

Individual Consciousness and Universal Reality: A Thematic Comparison of Aurobindo and Tagore's Poetry

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"At the very first sight, I could realise he [Sri Aurobindo] had been seeking for the Soul and had gained it, and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light..."

I felt the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishis spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human Soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him, "You have the word, and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, Hearken to me..."

O Aurobindo, accept the salutations from Rabindranath."

Rabindranath Tagore

Abstract

This paper explores the thematic relationship between individual consciousness and universal reality in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore, two major voices of modern Indian literature. Both poets engage deeply with the idea that human consciousness is not isolated but intrinsically connected to a greater cosmic or divine presence. However, their poetic treatments of this theme reveal distinct philosophical orientations. Sri Aurobindo's poetry presents consciousness as evolutionary and transformative. In works such as *Savitri*, he envisions the individual self as capable of ascending toward a higher spiritual state, ultimately merging with a universal, supramental reality. His approach is rooted in an integral philosophy that emphasises growth, transcendence, and the realisation of divine potential within the human being. In contrast, Tagore's poetry offers a more lyrical and devotional perspective. In collections like *Gitanjali*, he portrays the individual soul as seeking harmony and unity with the universal through love, surrender, and an intimate connection with nature. His vision emphasises emotional depth and spiritual unity rather than metaphysical evolution. Through a comparative analysis, this paper demonstrates that while Aurobindo stresses the progressive transformation of consciousness, Tagore emphasises the immediacy of union with the divine. Despite these differences, both poets affirm that true self-realisation lies in transcending the ego and recognising the unity of all existence. Their works contribute to a richer understanding of spiritual humanism and the interconnectedness of individual and universal reality.

Keywords: Individual Consciousness; Universal Reality; Mysticism; Spiritual Humanism; Divine Consciousness; Self-Realization; Comparative Literature; Indian English Poetry

1. Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have much to say in modern Indian literature and philosophy. Their poetry is not just about aesthetics, but about spiritual enquiry, self-realisation and metaphysics. Both poets aim to relate the individual self to the cosmos, but their poetic attitudes vary significantly in both philosophy and symbolism and spirituality. The central theme in Tagore's *Gitanjali* is the surrender of the self, emotional attachment to the divine and the union of the self and the divine through love, humility and nature. In contrast to Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, which is a more complicated metaphysical journey, the consciousness in *Savitri* continues to develop steadily toward the supramental state and cosmic transformation. Both poets' approaches to individual

consciousness and universal reality are comparatively analyzed and significant convergences and divergences are highlighted in the context of spiritual humanism and mystical epistemology.

Literature is one of those fine arts that employs "language" as a medium of expression. Fundamentally, it is the expression of human emotions, sensibilities, sorrows, and joys. Good literature never grows old; it transcends the boundaries of space and time. It is eternal. It is also universal in the sense that it appeals to readers across national and linguistic borders. Although languages and cultures may vary, human emotions remain fundamentally the same across all the literatures of the world. Within the realm of world literature, Indo-Anglian literature stands as a dynamic branch, possessing a magnificent heritage that traces its origins back to the Vedas; it continues to radiate its enchanting aura and constitutes an integral part of Indian literature—a modern facet of that very glory which holds within itself an ancient treasury of divine thoughts.

India is home to a diverse array of languages and literatures. It is a country where cultural roots are fundamentally unified, even though significant differences are evident across its regional literatures; this is because these literatures have been crafted in accordance with the distinct nature inherent to their respective languages. Furthermore, various movements have emerged that have profoundly influenced every regional literature within India. Although India possesses as many regional literatures as it does languages, a common underlying thread runs through them all; together, they form a beautiful and organic whole. One cannot overlook the fact that Indian literature is, in essence, the product of a synthesis of multilingual, multicultural, and socio-historical elements. Today, thanks to the contributions of both regional and national writers, Indian literature has reached the pinnacle of creative excellence.

Indian writing in English is the result of a historical interaction spanning nearly 190 years between two cultures—Indian and Western; and this cultural influence emerged with the establishment of four universities and the introduction of the Western educational system. The English language provided the indigenous inhabitants with a medium through which to access Western literature and culture. English education gave rise to a 'bourgeois' (middle-class) stratum among the natives, the majority of whom—while adopting Western aesthetic standards—continued to create literature in their own mother tongues. However, a select few among them deemed the English language itself to be the more suitable medium for expressing their emotions and experiences. Thus, a distinct form of 'Indo-Anglian' literature came into existence—characterised by Indian subject matter, yet expressed through the medium of English.

Research Gap

There is much scholarship on the mysticism of Tagore and the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, but very little work that attempts to compare them directly in a literary analysis from the point of view of the individual consciousness and the universal reality in terms of themes. Several studies have been conducted in the past, which are mainly:

1. His devotional mysticism and nature symbolism,
2. Sri Aurobindo's spiritual growth and yogic ideas,
3. Comparisons of Indian mysticism with Western philosophical thought.

There has been limited consideration of, however:

1. comparative symbolic structures in Gitanjali and Savitri,
2. spiritual ascents represented in various ways,
3. poetic approach to relational/evolutionary consciousness.

Therefore, this study is a much-needed work of comparative analysis of the poetic vision of the two poets in the manipulation of their images, symbols and metaphors, as they make spiritual philosophy a poetic art.

2. Literature Review

Indo-Anglian literature traces its origins to Raja Ram Mohan Roy. While working with British officials, he acquired a strong command of the English language. Through the Brahmo Samaj, he endeavoured to introduce new ideas and to eradicate old superstitions and traditional customs. He possessed an excellent command of English and produced works in both prose and poetry in the language. Regarding his contribution to the field of Indian writing in English, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar writes;

While Rammohan Roy may be regarded as the foremost among the Indian masters of English prose, he was so eminent in such diverse fields that his place is far more appropriately situated within Indian history than merely within the history of 'Indo-Anglian' literature [1].

Thus, through their writings and ideas, they contributed to laying the foundation of Indo-Anglian literature and paved the way for their successors and contemporaries. Henry Derozio, the Cavery brothers, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Hasan Ali, P. Rajagopal, Mohanlal, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt, among others, are regarded as the first Indo-Anglian writers of both verse and prose.

The first Indian English poet, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809- 1831), nurtured English verse in India. He became a teacher of English literature at the Hindu College, Calcutta. A teacher as well as a poet, Derozio had expressed nature in his poetry. The flavour of Romanticism found in his poetry as he was highly influenced by Byron, Shelley, Keats, Scott and Moore. He died at a very early age due to cholera in 1831.

Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809–1837) is also regarded as one of the foundational pillars of Indo-Anglian literature. His contribution to Indian English literature stands on par with that of Henry Derozio. His work, *The Shair and Other Poems* (1830), holds a distinct place in the literary history of India. He is also credited as the first Indian to publish a regular collection of English poetry. Ghosh also edited an English weekly titled *The Hindu Intelligence*. His poems are acclaimed for being not only moralistic but also for representing an exquisite blend of originality and traditional imagery.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873) began writing while he was still a student at Hindu College. He won numerous scholarships in his college examinations and also received a gold medal for an essay he wrote on women's education. While a student at Hindu College, his Bengali and English poems were published in periodicals such as *Jnananneshan*, *Bengal Spectator*, *Literary Glimmer*, *Calcutta Library Gazette*, *Literary Blossom*, and *Comet*. Lord Byron was Madhusudan's inspiration. In 1860, he became the first person to employ "blank verse" in *Padmavati*, a play based on a Greek myth. His subsequent poems silenced his critics and detractors, permanently establishing blank verse as a literary form. Madhusudan's epic poem, *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, remains his greatest masterpiece to this day.

Bengal was the epicentre of the Renaissance, for it gave birth to litterateurs who brought global renown to 'Bharat Mata' (Mother India). Among them, Toru Dutt was the first female poet of Indo-Anglian literature. She received her education through the medium of English, and her lineage was exceptionally affluent and distinguished. Her family was wealthy and highly educated. Her father, Govin Chunder Dutt, was an accomplished linguist and a cultured gentleman with a profound understanding of literature. The Dutt family moved to Cambridge in 1871, where Toru attended various lectures. In 1875, she translated French works into English, a collection titled *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. She learned Sanskrit and translated the *Ramayana*, *the Mahabharata*, and *Shakuntala* into English verse. She attained complete mastery over the Sanskrit language; shifting her focus from French to Sanskrit, she translated numerous Indian mythological texts into English.

Another contributor of literature from Bengal, as is the land of arts, is Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909). He was Toru Dutt's cousin and forwarded her writing at its height. He had passed the Indian civil service Examination in 1869 and served in various capacities in India. He had also devoted much time to literary creation in Bengali and English. Romesh Dutt had written novels in Bengali and translated two of these novels into English, named *The Lack of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). He had narrated historical surveys in a large range, like *A History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, later *Hindu Civilisation*, *India in the*

Victorian Age, The Economic History of British India and *A Brief History of Ancient and Modern Bengal*. Apart from this, his greatest achievement was the Bengali translation of the *Rig Veda*. His translation into English verse from *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Rig Veda*, The Upanishads, Buddhist literatures, Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* and Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniya* is a most creditable contribution. Iyengar writes the turn from Toru Dutt to Romesh Chunder Dutt as;

To turn from Aru and Taru Dutt to Romsh Chunder Dutt is like passing from the bud and the flower to the ripened fruit; from Erato and Melpomene to Clio and Calliope; from Ushas, rosy-fingered and short-lived, to the toiling Sun on the ascendant; from infinite promise to impressive achievement [2].

Another sparkling star of Indian literature is Manmohan Ghose (1869- 1924). He was the elder brother of Sri Aurobindo. He had an English education at Manchester and Oxford. His first poem collection, *Primavera* (1890), was appreciated by literary scholars and classmates at Oxford. Like Derizio, Manmohan Ghose became a professor of English at the Presidency College, Calcutta. In 1898, he published a collection of poems – Love Songs and Elegies and also wrote a five-act play- *Perseus the Deliverer*. His wonderful sense of the beauty of English words and rhythm made him a notable literary craftsman in the eyes of English scholars of England. His poetry was considered much intellectual thoughts, and the rhythm in his poetry is an outstanding feature.

Manmohan Ghosh was born in 1869; he was the second son of Dr K.D. Ghosh is a renowned surgeon. Along with his brothers, Binoy Bhushan and Aurobindo, he studied at Loreto Convent in Darjeeling. In 1879, Manmohan Ghosh moved to England, where he remained until 1894 and obtained the professional qualification of 'Barrister-at-Law' from Lincoln's Inn. Upon returning to India, he began working as a Professor of English at Patna College; subsequently, he was appointed as a professor at Presidency College in Kolkata and also served as an Inspector of Schools.

Manmohan Ghosh had begun writing poetry while he was still living in England. Some of his poems were published in a poetry anthology titled *Primavera*, which also featured works by poets such as Laurence Binyon, Arthur Cripps, and Stephen Phillips. Reviewing this collection, Oscar Wilde wrote of Manmohan Ghosh: "The temperament of Keats and the moods of Matthew Arnold have influenced Mr Ghosh; and for a young poet, what influences could be better?"

Manmohan Ghosh's poetry differed in many respects from the earlier style of Orientalist verse. His poems often reflected a yearning to return to England, where he had spent twenty-two years of his life. While his contemporaries in India—including his brother, Aurobindo Ghosh—were writing on nationalist themes and drawing inspiration from ancient Indian culture, Manmohan Ghosh turned to England for his muse.

By this time, Indian literature had flourished significantly; however, it was Rabindranath Tagore who elevated Indian literature to a global stage, securing for modern India a distinct place in the history of world literature—an achievement recognised by the Nobel Prize in Literature, which brought India global recognition. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), a multifaceted figure in the world of Indian literature, is revered as a 'Rishi,' 'Gurudev,' and 'Maharshi.' He was a poet, playwright, actor, producer, composer, painter, educationist, social reformer, philosopher, visionary, novelist, short-story writer, and a critic of both life and literature.

Rabindranath Tagore was the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for his book, *Gitanjali*. Although he was best known for his poetry, Tagore was a creative genius who played a pivotal role in the cultural renaissance of India and Bengal during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to being a visionary poet, Tagore's achievements encompassed remarkable contributions to the fields of music, literature, drama, art, and educational reform.

Tagore was born in 1861, the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi. Debendranath Tagore was himself an influential Bengali and a member of the Brahmo Samaj. Although very wealthy, he had an underlying spirituality, qualities which to a large extent were inherited by his youngest son, Rabindranath. As a young boy,

Rabindranath Tagore was asked to sing by his father. Debendranath was so impressed with the soulfulness of his singing that he credited his son with a valuable gift.

Rabindranath wrote his first poem at the age of 6 and, as a young boy, studied the classical poetry of [3]. He also studied the Upanishads, languages and modern sciences. In 1878, he travelled to England in the hope of becoming a barrister. However, in 1880, he left University College London and returned to India because his father had arranged his marriage to Mrinalini Devi. Thus, Tagore returned home to get married and look after his family's estates. This enabled a productive period of writing poetry, plays and short stories. In 1901, Tagore moved to Santiniketan (West Bengal), where he founded an ashram dedicated to returning educational traditions of ancient India. Later, this school was to be expanded and given the name of Shriniketan, "Abode of Peace" This project was dear to Tagore's heart throughout his life.

"because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West" (3) (3) Nobel Prize for Literature – Rabindranath Tagore.

Tagore's poetry was influenced by traditional Indian poetry. For example, his early poetry was especially influenced by the devotional Indian poets Ramprasad and Kabir. Later, he was influenced by the Baoul tradition, which is a tradition of traditional Bengali folk music, known for its simple ballads and invocation to union with the beloved. Throughout Tagore's work, there is a strong mystical element. Although it is worth noting that Tagore rarely referred to God directly.

"When the voice of the Silent touches my words, I know him and therefore know myself."

"Love is an endless mystery, for it has nothing else to explain it."

Rabindranath Tagore wrote primarily in Bengali and translated many of his poems and plays into English. Before he was eighteen, he had written more than 7000 lines of verse. *Gitanjali* (1912) won the Nobel Prize for literature and became the poet of the world. After that, his other works and *Gitanjali* were translated by literary scholars into major languages of the world. To his credit, there is a long list of poems and plays, both in Bengali and English, which have made his place among the world's greatest writers. In Iyengar's words;

As the years passed, he grew into an ever-greater figure; with his flowing beard and immaculate white robes, he truly belonged to the tradition of the great sages of the Upanishadic era—and indeed, he was the true heir to that noble tradition which bears witness to the 'Threefold Truth,' which itself perceives the Path and reveals that very same Path to others [1].

The fertile soil of Bengal has gifted the world a shining star in the form of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. He (1872–1950) is such an extraordinary figure in Indo-Anglian literature that his preeminence is beyond dispute. He made an invaluable contribution to Indian literature while simultaneously elevating his works to a global stature.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was born in a Bengali Hindu family in Calcutta (now Kolkata), West Bengal, India, on 15 August 1872. His father, Krishna Dhan Ghosh, was District Surgeon of Rangapur, Bengal. His mother, Swarnalata Devi, was the daughter of Brahmo religious and social reformer Rajnarayan Basu. Aurobindo Ghose was a multifaceted person. He was a freedom fighter, poet, scholar, yogi and philosopher. He spent his life working towards the cause of India's freedom and for the further evolution of life on earth. He was a great scholar, mystical poet, yogi and an aggressive Indian nationalist. He was actively involved in the politics of India. He is well known for his incredible contribution to the freedom struggle of our country. He came up with an entirely new system of spirituality. He called his pathway to spirituality the 'integral yoga. The basic objective of his teachings was to increase the level of consciousness of people and make them aware of their true selves. His literary works include writings on varied subjects like the Indian culture, socio-political development of the country, spirituality, etc.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is, in a sense, practical. It is based on facts, experience and personal realisations and on having the vision of a seer or Rishi. Aurobindo's spirituality is inseparably united with reason.

The goal aimed at by Sri Aurobindo is not merely the liberation of the individual from the chain that fetters him, but "to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down the divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity".

"A fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a Supreme Grace that answers from above are two powers which, in their conjunction, can effect this. If the transformation is to be integral, integral should be the rejection of all that withstands it," says the Master Sri Aurobindo.

"The call upon us", says Sri Aurobindo, "is to grow into the image of God, to dwell in Him and with Him and be a channel of His joy and might and an instrument of His works. Purified from all that is Asubha (Evil), we have to act in the world as dynamos of that Divine Electricity and send it thrilling and radiating through mankind, so that wherever one of us stands, hundreds around may become full of His light and force, full of God and full of Ananda. Churches, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds and institutions...as if these could save mankind, and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul".

Aurobindo's Life Divine is, and will always remain, a force guiding the thoughts of men all over the world. His other publications are Essays on Gita, Ideal and Progress, Isa Upanishad, The Superman, Evolution, Heraclitus, The Ideal of the Karmayogin, The Brain of India, the Renaissance in India, Bases of Yoga, Kalidasa, Vikramorvasi or The Hero and the Nymph, Poems, The Riddle of This World, etc.

Aurobindo wrote that his philosophy "was formed first by the study of the Upanishads and the Gita", as well as "knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation"[4]. Peter Heehs writes that examination of Aurobindo's manuscripts bears out Aurobindo's statement. Heehs writes that the influence of the Indian Vedantic tradition on Aurobindo's thought was enormous. The other major component was ideas that Aurobindo encountered during his education, such as the theory of evolution.⁵ (the, mother, *The Mother*, retrieved 1 January 2013)

Another, comparatively minor and indirect influence, mediated through Mirra Alfassa, was some ideas of Max and Alma Théon and *Le Mouvement Cosmique*, some of which were inspired by Lurianic Kabbalah [5].

Sri Aurobindo's extensive poetic journey has established him as a distinguished figure in Indo-Anglian literature. His interests spanned teaching, poetry, and politics. His works, *Songs to Myrtilla* and the early long poem *Urvashi*, were published in 1895 and 1896, respectively. He was a profound scholar of ancient literature and employed a Miltonic style of language, along with epic-scale similes, in his compositions. This classical influence is clearly evident in his poem *Love and Death*—a blank verse composition comprising approximately 1,100 lines. Its central theme is 'Love,' based on an ancient Hindu legend that bears a striking resemblance to the Greek myth of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. In addition to numerous collections of his poetry and plays, Sri Aurobindo also authored a prose work titled *The Life Divine*, which is regarded as one of the greatest philosophical-religious texts ever written.

The most magnificent work of Indo-Anglian literature is Aurobindo's *Savitri*, a three-part work divided into 12 books or 49 cantos, containing a total of 23,813 lines, on which the poet spent fifty years of his life working. M.K. Naik writes in *A History of Indian English Literature* that;

The poet continuously revised 'Savitri' almost until the very end of his life, crafting it as an epic of humanity and divinity, and of death and divine life. It is a kind of poetic philosophy of the soul and of life, and simultaneously, an experiment in mystical poetry cast in a symbolic form [6].

To conclude in brief about *Savitri*, Iyengar has used the words of Prof. Raymond Frank Piper;

Aurobindo has perhaps composed the greatest epic in the English language. I venture to offer the opinion that it is the most comprehensive, coherent, beautiful, and perfect cosmic poem ever created. Symbolically, it spans the entire spectrum—from a primordial cosmic void, passing through the darkness and struggles of the Earth, to the highest realms of Supramental existence; and, through verse of unprecedented vastness, grandeur, and metaphorical brilliance, it illuminates every significant human concern. *Savitri* is perhaps the most powerful

artistic creation in the world, expanding the human mind toward the 'Supreme Reality [7].

3. Methodology

This study aims to examine the relationship between the individual consciousness and the universal reality in the works of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* using the qualitative comparative literary analysis. Qualitative research is appropriate because both texts have a deep metaphysics and symbolism, allowing for the examination of the layers of spiritual meaning that can be found in poetic language, imagery, and representation. The study is mainly based on the close study of some of the poems from *Gitanjali* and some of the cantos from *Savitri*. Special focus on regular subjects like the search for self-realisation, the search for divine consciousness, transcendence, surrender, cosmic unity and spiritual evolution. By close reading, the study charts the way each poet creates the dialogue between the finite human self and infinite universal reality. The poetics of spirituality is compared and contrasted. The comparison is:

1. The representation of the individual consciousness,
2. universal reality" is his concept of reality.
3. Incorporate the use of mystical symbolism, and
4. Visuals related to light, nature, travel, and change,
5. attitude towards self and universe.

Thematic textual interpretation is also considered an interpretative instrument used in the study. This method enables a deeper analysis of symbolic expressions and metaphysical ideas present in the poems. The analysis is not done in great detail on historical or biographical background, but rather is text-based and privileged by the spiritual and philosophical elements expressed through the poetic language. The primary sources are Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Interpretive framework supported by secondary scholarly sources of mysticism, Indian aesthetics, Vedantic philosophy and comparative literature. This approach enables a systematic examination of poetising spiritual consciousness, as well as different poetic visions of human life and universal interconnectedness presented by both poets.

3.1. Comparative Textual Analysis

Spirituality and Individual Consciousness in *Gitanjali*

Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* offers a very personal and personally lived out understanding of spirituality as the personal soul's connection to the Divine. There is a recurring theme of humility, surrender, devotion, and loving-kindness in all the poems as the means to universal consciousness.

In Poem 11, Tagore rejects external ritualism:

“Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!”

This line attacks formalised religion and calls the seeker to living spirituality. Divinity is not distant and out of the reach of the profane or beyond the confines of sacred institutions; it is present in ordinary life and in our experience as humans.

The poet continues:

“He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.

Tagore's concept of democracy has spiritual aspects because he finds the Divine in work, movement, and human activity. The imagery of the tiller and pathmaker points to a dynamic orientation to life as opposed to the ascetic withdrawal.

Tagore uses imagery of nature to convey universal interconnectedness:

That same life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world!

The term “stream of life” is the main theme of Tagore's spiritual vision. It represents a life force that binds people together and gives meaning to their lives in the context of the universe. The self is not self-contained or self-sufficient, but it is a part of a bigger universal rhythm.

Light imagery is also important:

My light, my light, the light of the world.

Light is a symbol of consciousness, illumination and awakening to the inner dimensions of oneself. It represents transcendence and immanence; the divine is above and within. In these images, Tagore builds up consciousness not as an autonomous entity but as a relational one. Spiritual realisation is achieved by surrendering the ego and by knowing the Oneness of the universe.

3.2. Spiritual Evolution and Universal Reality in Savitri

Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is a more comprehensive metaphysical perspective. Aurobindo's devotional lyricism is different from Tagore's. Aurobindo speaks of consciousness as evolving and transforming.

Aurobindo writes:

“Conscious soul living in the Inconscient's world”.

The paradox is the nature of human life itself. Man is shown to be spiritually aware but encircled by material and unconsciously limited views.

A second very important line reads:

The spirit shall be seen in the eyes of Matter.

This is one of the statements of Aurobindo's integral philosophy. Matter is not to be opposed to spirit, but is a medium for the manifestation of the spirit. The pictures depict the eventual transformation of physical existence by higher consciousness.

In all of Savitri, Aurobindo employs imagery of ascent and illumination:

An “invisible goal” that sits in “lonely splendour.”

The word lonely also represents the ascent of the soul towards the transcendent reality: splendour. The “invisible goal” indicates that there is a metaphysical goal which is not subject to ordinary consciousness.

Fire imagery is also prominent, as are other images of fire:

“There shall be a fire from the infinitudes.

Fire symbolises aspiration, purification, and spiritual transformation. Aurobindo's symbolism, as opposed to Tagore's, is dynamic, forceful and evolutionary.

The Dawn image also helps to confirm awakening:

The mind is illuminated with the dawn of Godhead.

Dawn is a metaphor for emerging from ignorance to illumination. Consciousness does not remain the same, but it is ever evolving into higher and higher states.

So, for Savitri, spirituality is a movement from ignorance to supramental realisation.

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Universal Reality

Although the two poets deal with the relationship of self and cosmos, their conceptions are very different. Tagore's reality is universal, immediate, intimate and emotional. Love, beauty and harmony are ways to encounter the divine.

For example:

Thy pleasure is that I am made endless, O Thou Who lovest me.

In this, the person becomes important in God's eyes. Grace is felt in Infinity.

Aurobindo, on the contrary, sees universal reality as cosmic, ontological and evolutionary:

The whole world has been made over by "A Truth supreme."

The entire cosmos is governed by a higher intelligence, one that constitutes the fabric of reality. Human consciousness is in a process of evolution that has not been completed and which is aimed toward Divine fulfilment.

Tagore emphasizes:

1. surrender,
2. devotion,
3. beauty,
4. emotional transcendence.

Aurobindo emphasizes:

1. transformation,
2. evolution,
3. ascent,
4. supramental realization.

Despite these differences, both poets reject fragmented individuality and affirm the essential unity of existence.

3.4. Symbolism and Imagery: A Comparative Reading

Symbolism plays a crucial role in both texts.

Tagore's recurring symbols

river/stream → continuity of life and cosmic unity

flower → purity and offering

song → soul-expression

light → divine presence

Example:

"My song has put off her adornments."

The "song" symbolises purified consciousness stripped of ego and ornamentation.

Aurobindo's recurring symbols

fire → aspiration and purification

sun/light → supramental consciousness

dawn → awakening

journey/ascent → spiritual evolution

Example:

It was a dark and silent night.

The night is a time of lack of knowledge and unconsciousness before the awakening of the spiritual soul.

While Tagore's lyricism is inward-looking, Aurobindo's is cosmic, using large, symbolic images to convey a metaphysical change.

3.5. Critical Interpretation

Tagore's spirituality is experiential mysticism. His poetry emphasises emotional connection to the divine and implies that the universal reality is available by way of humility, love and aesthetic sensitivity. Sri Aurobindo's spirituality is more philosophical and systematic. His poetry builds consciousness as evolutionary, and he posits that people have a potential evolution towards higher spiritual states.

1. Tagore seeks harmony.
2. Aurobindo seeks transformation.
3. Tagore imbues the cosmos into himself in his devotion.
4. Aurobindo lifts the Self to its universal level by a process of spiritual ascent.

Both poets together open up a space of metaphysical investigation where poetic language is a means of exploring consciousness and universal truth, where Indian English poetry becomes a site of inquiry. The updated section has been streamlined to avoid too much biographical information and focus instead on:

1. spirituality
2. consciousness
3. universal reality
4. textual analysis
5. symbolism and imagery.

4. Discussion

Sri Aurobindo not only expressed his spiritual thought and vision in intricate metaphysical reasoning and in phenomenological terms, but also in poetry. *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* is Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, which refers to a story of 'Savitri and Satyavan' from the Mahabharata. Where the characters go through the evolutionary process, including bringing the divinity to earth, transforming it spiritually [8].

The one aim of [my] yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can, in time, discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature⁹ (9- "no religions". Retrieved 03/01/2013.)

Sri Aurobindo is a thinker of a distinctly different kind, whose methodology is grounded in spiritual inquiry inspired by the Indian tradition. This methodology presents a completely novel intellectual framework within the context of modern science and addresses the challenge of transcending the dichotomy between religion and materialism, as well as between tradition and modernisation.

The objective of his spiritual quest was to address the shortcomings in prevailing thought regarding the conflicts between spiritual inquiry and practical materialism. He offered new perspectives on humanity's relationship with its natural environment and the material aspects of existence. He was, undoubtedly, a far more 'systematic' thinker than either Gandhi or Tagore. Like Jiddu Krishnamurti, Sri Aurobindo, too, believed that what we term 'religious' is not primarily a matter of doctrines or dogmas, but rather a matter of experience. He asserts that the validating factor for the authenticity of a religious intuition is the actual experience of that intuition's spiritual truth. It is neither a mere viewpoint nor a cumulative legacy of ideas passed down through generations; rather, it is an entirely direct and personal experience. Aurobindo contemplated whether a means could be discovered to bridge individual religious experience with the expansive—yet fundamentally religious—analytical rationality characteristic of the modern world.

Spiritualism is a religion that is not based on a relationship with a particular saviour. It recognises all prophets that have come to humankind throughout the ages, not setting one above the other. Rather, it is based upon the idea that we are all to form our own relationship with God, and to obtain guidance and accept responsibility for our actions based on our interaction with that personal guidance. We can have that instant and personal communication directly with God through no intermediary; hence the reason that we do not give anyone a fixed idea of God, only that there is a God. Any attempt to personalise the idea of God only limits the totality of that Intelligence, which is the reason that Spiritualists sometimes refer to that idea of God as “Infinite Intelligence” or “Infinite Spirit.”¹⁰ (<http://www.cassadaga.org/whatitis.htm>)

Another significant difference is the belief in the survival of the personality after death, meaning that we still think of ourselves the same after death as during our physical life. This is proven by Mediumship, the bringing back of loved ones in evidential form who have gone through the change called death. Belief in the survival of the personality also removes grieving when it is realised that our loved ones are still around us from time to time, are able to communicate with us and still care about us, and can be communicated with. Mediumship, when done in the true sense, will produce a real understanding of this existence and level of interaction to and from the spirit realm.

This research aims to explore the degree of spirituality in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore. Both poets devoted substantial thought to spiritualism and the relationship between truth, personality and form in art.

Both Tagore and Sri Aurobindo hailed from Bengal, but were brought up in two different backgrounds, the former in the gurukula tradition, the latter in the western tradition, but had soon realised the immensity of Indian tradition and never deviated from it till their deaths. Both were mystic poets, both had visions of India and life, both had dwelt extensively on moral and spiritual values. Both had defined the concept of man in the backdrop of Indian tradition, both were deeply involved in and championed the cause of freedom for the nation, both were original thinkers, philosophers, brilliant speakers and writers. In contrast, Tagore, though a mystic, had never swerved from the realities of life in the world. He struck harmony between the two worlds, the empirical and the transcendental. On the other Sri Aurobindo had left his revolutionary life and devoted himself completely to yogic life.

Both were not interested in building up a theory of art, either eclectically or originally. Both had abhorred academicism and had little interest in theorising. Both, however, had spoken extensively in poetry about what they felt and experienced. Indian, Neo-Platonic, Hegelian, Kantian and nineteenth-century romantic theories of art influenced their thought, but their influences could hardly be traced in their writings. Both remained original to the core in their thinking. The sources of Tagore’s pronouncements on poetics are seen in his essays: “What is Art?”, “The Realisation of Beauty”, “The Poet’s Religion”, whereas “The Future Poetry” and letters embodied Sri Aurobindo’s views of art and poetry.

Reflecting on the functions of art, Tagore has not dismissed the world in the true Advaitic sense. He accepts all three stages of realities: physical (*pratibashika*), psychological (*vyavaharika*) and transcendental (*paramartika*). He argues that detachment and disinterestedness of aesthetic experience do not mean detachment from the world of man and nature around us; it is only a detachment from the exigencies of action. The function of art, therefore, according to him, is to make us realise the world as more fully and richly real than we do in normal experience. Art is no less a deepening of world-consciousness than it is a classification of self-consciousness. Art brings nature close to man and enables him to establish an intimacy with all.

The function of art for Tagore is to remove the shadows which obscure the reality of the objective world as well as of the personality of man, and thereby to bring them together in intimate union. In his Bengali essays, he uses the Bengali word for literature, “*Sahitya*”, which comes from “*sachit*”, and etymologically means “togetherness” or “intimacy”. Emotions occupy a very important place in Tagore’s philosophy of art, for they are the principal

instruments of man's unification and harmonisation with the world. However, he cautions, in art we should not be concerned with the emotions on the biological plane or, as the Vedanta puts it, on the plane of *avidya-karma*. For him, an artist can liberate himself, his reader, spectator or listener, from this bondage, at least momentarily.

Sri Aurobindo's poetry is set within a more spiritual tradition. His spiritualism was born out of his original yogic experiences, firmly grounded in the Upanishads and the Indian aesthetic tradition. The oft-quoted dictum "All life is Yoga" applies to art and literature also. All art *sadhana*, being a part of life, is yoga. For him, all forms of art are various forms of beauty in the act of creation by the Soul's Delight. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Aesthetics is concerned mainly with beauty, but more generally with *rasa*, the response of the mind, the vital feeling and the sense to a certain 'taste' in things [9]. Poetry tries to seek this *rasa*. "Aesthetics, therefore, is of the very essence of poetry, as it is of all art [10]. For him, beauty is not denotative, but connotative; it has a wider field and application. "It is the Universal Ananda that is the parent of aesthetics, and the Universal Ananda takes three major and original forms - beauty, love and delight [11]. This creation of beauty in poetry and art does not fall within the sphere of reason. It is not ordinary, but it is supranational. This beauty can be seen by the inner eye, heard by the inner ear. The search and realisation of this beauty, for Sri Aurobindo, involves three stages, in the form which appeals to the physical senses, in the ideas and finally in all things, the uplifting delight of absolute beauty. The third stage is Suprasensuous, Suprarational, Supraintellectual. Great art, according to him, seeks "the soul of beauty which is hidden from the ordinary eye and the ordinary mind and revealed in its fullness only to the unsealed vision of the poet and artist in man [12].

Though Aurobindo defines poetry as something elusive and unfathomable, he calls it "Mantra of the Real" [13]. Tagore's conception of art ("the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real"), however, is analogous to Sri Aurobindo's definition. What Aurobindo means by it is that poetry must transcend the earth to encompass higher spiritual regions inhabited by Divine Truth, Divine Beauty and Divine Delight. The source of Mantra is not the ordinary mind or higher mind or illumined mind, but "Overmind". Imagination, however brilliant and powerful maybe, cannot be the source. The source of Inspiration is this Overmind, above ordinary mental states. Explaining the "poetic inspiration", he asserts: "What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus of poetic creation and the utterance comes to us from our superconscious source above the ordinary mentality so that what is written seems not to be a fabrication of the brain mind, but something more sovereign breathed or poured from above". This implies that in Sri Aurobindo's view, the poetic inspiration is Divine. The poet receives, accordingly, irresistible inspiration to write poetry from above. Like Shelley, he thinks that poetry is a divine, mysterious act of creation beyond the comprehension of a conscious man. Thus, great poetry is created. In this sense, the poet is essentially a spiritual being. Naturally, this kind of poetry can be enjoyed only through the soul. That is, it demands that the reader should also be spiritually awakened. Then alone, he/she can really enjoy it.

This takes us to a question of whether writing poetry is a divine activity or not human. In fact, in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics, both divine and human powers collaborate in the creativity. Though the inspiration derives from the above, the place of creation is the human mind. Hence, he defines poetry as "the rhythmic voice of life [14]." But he cautions, "it is one of the inner and not one of the surface voices"¹⁸ This inner is beautiful, spiritual. Poetry should not be merely concerned with the physical, sensuous and imaginative outside. It must pulsate with the inner, and then it becomes the "rhythmic voice of life." The poet is gifted to comprehend this, and he must unite both the finite and the Infinite. Poetry of this sort will give us "the spiritual and vital joy, the exalting power of a great breath of life [15]."

5. Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have two perspectives of individual consciousness and universal reality, which are mutually complementary. These are Tagore's themes of surrender, love, and harmony of feelings with the divine. In his poetry, he portrays consciousness as a relational and spiritually satisfied state of oneness with nature and with God. According to Sri Aurobindo, consciousness is a process of evolution and transformation,

leading towards the supramental realisation and the cosmic divinization. Tagore is stressing the here-and-now of God's presence, Aurobindo the ascent of the human spirit. As they both evolve their poetry into the new and modern Indian world, together they bring forth a deep spiritual philosophy as well. Today, their poetical visions provide still useful ways of thinking about consciousness, self and interconnectedness.

To conclude, both Tagore's and Sri Aurobindo's philosophies of poetry focus on the supreme beauty and truth of the Infinite in all its shapes and forms. Sri Aurobindo's poetry emanates from the sublimity of his mystical experiences. His theory of poetry is characterised by profound yogic experiences. It certainly opens up new horizons, though it is difficult to agree with him that all future poetry will be essentially spiritual and the product of the superconscious mind. Tagore is more rooted within a Romantic tradition. He believes that man is by his very nature creative; as there are infinite possibilities in man, man's art or literature also has infinite potential. According to him, man and nature are closely united. Like the Romantics, he believes in the importance of feelings, creative imagination (it includes sympathy as well as empathy) and in the value of the writer's own individual self. Tagore admits that the writer expresses not only his own individuality, but also the writer's human quality, his essential human nature. Though there are differences in their pronouncements on poetics, one may discover near similarities in their views, and one may notice the synthesis of the West and East in their personalities, which is reflected in their writings.

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