



Mapping Elements of Nationalism in Sri Aurbindo's *The Indian Renaissance and Early Political Writings*

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*Aurbindo Ghose is one of few Indian writers who has been privileged to live in colonial and postcolonial India. Although he died three years after India became an independent nation, he was able to put all aspects of freedom struggle of India, Indian culture, philosophical pursuits of Indian society, idea of a sovereign state in his writings. He comes across as a writers whose works could be examined against the backdrop of nationalism. In other words, a major part of his writings have been composed of elements of nationalism, however, the present paper endeavor to go into bottom of his two works entitled *The Indian Renaissance and Early Political Writings*. To meet the proposed objectives, this papers also traces significance and features of Aurbindo's art of writing with theme of nationalism.*

Keywords: Spirituality, nationalism, culture, unity, karma, universalism, freedom, consciousness, morality.

Introduction:

Nationalism and Indian literature in English are two interconnected concepts. Indian literature in English is a product of the British colonization of India, and it emerged as a response to the westernized education system introduced by the British. The nationalistic movement in Indian literature in English can be traced back to the early 20th century, when a group of Indian intellectuals and writers sought to create a literature that would reflect Indian culture and traditions. These writers were motivated by the desire to create a distinctive Indian literature that would counter the dominance of Western literature and contribute to the nationalist movement.

In the 1920s and 30s, Indian writers began to write about the social and political issues of their time, often drawing upon Indian mythology and history to create a sense of national identity. This period saw the emergence of writers such as Aurbindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, and Mulk Raj Anand. Therefore, nationalism and Indian literature in English are closely intertwined, and Indian writers have used their writing to express their nationalistic sentiments and to contribute to the larger nationalist movement.

He was a prominent Indian philosopher, poet, yogi, and nationalist leader. He was born on August 15, 1872, in Calcutta, British India, and he passed away on December 5, 1950, in Pondicherry. Aurobindo Ghose was raised in a family that valued education and cultural pursuits. He received a Western-style education and was proficient in English, as well as several Indian languages such as Bengali, Hindi, and Sanskrit. He went on to study at King's College, Cambridge, in England, where he excelled in academics and emerged as a brilliant scholar.

Aurobindo's writings on nationalism, written before his spiritual transformation, played a crucial role in shaping the Indian nationalist movement of the early 20th century. His ideas on integral nationalism, cultural unity, and spiritual foundations provided a unique perspective on the role of nationalism in India's struggle for independence. Today, Sri Aurobindo is widely regarded as one of the most influential spiritual philosophers and thinkers of modern India. His writings continue to inspire individuals in their quest for personal growth, social transformation, and the realization of a higher consciousness. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry remains a thriving spiritual community, preserving his teachings and promoting his vision of a new consciousness for humanity.

Significance of Nationalism in Sri Aurobindo's Works:

Nationalism holds significant importance in the writings of Sri Aurobindo Ghose. His exploration of nationalism goes beyond the conventional understanding of political independence and encompasses the spiritual, cultural, and social dimensions of a nation. The significance of nationalism in Sri Aurobindo's writings can be understood through the following points:

Integral Development: Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the concept of integral development within the context of nationalism. He believes that a nation's progress should encompass not only its political and economic aspects but also its spiritual and cultural dimensions. Sri Aurobindo's vision of nationalism seeks the holistic development of the entire being of a nation.

Cultural Unity and Identity: Sri Aurobindo recognizes the importance of cultural unity and identity in nationalism. He emphasizes the preservation and revival of a nation's cultural heritage as a vital source of strength and identity. Sri Aurobindo views culture as the foundation upon which a nation's values, aspirations, and unique contributions are built.

Spiritual Basis: Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the spiritual basis of nationalism. He believes that the pursuit of higher consciousness and spiritual growth is an essential aspect of a nation's development. Sri Aurobindo's nationalist philosophy transcends materialistic pursuits and advocates for a deeper understanding of the spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Self-Determination and Freedom: Sri Aurobindo's writings on nationalism stress the importance of self-determination and freedom for a nation. He argues that nations have the right to determine their own destiny and shape their political, social, and economic systems according to their unique needs and aspirations. Sri Aurobindo's nationalist ideology aligns with the struggle for political independence and self-governance.

Universal Perspective: Sri Aurobindo's nationalism includes a universal perspective that goes beyond narrow boundaries and divisions. He envisions a world where nations collaborate and cooperate for the greater good of humanity. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting the rights and aspirations of other nations, fostering a sense of global harmony and unity.

Active Participation: Sri Aurobindo encourages active participation and engagement in the national struggle. He believes that individuals should not be passive spectators but active contributors to the nation's progress. Sri Aurobindo's writings inspire individuals to take responsibility and work towards the realization of the nation's ideals.

The significance of nationalism in Sri Aurobindo Ghose's writings lies in his holistic approach that encompasses the spiritual, cultural, and political dimensions of a nation. His ideas provide a comprehensive understanding of nationalism as a force for individual and collective transformation, rooted in the pursuit of higher ideals and the development of a nation's unique identity. Sri Aurobindo's writings on nationalism continue to influence and inspire individuals seeking a deeper understanding of their national identity and the role of spirituality in the growth and progress of nations.

Spiritual Basis of Nationalism: Exploring the connection between Spirituality and Nationalism in Sri Aurobindo's writings

In Sri Aurobindo's writings, the spiritual basis of nationalism emerges as a central theme, highlighting the deep connection between spirituality and the nationalist movement:

Inner Awakening: Sri Aurobindo emphasized that the true essence of a nation lies in the inner awakening and evolution of its individuals. He viewed nationalism as a catalyst for the spiritual growth and self-realization of its people.

Higher Consciousness: Sri Aurobindo believed that the evolution of a nation goes beyond material progress and includes the development of higher states of consciousness. He emphasized the importance of transcending egoistic and divisive tendencies, promoting unity, harmony, and a collective aspiration for spiritual growth.

Collective Karma: Sri Aurobindo viewed the nation as a collective entity with its own karma and destiny. He believed that the spiritual evolution of individuals within a nation has a direct impact on the collective consciousness and progress of the nation as a whole.

Moral and Ethical Foundations: Sri Aurobindo stressed the significance of moral and ethical foundations in nationalism. He believed that spirituality provides the necessary ethical framework for the actions and decisions of a nation. Spiritual values such as truth, justice, compassion, and integrity serve as guiding principles.

Unity in Diversity: Sri Aurobindo's spiritual perspective on nationalism recognizes the underlying unity amidst the diversity of cultures, religions, and languages within a nation. He advocated for an inclusive nationalism that appreciates and respects diverse spiritual paths and traditions while recognizing their common source..

Universal Outlook: Sri Aurobindo's spiritual basis of nationalism extends beyond the boundaries of a single nation. He envisioned a world order where nations would collaborate and cooperate, transcending narrow self-interests and working towards the common good of humanity.

Through his writings, Sri Aurobindo highlighted the profound connection between spirituality and nationalism. He envisioned a nationalism that goes beyond political independence, encompassing the spiritual growth, unity, and higher consciousness of individuals and nations. These elements are also present in his two works *The Indian Renaissance and Early Political Writings*. In his book *The Indian Renaissance: India's Rise After a Thousand Years of Decline* Aurobindo discusses the cultural and intellectual awakening that took place in India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which led to the emergence of a new sense of Indian nationalism. In the book, Aurobindo argues that the Indian renaissance was a response to the challenges posed by British colonialism and the erosion of traditional Indian culture. He sees the revival of Indian culture as a necessary step towards achieving political independence, and emphasizes the importance of national consciousness in this process.

Aurobindo's views on nationalism are closely linked to his vision of a spiritual and cultural renaissance in India. He believed that the revival of Indian culture was not only a means to achieve political freedom, but also a way to reconnect with the country's spiritual heritage and fulfill its destiny as a great civilization.

In one of his essays *Bande Mataram: P.olitical Religion and the Idea of India* Aurobindo analyzes the significance of the nationalist song "Bande Mataram" and its role in shaping the Indian national consciousness. He argues that the song represents a fusion of political and religious ideals, and that it embodies the idea of India as a spiritual and cultural entity.

Additionally, in his essay *Nationalism and Culture*, Aurobindo discusses the relationship between nationalism and cultural revival. He argues that a strong national consciousness is essential for the revival of Indian culture, and that the two are intimately connected. He sees the nationalist movement as a way to create a new sense of Indian identity that is based on shared cultural values and aspirations.

In the same work there is another essay entitled *The National Value of Art*; Aurobindo discusses the role of art in promoting Indian nationalism. He argues that art is a powerful means of expressing the national spirit and creating a sense of cultural unity. He sees Indian art as a way to celebrate the country's rich cultural heritage and inspire the nationalist movement.

In *The Spirit and Significance of Nationalism*, Aurobindo discusses the deeper spiritual roots of Indian nationalism. He argues that nationalism is not just a political movement, but a way to reconnect with India's ancient

spiritual traditions and fulfill its destiny as a great civilization. He sees the nationalist movement as a means to achieve both political freedom and spiritual liberation.

In *The Nationalist Ideal* Aurobindo discusses the qualities that define the nationalist ideal. He sees the nationalist as a selfless and dedicated servant of the nation, who is willing to sacrifice his own interests for the greater good. He emphasizes the importance of discipline, courage, and perseverance in the nationalist struggle.

Hence *The Indian Renaissance* reflects his deep commitment to Indian nationalism and his belief in the importance of cultural and spiritual revival. He sees the nationalist movement as a means to achieve both political and cultural liberation, and emphasizes the need for self-reliance, discipline, and dedication in the struggle for Indian independence. His writings on nationalism reflect his broader philosophy of integralism, which seeks to integrate all aspects of human life, including politics, culture, and spirituality. He sees nationalism as a means to achieve this integration, and as a way to fulfill India's destiny as a great civilization

Aurobindo Ghose's book *Early Political Writings* contains a collection of his essays and speeches on nationalism and political activism in India during the early 20th century. In these writings, Aurobindo expresses his views on the importance of national consciousness and the need to resist British colonialism:

In "Nationalism" Aurobindo argues that nationalism is not just a political movement, but a spiritual and cultural awakening that is essential for India's progress and development. He sees the revival of Indian culture and traditions as a necessary step towards achieving political independence, and emphasizes the need for a strong national identity that is based on shared values, beliefs, and aspirations.

Aurobindo's writings also reflect his belief in the importance of direct action and political activism in the struggle for Indian independence. In his speech "The Duty of Patriots" he calls on Indians to take up the cause of nationalism and resist British colonialism through nonviolent means, such as boycotts and civil disobedience. He sees this as a way to awaken the Indian masses and build a strong national movement that can challenge British rule.

Another important theme in Aurobindo's *Early Political Writings* is the idea of Swaraj, or self-rule. He sees Swaraj as a means to achieve both political freedom and spiritual liberation, and emphasizes the need for Indians to take responsibility for their own destiny. He argues that Swaraj is not just a political ideal, but a way of life that is based on self-reliance, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice.

In his essay "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance" Aurobindo argues that passive resistance, or nonviolent civil disobedience, is a powerful tool for the nationalist movement. He sees it as a way to confront British colonialism without resorting to violence, and as a means to awaken the Indian masses to the injustices of British rule.

In his speech "The Ideal of Human Unity" Aurobindo discusses the role of nationalism in promoting human unity. He argues that nationalism is not a narrow or exclusive concept, but rather a way to celebrate the diversity of human cultures and promote cooperation and mutual respect among nations. He sees Indian nationalism as a way to contribute to the larger goal of global human unity.

In “The Mahratta and the Future of India” Aurobindo discusses the importance of regional nationalism in India. He argues that regional identities and cultures are an important part of India’s national fabric, and that they should be celebrated and preserved. He sees regional nationalism as a way to strengthen the overall nationalist movement and build a more diverse and inclusive vision of India.

In “Nationalism and Internationalism” Aurobindo discusses the relationship between nationalism and internationalism. He argues that nationalism is not necessarily opposed to internationalism, but rather a necessary foundation for it. He sees the nationalist movement as a way to build a strong, self-reliant India that can contribute to the larger goal of global peace and cooperation.

Conclusion:

Sri Aurobindo's nationalism in *The Indian Renaissance* and his *Early Political Writings* was rooted in his deep appreciation of India's cultural heritage. He believed that India's past glory could be revived by a resurgence of its spiritual and cultural values, which would in turn lead to a political and social transformation. Sri Aurobindo saw the struggle for India's independence as a means of achieving this transformation, and he played an active role in the Indian independence movement. Sri Aurobindo's political thought was based on the idea that India's freedom was not just a political goal but also a spiritual one. He believed that India had a unique role to play in the world and that its spiritual heritage could be a source of inspiration for humanity. Sri Aurobindo's vision for India's future was not just about achieving political independence but also about creating a society that was based on spiritual and moral values. He believed that a society that was built on these values would be more just, peaceful, and prosperous. All things considered, Sri Aurobindo's nationalism was not just about political freedom but also about spiritual and cultural regeneration. His ideas continue to inspire many people in India and around the world, and his legacy remains an important part of India's intellectual and cultural heritage.

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