

THE METAPHORS OF LOVE, COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND EVOLUTION IN SELECT POEMS OF RUMI AND SRI AUROBINDO IN THE LIGHT OF INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY

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Cultural Backdrop

Mawlana Rumi (1207-1273) and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) have been integral seers of life, by virtue of their vision of a complete life, inner and outer, lower and higher, material and spiritual. Rumi had anticipated the principal doctrines of Sri Aurobindo way back in the 13th century. His journey as a spiritual seeker began under the tutelage of his father Bahauddin Walad, who was a theologian and a mystic. Young Rumi used to accompany his father whenever he was invited for lectures. After his father's death, he embraced the same vocation. However, he composed poetry alongside, and he was greatly influenced by Attar and Sanai, who preceded Rumi as mystical *mathnawi* writers (Khosla 1987: 9).

Attar was the spirit and Sanai its two eyes,
We came after Sanai and Attar (Ibid)

Rumi's poetic career has three distinct phases: the first phase focuses on his friendship with Shams of Tabriz, the seer, which, according to Franklin D. Lewis, lasted from 1244 to 1248 (Lewis 2007: 177-201). According to Coleman Barks, Shams of Tabriz was assassinated on December 5, 1248 (Barksyear: xx). According to Khosla, he disappeared into obscurity. The second phase was spent in the company of Saladin Zarkub, the goldsmith, who was with Rumi for about 10 years till 1258. Afterwards, Salah-al-din was replaced by Husam Chelebi, a student and a disciple, who was with Rumi for the last 12 years and took dictation of the six volumes of

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Masnawi or *Mathnawi* (xxi). According to critics like Barks and Lewis, Rumi always looked for a muse to escalate his poetic zeal. However, the influence of Shams-e-Tabriz seems the most potent on Rumi as, after their interactions, there had been a ‘spiritual metamorphosis’ (Lewis 2007: 170) in Rumi’s life.

The encounter with Shams triggered the completion of a paradigm shift in Rumi’s approach to piety and spirituality; he discovered that beyond the safe, dry and socially approved forms of obedience (prayer, sermonizing, discovering and applying the principles of law) and renunciation (fasting, controlling the passion and the ego), there is a meta-spirituality of love, which consists in joyously and creatively celebrating our relationship with God. Herein lay the difference between monkish and the mystic Rumi... (Lewis 2007: 171)

One can find here a distinct transition in Rumi’s approach to life, when the ascetic Rumi becomes a mystic in his late 30s in the company of Shams, and the mutual admiration for each other prompted him to compose the masterpiece *Divan-e-Shams-e-Tabriz*. R.A. Nicholson opines that the friendship between Rumi and Shams was more like Plato and Socrates, “similar in kind not in degree... Tabriz represents the divine Beloved, the one Being in whom all individual names are manifested and ultimately merged” (Nicholson 2001: xv).

Sri Aurobindo was not a born prophet like Rumi. He was a nationalist and played a key role in India’s freedom struggle, especially between 1906 and 1910. His biographer A.B. Purani has marked four distinct periods in Sri Aurobindo’s life: England phase (1879-1893), Baroda phase (1893-1906), Calcutta phase (1906-1910) and Pondicherry phase (1910-1950) (Purani 1958: 5). The last phase was the most significant as it witnessed the mighty transformation in him—a leap to the Supermind, a territory above the Mind, the mental man. However, he had begun writing poetry at an early age since his student life in England. His political awareness began growing during the later years of his stay in England. Immediately after returning to India, his literary activities increased both as a creative and critical writer. He began composing lyrics privately and contributed articles to *Induprakash*, edited by K.G. Deshpande.

During the Baroda and Calcutta days, and especially during his days in Calcutta, his role was more of an activist, the writer as an activist, to be more precise. The preparation for a leap to a greater height of consciousness was going on latently in Calcutta. Later, in Pondicherry, he began serializing *The Life Divine* in *The Arya* from 1914, which showed his ascent in higher consciousness, as also the diary entries of July 1912 in the *Record of Yoga*. The writing of

Savitri had already been started, though without its later spiritual leaps. These experiences were leading him toward the supramental manifestations on earth.

The final phase of his life in Pondicherry was marked by a great spiritual realization, as it mirrored his spiritual realizations in his sonnets and lyrics. The best of them were mostly composed after 1930, reflecting the evolution of human consciousness beyond the ordinary level.

The Metaphors of Love, Cosmic Consciousness and Evolution

Rumi was a preacher and poet, but Sri Aurobindo was a combination of seer, poet, critic, and philosopher. His doctrine of integral philosophy is the art of integrating life and spirit. He sees the truth in all aspects of material life. Sri Aurobindo has explained it with reference to his philosophy of integral yoga or *Purnayoga* (Warrier 1990: 32). The metaphor of *yoga* or union, according to him, is “union with the Divine,” as he observes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, vol.1:

Seeking to embrace all life in itself, it is in the position not of a pilgrim following the highroad to his destination... For Yoga has long diverged from life and the ancient systems which sought to embrace it... one may say that the perfection of the integral Yoga will come when each man is able to follow his own path of Yoga pursuing the development of his own nature in its upsurging towards that which transcends the nature. (Sri Aurobindo 1999: 57)

Sri Aurobindo’s approach is more towards the personal growth of an individual in terms of behaviour and attitude, which is the quickest way to change society. One has to go beyond the self-centred impulses and other negative emotions to achieve a sense of balance in the personality. After achieving that, one moves upward in cosmic consciousness, which unites humanity irrespective of class and creed. Prof. Warrier explains this process of change as the transformation of mental being into a gnostic being (Warrier 1990: 39).

All-embracing love is a dominant trope in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo and Rumi. The metaphor of love may also be classified as erotic love, spiritual love, selfless love, filial love, self-love, and camaraderie. All these perspectives taken together make it an “embedded phenomena” (Greenberg 2008: xxvii). If we look back to the Vedic and post-Vedic scriptures, the *Mundaka Upanishad* refers to love as the essence of our existential principle, “The Lord of Love shines in the hearts of all” (Easwaran 2010: 193). According

to Sri Aurobindo, love stems from widening, deepening, and heightening of our ordinary consciousness. The term consciousness, as the online dictionary defines, is the “state of being aware” or achieving a “perception” (Wikipedia). According to Sri Aurobindo, “consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti, awareness but also conscious force” (Glossary 1978: 23).

Sri Aurobindo here describes it as “dynamic and creative energy”, which can help us transcend beyond the mundane to the “overmental” level or it can lower us to the “submental”, which is the level of the “unconscious” dealing with some gross emotions like hatred, jealousy, perversion, and libido. According to Freud and Jung, consciousness is equal to mental awareness. They focus more on the unconscious or the Aurobindonian “submental”, which, according to Freud, was a reservoir of repressed memories, the “libido” and some other socially unacceptable instincts. Jung describes it as “the personal unconscious” (Hopwood), which shapes up the individual psyche. The elements of the personal unconscious could be some forgotten information or repressed memories. Over the years, more memories are added to it, influencing the growth of the individual personality to a great extent. Here lies the difference between Sri Aurobindo and the Western thinkers.

However, in “The Meaning of Self-Knowledge,” Jung comes very close to Sri Aurobindo and says: “the deepening and broadening of this consciousness produce the kind of effect which the primitives call ‘mana’...” (Jung year 1954: 76) meaning the “impersonal and supernatural power” (Wikipedia). We observe an apparent difference between Jung and Sri Aurobindo. For Sri Aurobindo, it means to elevate human consciousness from the mundane level; for Jung, it is an impersonal as well as a supernatural power, and in an indifferent state, we get rid of our subjective desires resulting in a feeling of all-embracing love.

According to Sri Aurobindo and Rumi, love is the fundamental principle of living, and the capacity to love all the aspects of the manifested world originates from a widening of consciousness. Rumi writes in *Divan-e-Shams*:

... I have been born many times...
 I have passed nights with ascetics in the monastery,
 I have slept with infidels before the idols in the pagoda.

I am the theft of rogues, I am the pain of the sick,
I am both cloud and rain, I have rained in the meadows...

(Tr. Nicholson 2001: 332)

The poet persona identifies himself with the world, and at the same time, the first sentence of the poem expresses his idea of evolution, which is discussed later. The anaphoral 'I' creates an incantatory effect as evident in the *Vedantic* scriptures. Here is an example from *The Gita*, chapters 9:16:

I am the rite, the sacrifice,
The herb, the offering to the dead
I am the fire, oblation poured
I am the oil, the verse that's said...

(Tr. Geoffrey Parrinder 1999: 61)

A similar kind of emotion and a sense of identification with the creation are also evident in Sri Aurobindo's sonnet entitled "Cosmic Consciousness":

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self ...
I am the god and demon, ghost and elf,
I am the wind's speed and the blazing star...
I have learned a close identity with all...

(Aurobindo 1980: 603)

The image of "I" in all the three examples indicates the Truth and the individual "i" merges with the "I" of Truth-consciousness. The seer unites with the cosmic soul. The Western critics like R.M. Bucke equate cosmic consciousness with morality. Sumita Roy, in her book entitled *Consciousness and Creativity*, quotes Richard Maurice Bucke's definition:

Cosmic Consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos that is life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence—would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation and joyousness, a quickening of the moral sense which is fully as striking and more important both to the individual and to the race than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come, what may be called, a sense of immortality, consciousness of eternal life... (Roy 1991: 30)

R.M. Bucke, the first critic to explain cosmic consciousness, appears a bit confusing as compared to Sri Aurobindo's idea of

cosmic consciousness. Sri Aurobindo says that the enlightenment achieved is intuitive, not intellectual. Also, it has nothing to do with “moral exaltation” or “moral sense.” It is an intuitive realization, which places the individual on “a new plane of existence”. According to Sri Aurobindo, it happens only when the “psychic being” comes to the forefront of our being. He explains in the *Life Divine* that the psychic being is the source of love:

... this veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, inextinguishable... is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine... secret psychic entity which is the true original Conscience is us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature. It is the psychic personality in us that flowers as the saint, the sage, the seer; when it reaches its full strength, it turns being towards the knowledge of self and the Divine, towards... the supreme Beauty, Love and Bliss, the divine heights and largeness, and opens us to the touch of spiritual sympathy, universality, oneness. On the contrary, where the psychic personality is weak, crude or ill-developed, the finer parts and movements in us are lacking or poor in character and power... (Dalal 2001: 88-89).

The psychic being, therefore, works as a catalyst for our inner growth, and the awakened psychic being always promotes love and harmony. But in some cases, it is not well-developed among some, and the reasons may be the lack of education. Jung, in his essay entitled “Child Development and Education,” says that if the children are deprived of education, they will remain primitive despite their native intelligence (Jung 1954: 52), which may result in “weak psychic personality”. Sri Aurobindo further explains it as the spark of the Divine. It grows and evolves in the form of the psychic being. However, for Sri Aurobindo, there is a subtle difference between the psychic being and the soul. The soul is eternal, constant, and unchangeable. The psychic being is the spark of the divine-grows and evolves to the divine. In Sanskrit, it is referred to as the *Chaitya Purusha* (Aurobindo 1978: 120-122). An ordinary individual is not aware of its presence as it is covered by the mind and vital. Western critics like Jung says that the man is a microcosm, a reflection of the great cosmos. “...the very existence of his world-embracing and world-conditioning psyche might have taught him better... he bears this cosmic correspondence within him by virtue of his reflecting consciousness...” (Jung 1954: 43). Jung’s elaboration is somewhat

on the surface level. Jung has a faint idea that the human soul is capable of embracing the cosmos. This psychic opening leads to cosmic consciousness, and that stage is a gateway to the higher plane of consciousness—the Supermind leading to the Supreme *Ananda* or *Allah* or *God*, the Supreme Truth-consciousness, as we see in “Bliss of Identity” :

...I am a centre of Thy golden light
And I its vast and vague circumference;
Thou art my soul great, luminous and white...

(Aurobindo 1971: 20)

It is “luminous and white”. And the poet has become the centre of that Light Supreme. The reference to psychic being is also evident in *Rubaiyat* of Rumi, but he did not explain much like his poetic successor.

There’s a Soul deep inside your soul
Search for that Soul...
O wandering Sufi, search if you can
but not somewhere outside
look for it inside yourself.

(Trans. Ergin and Johnson 2007: 53)

The wandering Sufi and his Indian counterpart consider it as the inmost self, which is capable of evolution.

To the mystics, both are real; the outer and the inner; the cosmos and the inner self. Nature, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not an illusory manifestation of the Absolute. “The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real...” (Dalal 2001: 377). This approach can be equated with the doctrines of Neo-Platonism, introvertive mysticism, and extrovertive mysticism. According to Jacques de Marquette, the mystics seek union with God alone and is not satisfied with anything short of this sublime goal (Marquette 1949: 20). William James has shown four distinct features of it, and they are Ineffability, Noetic Quality, Transiency, and Passivity (James 1902: 380). These four characteristics of mysticism had provided a platform for all the critics of the later days. The leading critics of mysticism like Evelyn Underhill, Walter T. Stace, Rufus Jones, Margaret Lewis Furse and Jacques De Marquette collectively opine that it is a kind of transcendental consciousness or a state of ecstasy, which culminates into the feeling of cosmic consciousness, leading to oneness. This feeling of joy, to some critics, is flared up either by a natural sight or an incident. Malwida von Meysenbug says:

I was alone upon the seashore as all these thoughts flowed over me, liberating and reconciling; ... I was impelled to kneel down, this time before the illimitable ocean, symbol of Infinite. I felt that I prayed as I had never prayed before ... (James 1902: 395).

This is an example of a mystical experience. The intellectual mind cannot explain it. It is an intuitive realization combined with a vision. A mystic is gifted with an extraordinary sight. According to critics like Rudolph Otto and Walter T. Stace—*Mysticism East and West* (1932) and *Teachings of the Mystic* (1960)—extrovertive approach moves towards the external world in search of unity with the One. In contrast, the introvertive approach asks us to look inward in search of integration with the self or the soul. The extrovertive way propagates cosmic unity or a feeling of identification with every aspect of Nature. Otto defines it as a “way of unifying vision”. The introvertive approach is to be one with one’s soul or the true essence of being. The mystic realizes that through his intuitive self-awareness. All the mystic poets of all ages had spoken of these two levels of unity in their poetry and songs. V.K. Chari calls it “the mystic’s unifying vision” that “obliterates distinction” (Chari 1973: 930). The unitive vision of the external reality helps the mystic to connect with his or her true self. That is why Rumi and Sri Aurobindo are Neo-Platonic in their approach. Plotinus in *Ennead* writes: “There is nothing Yonder, which is not also Here” (quoted from *Ennead* by Inge 1918: iv). It indicates that both this world and the world beyond are real and meaningful to him. This is one of the prominent features of the mystic poets of all time. The mystic poets cannot think of rejecting this world. Neo-Platonism is also the essence of Sufi teachings.

I am the Divine Sun of the world,
I am the Beloved of lovers,...

(Tr. Nicholson 2001: XLI)

I shall approach thee in things and people dear...
Until I lay my hands on thee indeed
Somewhere among the stars, as ‘twas decreed...

(Aurobindo 1971: 83)

The word “sufi” has been derived from *suf* meaning “wool” referring to the woollen robe worn by the sufis. It is often linked with *sufiyya*, meaning purified or chosen (Stoddart 1976: 20). The Islam religion has two aspects: outward and inward. The outward aspect is exoterism or *sharia* meaning teachings and duties, and the inward

aspect is esoterism or *haqiqa* meaning the mystic truth, which leads to *marifa* or union with the Divine. In Sufism, this state of merging is known as *fanaa*, indicating the annihilation of self or ego so that the Sufi mystic reaches the stage of *marifa* and merges with the self within. Rumi in the company of Shams often practised *sama*, a dance form in which the disciple “moves the body in a meditative circular motion to the accompaniment of music and/or *zehr* (the chanting of a mantra) and/or poetry” (Lewis 2007: 172) and that created a feeling of spiritual ecstasy preparing the mystic for the state of *fanaa* or the abolition of the individualistic feeling resulting in harmony with all. The practice of *sama* was not known to the Sufis before Rumi. Sham Tabriz taught this to his disciples, and one may opine that the birth of organized Sufism began with Rumi. Prof. A. Reza Arasteh says: “Although its origin is obscure, Sufism probably arose as a more satisfactory answer to the ‘human situation’ in the insecure society of Persia. Initially, Sufism was closely related to religious virtues, but gradually it became an instrument of criticism of religion and human conduct to transcend it” (Arasteh 1972: 8). The stage of *marifa* is Oneness in Aurobindonian approach. But our ego does not allow us to be merged. Sri Aurobindo has explained the problem of ego in *The Ideal of Human Unity*, where he writes that a man’s “international existence is still primitive” (Aurobindo 1997: 298).

Man must learn not to suppress and mutilate but to fulfil himself in the fulfilment of mankind, even as he must learn not to mutilate or destroy, but to complete his ego by expanding it out of its limitations and losing it in something greater which it now tries to represent... (Aurobindo 1997: 300).

The expansion of the self initiates the growth of love, harmony and unity, even though ego is “man’s basic existential experience... is being a living self” (Assagioli 1987: 126). The ego creates a sense of individuality. Ego distinguishes one from the other. It is individualistic as well as separatist. It becomes a hindrance when it acts as a stumbling block in our progressive realization of the higher Truth. The “I” in us cannot renounce the attachment to the fruit of its work. We cling to the merits and demerits of our work resulting in varied emotions in us. Ego-sense is conducive for a child’s growth, but when the child reaches adulthood, the grown-up psyche must learn to judge his/her action and the subsequent responses of the ego-sense to the outcome and consequences. Meister Eckhart has said, “if thou wouldst reach the kernel, thou must break the shell” (quoted by Stoddart 1976: 42). It is the shell of our ego, which does not allow our ordinary and individualistic self to be merged

with the Soul inside. It makes us play our different emotions on the surface level, and we end up becoming possessive, jealous, and attached. Sri Aurobindo further explains the metaphors ego and cosmic consciousness and its expansion with reference to cosmic consciousness in *Letters on Yoga*:

The cosmic consciousness is that in which the limits of ego, personal mind and the body disappear and one becomes aware of a cosmic vastness which is or filled by a cosmic spirit... It is not that the ego, the body, the personal mind disappear, but one feels them as only a small part of oneself. One begins to feel others too as part of oneself or varied repetitions of oneself. (quoted by Dalal 2001: 372)

The ego disappears when the realization grows intense. The expansion of our limited self to the cosmic vastness will also lead to human unity as well. The feeling of cosmic consciousness prepares one for this journey towards the ultimate union. The *Vedanta* also speaks of the same thing. Farrukh Dhondy in the postscript section of his book entitled *Rumi* draws our notice to the fact that there no difference between the Vedantic and Islamic mysticism:

One of the historical figures of Sufism, Prince Dara Shikoh (d.1619), the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, was a Sufi of Qadriyah order. He regarded himself as a devout Muslim and scholar and devoted part of his tragic life in translating Hindu scriptural texts—the Bhagvad Gita and the Upanishads—from Sanskrit to Persian. Dara Shikoh believed the Upanishads to be the ‘hidden books’ to which the Koran refers. He wrote that ‘they contain the essence of unity... His study of Hindu philosophy led him to believe that Sufism and Advaita Vedanta, the essential philosophy of the Upanishads and the Bhagvad Gita, are the same...(Dhondy 2011: 142)

Later in the same post-script section, he writes:

The essence of Sufi devotion is the spiritual awakening, the realization, the cleansing, the enlightenment, the oneness-the light. All rituals or practice, which may take the form of whirling dances, of subservience, of devotion to a master; all learning, all association with a master, must lead to That... In essence Sufism is, as Advaita Vedanta is, monist and pantheist (Dhondy 2011: 143).

Farrukh Dhondy has rightly pointed out the similarities between the Islamic and *Vedantic* mysticism. In verse 163 of chapter 2 of *The Quran*, there is a reference to non-dualism: “the God is One God: there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful” (Verse 2.163, Ali 2003:15). In verse 3.2, the hint of *Vedantic* non-dualism recurs again: “Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting,

Eternal” (Ali 2003: 30). The identical image of one God is evident in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* combined with pantheism: “That God faces all the quarters of heaven... The God who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees...” (Hume 2014: 356). The awakened psyche like that of Rumi or Sri Aurobindo can perceive this by their intuitive realization and mystic vision, and therefore, they can easily merge themselves with the creation. Sri Aurobindo explains the state of merging in the *Letters on Yoga* as “loss of all sense of individuality in a boundless cosmic consciousness” (Dalal 2001: 226). One can do so when one is liberated from the individualistic self. Both Rumi and Sri Aurobindo could embrace humanity irrespective of colour, caste, and creed by virtue of their integral outlook and love. Love is a uniting force, and it helps the human soul to spiritually evolve beyond the ordinary level of consciousness, as we have seen in Oscar Wilde’s symbolic fairy tale *The Selfish Giant*.

As evolutionary thinkers, Rumi and Sri Aurobindo have spoken about spiritual evolution in their poems. K. K.Khosla, in the introduction of his book entitled *The Sufism of Rumi* says: “Death is not the end. It is the birth of a new form of spiritual life. Rumi believes in Resurrection” (Khosla 1987: 18). He also says that a small group of people think that Rumi is a “reincarnationist” (Khosla 1987: 18). Rumi writes in the fourth book of *Masnavi* (*Mathnavi*):

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was Man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
 With angels blest; but even from angelhood
 I must pass on: all except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
 I shall become what no mind e’er conceived.
 Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
 Proclaims in organ tones, ‘To Him we shall return’.

(Nicholson 2001: 270; Line: 220 onwards)

Rumi, here gives a hint of spiritual evolution of the human being to an ‘angel-soul’ and even beyond that phase, which none can even think of and finally the last summit is merging with the Lord or the Supramnetal. Also, in Book VI of *Masnavi* (Line 220-225), there is again a reference to it and he says that he has been flying for ‘hundreds of thousand years’ into the ‘pasture of the spirit’ (Nicholson 2001: 270).

Sri Aurobindo also writes on a similar note in *The Life Divine*, sonnets and lyrics: “An evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence. The evolutionary working of Nature has a double process: an evolution of forms, an evolution of the soul” (quoted by Hilaire-Saint 1963: 27). Then again, in the same book, he explains the development of Nature from plant to animal, from animal to man via various stages. (Hilaire-Saint 1963: 30)

As plant life contains in itself the obscure possibility of the conscious animal, as the animal mind is astir with movements of feeling and perception and the rudiments of conception that are the first ground for man the thinker, so the mental being is sublimated by the endeavour of the evolutionary Energy to develop out of him the spiritual man... (Hilaire-Saint 1963: 30)

The sonnets of Sri Aurobindo distinctly echo Rumi :

All is not finished in the unseen decree;
A Mind beyond our mind demands our ken...
A bliss beyond our struggle and our pain
Are the high pinnacles of our destiny...

(Sri Aurobindo 1980: 9)

I shall be merged in the Lonely and Unique
And wake into a sudden blaze of God

(Sri Aurobindo 1980: 29)

The identical theme is also evident in other sonnets and lyrics like “The Silver Call”, “The Miracle of Birth” and “The End?”. In the lyric entitled “The End?”, he says that there is no end. Evolution is a continuous forward march. Both Rumi and Sri Aurobindo are mystic mergers, and that is the main crux of their philosophy: the divinization of the ordinary consciousness or “spiritual evolution” or “to discover the spiritual being in himself and to help others towards the same evolution is his real service to the race” (Hilaire-Saint 1963: 75). The spiritual aspiration to be a merger is innate among the mystics. Tagore, Whitman, Kabir, Lalan Fakir, and the mystics of medieval India had expressed the identical themes in their poems and songs. The rational faculty deals with the finite and the tangible. It does not embrace the totality of existence.

Sri Aurobindo, as a critic, adds a new dimension to the traditional *Vedantic* philosophy through his synthetic outlook. His concept of integral philosophy does not treat the triple path of *The Gita* in isolation. The triple paths of Knowledge, Work, and Devotion are

deemed one. Sri Aurobindo says in *Essays on the Gita*, when the work is done without desire, it becomes sacrificial in spirit and the knowledge increases, with the increase of the knowledge, one achieves a sense of equality or we can say equanimity and that flares up one's love for the divine and this love can be extended to all beings. "Any one path followed with intensity and sincerity would automatically bring about the results obtained through the other two paths. Thus divine love can lead to divine knowledge and to divine service" (Warrier 1990: 35). The opening of the psychic helps one to acquire this synthetic vision, which hastens the ascent to the divine.

Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is inclusive. It includes the "triple path of *The Gita*" and gives stress only on intuition. Hence, Sri Aurobindo differs considerably from Sankara's monism. Sankara says that the goal of *advaita* is the realisation of the supreme and there are three ways of knowing Him: *sruti* (scriptures), *tarka* or *yukti* (reasoning), and *anubhava* (intuition). Whereas, Sri Aurobindo highlights the impotency of books and reason. He says that the Truth cannot be limited to these aspects. It is an intuitive experience, and he just includes the *anubhava* aspect of Sankara in his integral philosophy. Then there is another fundamental difference with Sankara, who says in *Vivekchudamani*: "In the realization of the Atman, one breaks his tie with the bondage of *Avidya* or Ignorance" (quoted by Warrier 1990: 79). It means that the absolute truth should be free from *maya* or ignorance or cosmic illusion, which is this mundane world. Sankara's *Atman* is "Pure Consciousness". Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy does not accept this. The world is very much real to him, which I have already mentioned with reference to the doctrine of neo-Platonism. According to him, the soul inside remains unaffected by *maya* and the crux of the integral philosophy is to surrender to the divine. "You must keep the temple clean, if you wish to install there the living Presence" (Aurobindo 1974: 4). To be very precise, this yoga does not require any ascetic withdrawal. It is the yoga of total life. It aims at realisation, followed by the divinization of consciousness and identification. Rumi has talked of the union. But Sri Aurobindo has described in detail his experiences of union and he calls that state "Supramental". That is the last summit of this spiritual evolution, which is beyond the mind. Teilhard de Chardin writes in his book, entitled *The Future of Man*:

Let us call it the *point omega*. Let us suppose that from this universal centre, this Omega point, there constantly emanate radiations hitherto only perceptible to those persons whom we call 'mystics'...a phenomenon

perhaps outwardly akin to death: but in reality a simple metamorphosis and arrival at the supreme synthesis. An escape from the planet, not in space or outwardly, but spiritually and inwardly, such as the hyper-concentration of cosmic matter upon itself allows (Chardin 1959: 122-123)

Here, we see that Chardin approaches close to the Aurobindonian thought. His ‘omega point’ is Sri Aurobindo’s supramental, and the message he leaves for the world is *E pur si muove*—we are continuously moving. “Essentially Progress is a force...” (Chardin 1959: 19). Taken together, Rumi, Sri Aurobindo, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are evolutionary philosophers. However, Rumi may be considered a strong tradition behind Chardin and Sri Aurobindo, who takes the phenomenon of man further and explains the possibility of the spiritual evolution of human being, and his poetic successor shows the ways through his doctrine of integral philosophy.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would say that the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo has nothing to do with the incomplete experience of life or asceticism; however, that had been the trend among the past seers. This concept seems to have been clear to Rumi. The negation of life is a negation of the Divine already manifested on earth in every material aspect. What then is the link between Rumi and Sri Aurobindo? Sri Aurobindo is an extension of Rumi, a conclusive note to Rumi’s half-developed sense of life: a combination of material and spiritual. By virtue of the evolution of consciousness, the seers of the later period are maturer and clearer than their past counterparts, and that’s why Sri Aurobindo could express the doctrine of integral philosophy with clarity.

How shall ascending Nature touch her goal?
Not through man’s stumbling intellect...

(Sri Aurobindo 1974: 9)

This can be explained with reference to Plotinus’ doctrine of integral outlook. William Ralph Inge explains the philosophy of Plotinus as discussed in *Ennead*:

Here the music of the great I Am pealing from the grand organ of creation through its countless reeds in endless harmony. The soul of man is bidden to take its part in the great hymn of praise which the world sings to its Creator. The body and the organs are the lyre on which the soul discourses its music. We must take care of our lyre while we can; but when the lyre is broken or worn out, then says Plotinus, ‘we must sing

without accompaniment' (Inge 1918: 23).

The quoted passage indicates that the body plays a crucial role in our spiritual evolution. The negation of the body means the denial of the soul. The body is like an instrument, it embodies the soul, and the perfection of the body leads to the perfection of consciousness. The Sufism also gives stress on the body as the performance in *sama* helps the mystic to transcend beyond the mundane. According to T.C. Rastogi, Sufism is a particular and distinctive Muslim way of life born of the human heart against the cold formalism and ritualism of the Muslim orthodoxy. It also does not adhere to a single uniform mode of thought (Rastogi 1982: 9). It is the call of the heart to look inward to realize the soul inside:

He was not in that exalted court
I gazed into my heart;
There I saw Him; He was nowhere else

(quoted by Arasteh 1972: 12)

Ego and "desire for more" have polluted the world. War is back in a terrible form accompanied by hatred. Sermons cannot save the planet. It needs love. Rumi and Sri Aurobindo are the true saviours. We have in them the words against the culture of hate, violence, and separation calling for a change of consciousness, which man has refused till date. The poetry of Rumi had sketched the destiny of man moving from a lower to a higher level. Sri Aurobindo arrives seven centuries later to fill in the outlines of Rumi as a poetic successor and gives a complete shape to Rumi's vision as a poet. The two poets, separated by time, form a single voice of the culture of the redemption of humanity.

Notes

- Quotes are from R.A. Nicholson's translation of *Divan* and *Masnavi*
- Translation of Rumi's quatrains by R. A. Nicholson can be found at <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/book3.html>
- Translation of parts of *Maarif* can be found in the given link <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/from-bahauddin-walad.html>
- *Glossary of Terms in Sri Aurobindo's Writings*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, 1978
- SABCL: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library
- CWSA: The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo
- <https://www.iep.utm.edu/adv-veda/> (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy has been consulted for reference)
- Abdul Qadir Gilani and Al Ghazali are also considered to be 11th Century Sufi Poets, but the organized Sufi tradition had begun with Rumi.

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