

## **Aurobindo's Theory of Spiritual Internationalism; Contemporary Relevance.**

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**ABSTRACT:** Aurobindo is the first Indian political thinker to propound the spiritual theory of international relations. His theory points out at an uncharted domain of human existence whose realization has been neglected till recently. Aurobindo has predicted with the growth of the science and technology of communication world is going to realize the limitation of the rationalist approaches to international politics.

**KEY WORDS:** Realism, Marxian theory, nationalism, Human unity and spiritual nationalism.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION -**

Aurobindo is the first modern Indian thinker who propounded a new spiritual theory of international relations. Aurobindo's theory has been much neglected rather not even recognized in the modern discipline of international relations and politics. International relations as a discipline and even in praxis have witnessed a constant struggle between two dominant world views of Idealism and Realism. Even the revolutionary idealistic Marxian theory has been held hostage by the realistic perspective nation-states and multi-nations states. Aurobindo has asserted that nationalism is the most potent natural manifestation of the national spirit therefore any theory of internationalism which treats nationalism as antithesis of internationalism is bound to fail. He asserted that once the nationalities of the world have expressed its self only then their nationalism will gradually transform itself into internationalism.

### **Practical Manifestation of his ideas in International Politics-**

Communication Approach, Functionalist, Neo-functionalist approach towards politics which came into the limelight in twentieth century has pointed towards this possibility in the context of international relations. These approaches shed the typical Idealistic reluctance to accept Nationalism as the potential basis of sound internationalism. Since the end of the Second World War and evolution of **United Nations and Britton woods** Institutions world has witnessed the increase in the practical application of Communication, Functionalist and Neo-functionalist world-views in the affairs of international politics. Evolution story of Europe once shattered by the consecutive wars justified by the prescription of realism is the clear proof of evolution of international relations towards the creation of human unity. European Union, Association of South East Nations and formation of other regional organization further strength the forces of change. Aurobindo has pointed out about the present situation of the world much before the actual materialization of these events. He has stressed in his work that percolation of the modern science and technology will help in expanding the human consciousness to a new level. Aurobindo is relevant in the more fundamental sense that he propounded that present expansion of human consciousness is predominantly based on the materialistic aspect of life. He asserts that there is the need to transform the individual consciousness with the help of spiritual aspect of life.

Aurobindo asserts that present materialistic approach towards the life is bound to create a new spiritual approach towards life (individually & collectively). Aurobindo believed materialistic aspect of present international or world politics has its limitations in transforming human nature with the carrot (inducement) and stick (force) methods. Aurobindo asserts that basic human instincts like greed, fear and envy are ingrained in much deeper physic of human existence. Aurobindo asserts that constant efforts to tackle these challenges of life are bound to result in frustration. Therefore treaties, laws and human rights charters fail on regular basis to live up to true sense of internationalism and human unity. Aurobindo has illustrated how two successive world wars have been fought despite having acknowledged the high principles of human unity.

Aurobindo has asserted that inherent instincts of fear and greed cannot be transformed from outside only. This would require transformation of spiritual aspect of life which can bring about revolutionary transformation in life from within. This transformation will increase the level of empathy among the human beings in particular and society in general. In his own words "It is true that subliminal in man is the largest part of his nature and has in it the secret of the unseen dynamisms which explain his surface activities. But lower vital subconscious which is all that this psychoanalysis of Freud seems to know." Aurobindo points out that humanity has not understood the subtle spiritual aspect of human life which has the capacity to transform the present

human understanding on different aspects. Aurobindo's political philosophy is capable of solving the present problems like environmental degradation, sustainable growth and all other type of issues. Besides his stress on the acceptance of diverse nationalities and their relative characteristic of national life can go in the long way reduce the conflict between the democratic and non-democratic regimes. Aurobindo's philosophy proceeds with the transformation of dormant national consciousness into explicit expression of spiritual manifestation of national life. These manifestations of national souls have different dimensions (materialistic or spiritual) which reflect in the functioning in the nation.

**Umbilical relation between nationalism and internationalism** -Aurobindo believed that every nation of the world should have the inherent right to express itself among the comity of the nations. Aurobindo points out that once a nation has established itself sovereign entity the next step of its evolution will lead towards the internationalism. Aurobindo asserted that nationalism will ultimately culminate in the internationalism because nationalism is the prerequisite of internationalism; these two ideologies are not dialectically opposite rather they are corollary of each other. Aurobindo was well aware of the transformation which modern communicational and scientific technology has brought about in the modern world.

Aurobindo believed that the West has created the possibility of international cooperation in political, economic and other aspects of international level. Aurobindo has predicted the immanent unification of Europe as confederation of different nationalities coming together of the attainment of their common materialistic end and their vision of humanity. Aurobindo asserts that the present conception of humanity and thus internationalism is predominantly materialistic which can definitely help in the initial stage of international integration but once this cooperation reaches the advance stage it will start to show its limitations. Aurobindo believed until the human beings do not realize the inherent unity of their existence which cannot be subdued by the differences of race, nation and sex, all the efforts to formulate a sound internationalism will not be accomplished.

Aurobindo pointed that present process of progress will ultimately revive the true mission of religion. Aurobindo writes "Religion, which ought have led the way, but owing to its greater dependence on its external parts and its infrarational rather than its spiritual impulses has been as much, or even more, a sower of discord, religion is beginning to realize, a little dimly and effectively as yet, that spirituality is after all its chief business and true aim, that is also the common bond and common element of all religions." He exhorts the India to lead world on this path of realization of self and inherent unity of existence after attaining its independence. He believed India is not attaining the status of national independence merely to create another nationalism based on the values of the West. He believed gradually the inherent tendencies of Indian nationalism will assert itself and India will look beyond the mere fulfillment of materialistic goals.

### **Spirituality beyond the modernity and post-modernity -**

Aurobindo points out that West has began with the rationalistic outlook of Greek-roman civilization to question the irrational and conventional institutions and norms prevalent in the Europe of those times. He writes "The individualistic age of Europe was in its beginning a revolt of reason, in its culmination a triumphal progress of physical Science." This new outlook transformed social, political, economic, cultural and technological aspects of life. This gave birth to modernity based on the materialistic existence of human life and the world. Aurobindo asserts that this search of materialistic aspects of life and individuality will reach its limits and gradually the West will start to realize the existence of spiritual and self-conscious aspects of life.

Aurobindo points out the materialistic aspect of the world have become more and more advanced with the passage of time. He laments that yoga as a source of knowing the spiritual aspect of life has been lagging behind. Aurobindo asserts that until the spiritual aspect of life is not enriched by the legacies of the East especially India the world cannot become a better place. "There is nothing mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind's immobility and thought-free stillness. When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence." Aurobindo in his works has pointed towards the new horizon of possibilities which spiritual knowledge can open up for the entire human race.

Vivakanda has been the predecessor of Aurobindo in this line of thinking his entire life, thoughts and actions reflected this mission. Aurobindo was able to structure his theory of internationalism in a more cogent way and in this he was helped by the circumstances of his time (two –world wars and post second world war period). Aurobindo has stressed that mere attainment of materialistic prosperity cannot ensure stable and justice internationalism. Aurobindo's theory of internationalism and human unity is teleological in its conception because he had a faith that humanity is being led towards this goal by the divine will. This teleological conception separates his approach from post –modernism.

### **Contemporary relevance-**

The recent challenges to the international institutions especially to world trade organization, climate change rounds, contentions on the issues of migrants and rise of protectionist Donald trump illustrates that economic prosperity cannot ensure stability in international relations. Present materialistic approach towards the national and international relations even if based on the broadest definition of self-interest is bound to create protectionist repulsions in the testing times. Aurobindo stressed that faith in the inherent oneness of human race is not the matter of law or legislation rather it is the matter of faith. He believed that Spiritual aspect of life is as important as the achievements in science and technology. These both aspects are equally essential for the establishment of human unity. Spiritualistic approach to understanding internationalism can help in awakening the conscience of the enlightened citizens of the different nationalities and this would help them to become true internationalists. Aurobindo believed that spirituality can help in realizing the inherent oneness of the humanity and the entire existence on this earth. Such a broaden conception towards life can become the true basis of the international institutions and internationalism in particular.

Aurobindo points out the rationalistic limitations of the modernity led by the West but he goes beyond the post-modernism by presenting spiritualism as the conceptual frame work which can connect the diverse narratives of existence and help humanity to choose its path of action. Aurobindo is relevant in the context of climate change because he did not support the primacy of human beings over all other creations of the earth. He stressed that individuals are bound to realize their inherent oneness with existence (nature) in the path of human evolution because only this realization can complete their evolution. Once the human beings have realized their spiritual existence of life the present dominance of the materialistic pursuit is bound to drop from their life. Aurobindo's internationalism describes nations as the manifestations of the soul of that political community which be given rightful space to express itself. But Aurobindo rejected the blatant use of the nationalism as the project to suppress the dissenting minorities. Presently internationalism is trying to find this same balance between the projects of nationalism and rights of the minorities.

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