
Literature of the Future

Sri Aurobindo's genius was such that not only could he express his spiritual thought and vision in intricate metaphysical reasoning and in rich and subtly perceptive psychological terms, but also in profound and beautiful poetry. In Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry, written under the title *The Future Poetry*, we can appreciate the importance he attached to art and culture for the significance it has for the spiritual evolution of mankind. He believed that a new, deep, and intuitive poetry could be a powerful aid to the change of consciousness and the life required to achieve the spiritual destiny of mankind which he envisioned. Unlike philosophy or psychology, poetry could make the reality of the Spirit living to the imagination and reveal its beauty and delight and captivate the deeper soul of humanity to its acceptance. It is perhaps in Sri Aurobindo's own poetry, particularly in his epic poem *Savitri*, that we find the fullest and most powerful statement of his spiritual thought and vision.

Consistent with his spiritual vision and the coherence of the many-sidedness of his work, Sri Aurobindo's ideal of poetry is the mantra, an outflow and direct expression of the divine Reality. He suggests that true poetry is a creation of neither the intelligence nor the imagination, but rather it is a creation of the soul. At the same time, the true recipient and, let us say, true target of poetry is neither the intelligence, the emotions, nor the vital nature, but rather again it is the soul of the listener. The intelligence, imagination, emotions, and vital nature are instruments of the soul and thus may shape or color the poetry, Sri Aurobindo says, but “the more rapidly and transparently [they] do their work of transmission, the less they make of their separate claim to satisfaction, the more directly the work reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry.”

While he grants an indispensable place for technique in poetry and discusses it in some detail, he gives it a secondary place quite subordinate to the poetic inspiration. He says of all the arts, technique is perhaps least important in poetry. He explains that this is because the instrument of poetry, the rhythmic word, is more full of subtle and immaterial elements than the instruments of other arts; it is more complex, flexible, variously suggestive, and has more possibilities in many directions.

In *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo analyzes the development of English poetry, indicates the significance and direction of its drift, and then traces the lines of its future development. Sri Aurobindo indicated that the poetry of the future would embody a harmony of five eternal powers: Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. The Truth that the future poetry will embody is not simply the limited truth of the outward life and nature, nor the truth of reason, philosophy, or science. Truth, says Sri Aurobindo, “is the very face of Infinity and Aditi herself, the illimitable mother of all the gods.” In a revealing passage he says, “its field is all soul experience, its appeal is to the aesthetic response of the soul to all that touches it in self or world; it is one of the high and beautiful powers of our inner and may be a power of our inmost life. All of the infinite Truth of being that can be made part of that life, all that can be made true and beautiful and living to that experience, is poetic truth and a fit subject matter of poetry.”

Just as poetry is concerned with the infinite truth, it is concerned with the infinite life of the spirit in its many creations. It is concerned more with the inner life than the outer, though outer circumstances, the objective world can be a means or a vehicle to contact or express that deeper inner life. It is a deeper and wider life that the future poetry will express and open for us, a life not imprisoned in the moment and the immediate act, but a life which has the background of eternity and the act which carries within it an eternal peace and the momentum of a universal power.

Even more essential to the future poetry are Delight and Beauty. Sri Aurobindo says that “delight is the soul of existence,” and “beauty is the concentrated form of delight.” He indicates that behind all things, whatever their appearance to the surface mind, there is an intrinsic spiritual delight and beauty. This bliss inherent in all existence is called Ananda in the ancient Indian scriptures, and it is this deeper delight and beauty in the essence of things that moves the poet and finds expression through poetry.

Sri Aurobindo believed that a great spiritual destiny awaited humanity. He indicated that the future poetry would be inspired by and express this greater spiritual consciousness and life. The spirituality that it could thus reveal and inspire in mankind is the view of existence as a progressive manifestation of the Divine in the universe and mankind's life as a field for a possible transformation into a new and perfected and divinised life. It would help open humanity to its deepest soul, to the higher levels of mind and spirit and to the vastness of the cosmic consciousness.

It would show a solution and way of deliverance for humanity from its vital unrest and mental questioning by the uplifting strength of the Spirit within and its supporting calmness and power of knowledge and mastery. It would reveal the unity of the self with other conscious beings in Nature, the soul and life of the plant and animal, the soul and life of things that seem inert. It would reveal to mankind the meaning of existence, express the universal delight and beauty and power of a higher life, and the infinite potentialities of our future existence.

We find in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's epic poem of about 24,000 lines in blank verse, a wonderful expression of the future poetry that he described and predicted. Based on a tale from the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic of love conquering death, *Savitri* describes in vivid detail and grand proportions the nature and significance of existence, the secret worlds and inner experiences of a master Yogi, the many layers and levels of human and cosmic consciousness, the demonic and the divine, the reason of suffering and the way out. In this poem one can begin to see and feel the spiritual nuances that are described so intricately and exhaustively in Sri Aurobindo's prose works.