite Grace**
- D. What does he mean by Marvel??**
 - 1. A progressive revelation of a luminous transcend Reality**
 - 2. Everything is Divine**
 - 3. The infinitesimal is the Infinite**

4. The Unknowable formulates itself as life and withdraws

- Darcy arrives and finds her at Pemberley
- Lydia's elopement steals away their joy
- She is filled with wonder to learn that Darcy was at their wedding and responsible for it.

5. Every moment is laden with Divine potential

*Only a little the god-light can stay:
Spiritual beauty illumining human sight
Lines with its passion and mystery Matter's mask
And squanders eternity on a beat of Time.*

6. One & Many

- A. Tradition says they are unconnected – you can be in either in one or the other – in the world or transcendent.
- B. He says there has to be a connection between them – Supermind
- C. Supermind is the Transcendent's power to express the timeless truths of the Eternal in space and time.
- D. Supermind is the creator, not Mind

7. Supermind the Creator

- A. Sachchidananda -- One without a second
 - 1. Spaceless, Timeless and Formless
- B. Comprehending Supermind -- All is all – GOD
 - 1. Jane Austen the author – entire story lives in her creative imagination
 - 2. Conscious Self
 - 3. Ideative formations in the Infinite
 - 4. Conscious and Force are one
 - 5. Equal self-extension – like thoughts & images in mind
 - 6. No individualisation
- C. Apprehending Supermind – all is in each, each is in all
 - 1. Separation of the author from her characters
 - 2. Universal Divine – the director

3. Individual Divine (Jivatma) – casting trials for each parts – any actor can play any part
 4. Spiritual Individual – actors identify with their parts but know they are actors
- D. Dividing Mind & Ego – actors believe they are the individual characters
- E. We are like the actors who have forgotten we are acting and feel bound by our current limitations
1. We are not really separate beings – we are forms of God
 2. We are whatever we believe ourselves to be
 3. We can become whatever we believe we can become

8. Planes of Time

- A. Tradition knows only two planes – time and eternity
- B. He tells of three –
- C. Author is in timelessness
- D. Reader is in time
- E. Narrator is simultaneously in both
- F. The third plane is the one in which we can make anything happen instantaneously – like Darcy meeting Eliza at Pemberley.

9. Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara

- A. Brahman -- Mr. Hurst
 1. Takes no note of the world yet exists in it everywhere
- B. Purusha -- Mr. Bennet
 1. Detachments, aloof witness who gives freedom to Prakriti and looks helpless but can always assert himself.
- C. Ishwara -- Mr. Darcy – Lord and Master
- D. Spirit is evolving – concept unknown in the tradition – universe is the body of the evolving spirit
- E. Karma

4/8/2011

1. Darcy stops Bingley's marriage and has to marry into the same family
2. Darcy transforms the karma of Lydia's elopement

10. Chords of Being

11. Destiny of the Individual

- A. Class and caste are eternal – Lady Catherine
 1. we meet only in heaven
 2. Gods will always be superior to man
- B. We are moving toward a classless, equal society based on spiritual equality and oneness – French Revolution
 1. Man evolves to become God
- C. This means man need not be subservient to life or nature or anything.
- D. The real challenge is to be free of servitude to our ego & lower ignorant nature.

12. Mind & Supermind

- A. Mind knows either waking or dream state.
- B. In supermind, you are simultaneously conscious in both worlds.

13. Knowledge & Ignorance

- A. Tradition says knowledge of life has no meaning – it is always Avidya – seek knowledge only of God
- B. He says ultimate knowledge is to discover the One in the Many, the Infinite in the finite, the Divine in Life
- C. All knowledge has its place
 1. In life and business understanding other people
- D. All paths of knowledge lead toward the Absolute

14. Dualities

- A. Can we concede that our sense of Pleasure-pain, Joy-suffering, Good-evil, Truth-falsehood is only determined by our egoistic point of view?
- B. Can you imagine that the people and events you feel are bad are not bad?
- C. When Bingley leaves Netherfield
 - 1. It is Good to Darcy and Caroline,
 - 2. Evil to Mrs. B, Jane and Eliza.
 - 3. Mr. B is neutral.
 - 4. The truth is something else
- D. Our sense of competition and opposition is only due to ego
 - 1. Mrs Bennet views Lucases as revivals
 - 2. Wickham views Darcy as rival
- E. Dualities are harmonized by universalizing to dissolve ego
 - 1. French Revolution reconciled the classes
 - 2. Darcy rejected the inferior connections of Longbourn then married into the family
- F. He says even the duality of Life-Death is abolished when ego dissolves and we discover Life is immortal and death is only process of life.
- G. Dualities are transmuted effacing all opposition when we rise to the transcendent oneness
 - 1. Darcy & Elizabeth overcome the oppositions of pride & prejudice to discover deeper Oneness

15. Good & Evil

- A. Good can lead to Evil
 - 1. Ignorantly helping someone with ill-will for us – Vanity Fair
 - 2. Good intentions of Collins are not enough
- B. Evil can lead to Good – Wickham's lies

16. Higher Levels of Mind

- A. Sense Mind – Darcy sees her as tolerable & her family as unacceptable**
- B. Higher Mind – you have spoken enough**
- C. Illumined Mind – he sees the light in her eyes**
- D. Intuitive – her abuse of him and retort to Lady Catherine give him a glimpse of her greatness**
- E. Overmind – Lydia’s elopement reveals all sides of her existence**
- F. Supermind – her acceptance brings knowledge by identity**
- G. Overmind is the rainbow spectrum – Supermind also knows the white light from which all colors emanate**

17. Realization

- A. Darcy dreamed of bliss in an aristocratic heaven far removed from normal life**
- B. He discovered Delight of Being in Eliza by descending, embracing and transforming her life**