

**Transcendental Awakening According to Sri. Aurobindo and
Paulo Coelho**

***Lochana R**

Research Scholar

****Dr. Krishnamayi A**

(Research Guide)

Vimala College (Thrissur)

University of Calicut

India

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to analyse the concept of transcendental awakening according to the doctrines of Sri. Aurobindo and Paulo Coelho. The analysis is made in the light of *The Life Divine* and *Brida*. Both the writers represent the ideas of the oriental and occidental views on spirituality respectively. Aurobindo postulates his theories based on Vedas, Upanishads and Hindu philosophy. He was a great yogi and preached the idea of Integral Yoga. He strongly believed in the divinisation of earth through individual transformation. Paulo Coelho advocates the concepts of self-realisation and pursuing one's ambition. He explains spirituality in the background of occultism and pagan worship. He celebrates the positive aspects of witch craft. Both the authors emphasise on the need for concentration and meditation for evoking the Supreme Consciousness. They also opposed the notion of the denial of the material world for spiritual realisation. Spirituality is not the product of religious orthodoxy. It is a way of life which creates a sense of oneness among the creatures of the universe. Aurobindo and Coelho signify the value of human life and how it becomes the cause for transcendental awakening.

Human psyche is often overloaded with the pictures that the mind has captured. The ego, illusion, biases, and anxieties everything tries to bury the true self into the dark trench of oblivion. Carrying the real self within him man searches for a greater truth in the external world. There are spiritual gurus who run colossal spiritual markets. They sell virtual spirituality and claim to spread the fragrance of divinity. Neither does following some religious dogma provide an individual with the knowledge of the divine, nor can he access the eternal truth from fake gurus. Realising the transcendental awakening needs lot of practice and faith in oneself.

Man in his ignorance considers that the clouds have covered the sun. But the sun is miles away and too big for the clouds to cover it. As Swami Prabhupada explains, the clouds cover the individual's eyes and not the sun. Evolving out of the world of ego, illusion and ignorance pave way for the realisation of ultimate truth. This paper attempts to analyse the transcendental awakening according to the philosophies of Sri.Aurobindo and Paulo Coelho.

Enlightenment or Nirvana is a pristine state where an individual experiences spiritual freedom and tranquillity. It is a concept beyond the limits of a definition. But when one is liberated from samsara, he experiences the bliss of transcending duality. Life as a human being is accompanied by suffering and agony. The root cause of suffering is attachment. Man is always fascinated by transient objects and he desires for it. Breaking the chains of attachment is the only way to end suffering. Spiritual discipline trains an individual to be ethically and mentally perfect. It cuts away the sheath of illusion and assists an individual to move towards eternal truth. Thus every individual becomes the 'awakened one'. A mind which is opaque is always ignorant. Meditation is a widely acclaimed practice to cleanse the heart.

In the material world problems arise as human beings relate their actions to their desires. He is not aware of the origin of his action. In the light of *Gita*, Sri.Aurobindo explained that every problem has a solution. One has to come out of the shell of intellectual and ethical complexities to view everything from a higher intellect. It is the universal nature or 'prakriti' that that determines the actions in the world. Yoga is a unique system of exercise which can bring discipline to human psyche. According to Sri.Aurobindo, it unravels the mystery of one's soul and its relationship with the divine consciousness. He proclaimed that as an individual tries to ascend to the Supreme Consciousness, so does the Divine descends to the material world. This is indeed the core of Aurobindo's philosophy. The distinguished system of yoga developed by him is known as 'integral yoga'.

The salient features of integral yoga are:

- It does not concentrate on relinquishing the life on earth and thereby indulging in spiritual ecstasy.
- The central object of integral yoga is a supramental achievement- the divinisation of the earth.
- It aims at the integral change of the consciousness and nature. Aurobindo included certain aspects of the older systems of yoga as well. Integral yoga seems to maintain a perfect synthesis of everything.

Sri.Aurobindo observes the spirit of man, as a universal entity endowed with the unique capacity to unite with the Divine Consciousness and the other souls of the nature. “The yoga we practice is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity.” (Aurobindo, 71). The mukti is the liberation and the transformation of man. His concept of sachchidananda symbolizes eternal bliss. The integral consciousness about the infinite and self-awareness is termed as the ‘supermind’ by Aurobindo. It is a realm beyond spacio-temporal constraint. A mind that has evoked this sphere realizes that the Supreme is the Purushotamma. The self-awareness and self-delight of an individual is manifested as sachchidananda. As the mind rises above the conflicting dualities everything exists in a state of harmony. The supermind acts as a transitional sphere between the material world and the supramental area. There is a constant progression in this realm, according to Sri.Aurobindo from knowledge to knowledge.

As discussed earlier, the distinctive aspect of Aurobindo’s philosophy was the descendance of the Supreme on earth. “The truth-consciousness, finding evolutionary Nature ready, has to descend into her and enables her to liberate the supramental principle within her; so must be created the supramental and spiritual being as the first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the Self and Spirit in the material universe.” (Aurobindo, 952). The path towards transcendental awakening involves triple transformation.

- Psychic change- involves the transformation of an individual’s present nature.
- Spiritual change- conversion of an individual’s psychic nature results in the dawn of new insights.
- Supramental transformation- as an individual traverses up to the realm of supermind, he realises that himself and the universal soul are one. The supramental awakening aims at the transformation of the mind, life and body.

Although the Integral Yoga accepts all life, it undergoes a supramental transmutation. In the evolutionary process of Nature, life is established in material life. Aurobindo’s yoga has certain elements of Tantra as well. It harmonizes the internal consciousness with the nature. “Our misunderstanding of our identity is due to the dust covering the mirror of the mind. In a mirror which is covered with dust one cannot see himself. So meditation is a process for cleansing the heart. Meditation means to understand one’s relationship with the Supreme.” (Swami Prabhupada, 270). Meditation enlivens the focal point of self-expression. It provides the individual a chance to navigate through the unexplored areas of the unconscious. The tensions, conflicts and anxieties are perceived in a spiritual dimension. The surface

consciousness is integrated with the subliminal consciousness through yoga. Thus it is a way of complete surrender before the Supreme Consciousness.

Paulo Coelho's *Brida* is the story of an Irish girl who wanted to learn magic and transform her. She was led by her quest for knowledge. She resorted to occultism to evoke the eternal knowledge. Coelho always believed that by following one's own dreams, human beings become instruments of God. Through the techniques of witchcraft the author unravels the altruistic aspect of occult. Coelho explains the concept of transcendental awakening through love, sex and occult. "Plunging into the world of magic means discovering other unknown senses, and sex propels us towards one of those doors." (Paulo Coelho, 152). He has focussed on his pantheistic ideals in *Brida*. There is quest motif persistent in the novel.

The astral world always attracted her like a magnet. Her quest is akin to that of Santiago's journey in *The Alchemist*. The Magus and Wicca acted as catalysts to hasten the transformation in her. The Magus trained her to be mentally strong and determined. From him Brida learned the Traditions of the Sun and Moon. He made her realise the significance of soul mate. Towards the end of the novel, Brida understands that the Magus himself was her soul mate. She approached Wicca as her 'romantic idea of the search for knowledge' was pregnant in her mind. Wicca taught her the techniques of witchcraft. She taught Brida that constant rapport with nature establishes the communion with God. Through the words of Wicca, Coelho puts forward that most of the humans are interested in reaching their goal. The process of learning is often considered as secondary. "Learning something means coming into contact with a world of which you know nothing. In order to learn, you must be humble." (Paulo Coelho, 56). Acquiring knowledge is a process where the ego should never stand on its way. Every particle in the universe has an atom of life in it. Wicca emphasizes the need for meditation and communicating with one's own soul. There is an episode of past life in the novel. It focuses on the significance of soul and the transience of physical body.

"Sex was the symbolic means of communion with the divine, a re-encounter with the meaning of life." (Paulo Coelho, 140). Coelho remarks sex as a sacred act where the pure forces of life are in constant association. In this novel he proclaims that spiritual quest has a masculine side and a feminine side. The masculine side is concentrated on knowledge. Knowledge remains dry and useless when it is not brought into practice. It is the feminine aspect which possesses the power of transformation. "Knowledge without transformation is not wisdom." (Paulo Coelho, 139). Orgasm is 'a moment of great plenitude', were all the five senses come together. The tradition of witches believed it to be the moment where an individual is accepted

for initiation. Initiation is a ceremony through which the participant reaches an astral plane or a supramental consciousness.

Sri. Aurobindo's doctrine of 'triple transformation' could be related to the metamorphosis taking place in Brida. After her first meeting with the Magus, Brida slowly comes out of her cocoon. She becomes self-determined and motivated. This was the psychic transformation in Brida. In her path towards destiny, Brida realises the significance of a guide or a teacher. Thus she approaches Wicca. She evolves out of her mundane existence and ego with the help of Wicca. The witches believed that communication with the environment explains the existence of human soul in the scheme of life. Coelho treats occult as a method towards spiritual realisation. Such an evolution accounts for the spiritual transformation in Brida. Before the initiation ceremony, she masters the technique of communicating with her conscience as well as with nature. She recognised the vitality of the power of sex. During the initiation ceremony, there were some rituals to be performed which focussed on the female energy of transformation. Brida realised that, "it was through her body that the soul could do its work." (Paulo Coelho, 238). The rhythmic dance and certain chants created a realm of ecstasy. All the initiates were in a realm of 'altered consciousnesses. Brida identified herself and everything else with her soul. Thus she was blessed by supramental transformation.

The initiation ceremony of the Wicca tradition has a close relation with the concept of 'Kundalini'. Both the systems concentrated on the awakening of the feminine creative power. The awakening of the Kundalini is confronted with many perils. The initiation also intends for a liberation and spiritual freedom. But such emancipation is possible after observing a spiritually disciplined life. There had been chants, clapping and dancing to stimulate the inner illumination during the ceremony. The prayer or mantras play a very vital role in the initiation rites. The Mother also emphasises the importance of collective prayer. In a group there exists a powerful unity and all the elements are centred on the same aim. It adds to the inner oneness of purpose and motivation. A collective unit is always capable of multiplying the strength of action. "...the word is thought transformed into vibration; you are projecting into the air around you something which, before, was only energy. ...The word has more power than many rituals." (Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, 84). Pandit Tigunait also opines that there are two kinds of words-mundane (evolving from external realm) and Divine (evolving from internal realm). The mundane words are vibrations perceived by the ears. But the divine word is the transcendental truth that originates from itself. The chants during the initiation induce the spark of divine light in the minds of the initiates and dispel the dualities and ignorance. Thus the positive energy is stirred up. Initiation could be perceived as a moment of spiritual awakening.

Aurobindo preached that religion, occultism, spiritual philosophy and spiritual experience are inevitable for the transformation of man. But all the four activities are not equally accessible to humanity. The liberation from external restraints results in deep inner realisation. But the liberation is a result of sincere practice and hard work. The physical self should be disciplined and organised to express the inner experience. The mind should dominate the external disturbances and should be open to hold the transcendental wisdom. Aurobindo strongly opposed the denial of the material world. The Mother explains that in every human being there is a sealed door. Opening up of that door leads him towards eternal joy. Aurobindo envisioned the evolution of a spiritual humanity that can lead to the life divine on earth.

Sri.Aurobindo and Paulo Coelho focussed on the journey from awareness to consciousness. An individual should be aware of himself first. Then he has to relate his consciousness with the universal soul. Such an individual becomes a spiritually intelligent being. Both the writers advocate the transformation of the humanity as a whole. The physical body is not considered secondary during the process of spiritual transformation. The altered consciousness attained after initiation has a close relation with the awakened consciousness after evoking the Kundalini force. The transcendental awakening is not an external phenomenon. It is the supreme form of self-realisation which takes birth within an individual. The greatest hazard faced by modern world is that there is no proper understanding of life. The illumination of the inner self causes a deep inner serenity. It enhances an individual to view the problems of daily life with spiritual maturity. In *Brida*, the protagonist had to face many ordeals before the ultimate transformation. In *The Life Divine* Aurobindo writes, "There can undoubtedly be a spiritual life within a kingdom of heaven within us which is not dependent on any outer manifestation or instrumentation or formula of external being. The inner life has a supreme spiritual importance and the outer has a value only in so far as it is expressive of the inner status." (Aurobindo, 1055). There is always a supramental or Gnostic power leading everyone throughout their life. The realisation of one's true self is the greatest knowledge attainable. It is the first step towards eternal knowledge as well. Transcendental awakening connects the individual mind to the various levels of consciousness. The desires of the lower self are surpassed. G. S. Arundale in his prologue to *Kundalini-An Occult Experience* opines, "To dwell in knowledge is beautiful and helpful, but no less beautiful and helpful is to dwell in mystery. For in mystery gods learn to know themselves as god." Human life is a long quest. Some deviate from their aim while others cease to continue their journey. There are yet others who seem to be satiated and victorious in a world of virtual reality. But successful are those who pursue their quest, with sincerity and determination. They are ready to take risks and

forsake their own pleasures for a larger cause. They are indeed the Gnostic beings who have explored the meaning of life and awakened the Transcendental Sublime.

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